

Performance Funding Metrics

Percent of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded Without Excess Hours

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

REVISED 04/28/2016



STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* FLORIDA
Board of Governors



The State University System of Florida has been reporting the number of hours in excess of degree requirements for decades in its annual accountability reports. In 2009, the Florida Legislature established an "Excess Credit Hour Surcharge" to encourage students to complete their baccalaureate degrees as quickly as possible. This law created an additional fee for each credit hour that exceeds specific thresholds. It is important to note that the statutory provisions of the Excess Hour Surcharge have been modified several times by the Florida Legislature, resulting in a phased-in approach that has created three different cohorts of students with different requirements. The data described in this document are based on the latest statutory requirements, which mandate a 110% threshold of the required hours.¹

In 2011, the Board of Governors included the excess hours metric in its 2012-2025 System Strategic Plan. In 2014, the importance of the excess hours metric was further elevated by its inclusion in a new Performance-Based Funding Model. This document provides details of the methodology and procedures used by Board of Governors staff during the analysis of the 'Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded Without Excess Hours' as reported in the Accountability Reports and used in the Performance Based Funding model.

¹ The Board's accountability metric is a retrospective summary for a given graduating class. The accountability metric does not attempt to report (and cannot be used to calculate) how many students have actually paid the surcharge at a given time. The Board of Governors will monitor actual surcharge payment data, but will continue to base the accountability metric on the latest statutory requirements because it provides a good perspective on what impact this new fee will have in the near future after the phase-in period is over. For more details see Section 1009.286, Florida Statutes at: <http://www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2012/1009.286>.



1. Defining the Cohort

The State University System of Florida Board of Governors (BOG) maintains a student unit record database titled the State University Database System (SUDS). This database contains more than 400 data elements about students, faculty, and programs at SUS institutions.

- a. The source data for the excess hours accountability metric are the Courses to Degree (CTD) and Hours to Degree (HTD) tables that are submitted to SUDS by each university as part of their Hours To Degree (HTD) file². Note: New College of Florida (NCF) does not submit a HTD file.
- b. The Hours to Degree file only includes single-major bachelor's degree recipients who were awarded a bachelor's for the first time during the academic year – summer, fall, and spring terms.
- c. The course information for the students reported includes all post-secondary course work and their course work taken in high school and accepted as post-secondary credit after high school.

2. Board Staff Query of HTD

The Board's Information Resource Management (IRM) staff query the database and provide the Board's Institutional Research (IR) unit with a student-level summary of the HTD data. The primary action of this query is to summarize the number of credit hours attempted for each individual in the HTD file into the groups described below. These groupings are critically important because the Legislature has exempted several types of credit hours from being included in the calculation of excess hours. The determination of credit hour groupings is done by university staff who report to the BOG using the following HTD elements:

- Course System Code [#1484]
- Course Grouping Code [#1485]
- Credit Hour Usage Indicator [#1489]
- Section Credit [#1459]
- Credit Hour Testing Method [#1488]
- Course Section Type [#1104]
- Excess Hours Exclusion [#2065]

a. Statutory Inclusions

- **Native Credits:** The statute includes all credit hours attempted at the state university from which the student received a baccalaureate degree, which is based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when CRS_SYSTEM [#1484] = 'N--native'. Native credits include all failed, dropped, repeated, and most withdrawals. In addition, Board of Governors staff have clarified that graduate-level credit that is attempted for completion of a baccalaureate degree is included in any calculation for excess hours.
 - However, if graduate credit is attempted as part of a (3+2 or 4+1) dual bachelor's/master's degree, where the credit applies to both the undergraduate and graduate requirements, then it should be considered graduate degree coursework and therefore should be considered exempt from excess hours. The exempted credits are based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when COURSE_GROUP [#1485] = 'R'.
- **Non-Native Credits Used Toward the Degree:** Based on all credit hours (sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459]) accepted for transfer by the degree-awarding institution (CRS_SYSTEM [#1484] <> 'N--native') and used toward the student's baccalaureate degree program (USAGE_INDICATOR [#1489] = 'D').

² For detailed information regarding the Hours to Degree file, please see the master file documentation that is available at: http://www.flbog.edu/resources/doc/ditr/susmaster/htd_print.pdf.



b. Statutory Exclusions

- Accelerated Mechanisms:** Based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when COURSE_GROUP [#1485] = 'D' or 'E'. This includes College Level Examination Program (CLEP), College Board Advanced Placement Program (AP), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations, and High School Dual (or Early Admit) Enrollment. Note: High School Dual/Early-Admit credits that are earned at another institution and accepted as transfer credit are also exempt from the excess hours calculation.
- Internship Courses:** Based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when COURSE_SECTION_TYPE [#1104] = 'I'. This should include externships, practicums, and supervised teaching activities within teacher education.
- Certification:** The data collected by the Board of Governors do not identify credit hours that are classified as 'for certification'; therefore, no certification credits are being excluded from the BOG accountability metric for excess hours.
- Withdrawal Due to Personal Hardship:** After summer 2014 Data Workshop discussions, a new 'Excess Hours Exclusion' element [#2065] was added to the State University Database System (SUDS) Hours to Degree file to identify these credit hours. It is important to note that for these hours to be exempted from the calculation of 'Excess Hours' for the Accountability Report, the COURSE_GROUP [#1485] code must be equal to 'A—academic course.' If the credit hours have already been exempted as a result of the COURSE_GROUP [#1485] values, then they will not be exempted again.
- Active Duty Military:** These data have historically not been identified in the HTD. After summer 2014 Data Workshop discussions, a new element was added to the State University Database System (SUDS) Hours to Degree file to identify these credit hours. These hours will only include credit hours taken while on active duty. It is important to note that for these hours to be exempted from the calculation of 'Excess Hours' for the Accountability Report, the COURSE_GROUP [#1485] code must be equal to 'A—academic course.' If the credit hours have already been exempted as a result of the COURSE_GROUP [#1485] values, then they will not be exempted again.
- Dual Major:** Dual majors are not included in the HTD data. Surchage Note: Because of the variation in how the curricula for dual majors can be constructed, the credits applicable to this exemption need to be determined by each university.
- Remedial/English as a Second Language:** Based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when COURSE_GROUP [#1485] = 'C'. In addition, Board of Governors staff decided that up to 10 credit hours of foreign language that are used to meet FTIC admission requirements (per Regulation 6.002(1)(h)) should also be exempt from excess hours. These data are based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when USAGE_INDICATOR [#1489] = 'L—Foreign Language.' It is important to note that for these hours to be exempted from the calculation of 'Excess Hours' for the Accountability Report, the COURSE_GROUP [#1485] code must be equal to 'A—academic course.' If the credit hours have already been exempted as a result of the COURSE_GROUP [#1485] values, then they will not be exempted again.
- Military Sciences:** Based on the sum of SECTION_CREDIT [#1459] when COURSE_GROUP [#1485] = 'M'. This identifies courses that are part of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program or credit for Military Training and Education granted to students with military training or coursework that is recognized by the American Council on Education (ACE) subject to regular institution transfer practices or limitations on amount, level, etc. of transfer credit. Credit hours earned from military courses from U.S. Military Colleges and Military Academies are also included.
- Note about Teacher Education:** Board of Governors staff recommend that universities evaluate their Teacher Education programs to determine whether the number of credit hours required for the program needs to be adjusted. If so, then the university needs to apply for the change in catalog hours with BOG staff.



3. Board Staff Analysis of HTD Query

a. Quality Assessment

- **Calculating Total Credit Hours:** The first action that IR staff performs is a quality assessment step to see if all bachelor's recipients have earned at least 120 total credit hours – per Board regulation 6.017(b). This step sums the total native hours and the non-native hours used toward the degree. If a student has less than 120 total credit hours used toward the degree, he or she is excluded from the excess hours calculation.
- **Catalog Hours and the Academic Degree Program Inventory:**
In accordance with the requirements of Board of Governors regulation 8.011(4), the Board office maintains the official State University System Academic Degree Program Inventory, which identifies all the approved degree programs for each university within the System.³ The programs are listed based on the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) taxonomy that the U.S. Dept. of Education maintains. Universities may have multiple “majors” at the same degree level under one CIP code, in accordance with definitions specified in regulation 8.011, and they may have degree programs at different levels within the same CIP.

In accordance with the requirements of Section 1007.25(8), F.S., and Board regulation 8.014, the Board of Governors may approve a request by a university board of trustees for a bachelor's degree program to exceed 120 credit hours to degree. Baccalaureate programs that have been granted this exception are identified in the Board's Academic Program Inventory along with the required catalog hours and the term when the change was made effective. The Board's Inventory displays only the credit hours associated with the longest track/major within any program associated with a six-digit CIP code.

It is important to note that program curricula naturally evolve and change over time to keep up with the latest developments within their respective fields of study. A program curriculum change *may* cause the university to change the required credit hours associated with an academic program. Universities that want to change the maximum credit hours for a program that has already been approved to exceed 120 credit hours must request approval for the administrative change (whether higher or lower) from the Board's Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) staff as specified in Board of Governors regulation 8.014. If ASA staff approve a change, the Program Inventory is updated to reflect the new maximum credit hours along with the effective term for the new maximum hours.

In the HTD file, the university reports the catalog hours for each student, which can vary within a CIP due to differences between majors that are grouped into the same CIP, or due to students who entered the university years apart and completed slightly different curricula. To ensure compliance with statute and regulation, Board staff use the Board-approved maximum credit hours for each university's CIP, combined with their effective terms, as reported in the Program Inventory, when calculating the 'Excess Hour' threshold for each program.

³ The Board's Academic Program Inventory is available at: <https://prod.flbog.net:4445/pls/apex/f?p=136:13>.



b. Calculating Excess Hours

- The calculation of the excess hours metric is executed at the student level and combines the different groups of data provided by IRM in a way that mirrors statute as closely as possible.
 - The formula starts with a sum of all 'native' credit hours plus non-native credits that were used toward the degree. 'Native' refers to whether the credits were earned at the same institution. 'Non-Native' credits refers to the credits that were earned elsewhere and accepted for transfer. This credit hour subtotal is then compared to 110% of the Board-approved maximum catalog hours. The final step subtracts the credit hours from the statutory exempt categories (which include all exempted native credit hours and only the non-native exempted credit hours that were used toward the degree). Note: Non-native credit hours that were not used toward the degree are not included in the exempted hours because these credit hours were already excluded from the initial subtotal.
 - The formula used is shown below.

$$\text{[ALL NATIVE + NON-NATIVE HOURS USED TO DEGREE]} - (\text{CATALOG HOURS} * 1.10) - (\text{EXEMPTED HOURS})$$

EXEMPTED HOURS include all native hours plus non-native hours that were used toward the degree from the following categories: Dual Enrollment, Exam Credit, Internships, Remedial, Language (to fulfill 2nd language admission requirements), Life Experience, Military Course Credit, Graduate Rollover Courses, Withdrawals due to Personal Hardship, and courses earned while serving on Active Duty in the Military (as described in Section 2b of this document).

- The result of the 'Excess Hour' formula above provides a numerical value for each baccalaureate recipient that is either negative, zero, or positive. If negative or zero, the student did not accrue any excess hours. If positive, the student did accrue excess hours. This numerical value is translated into a simple "Yes/No" flag, which is then used to summarize the number and percentage of baccalaureate recipients based on their designation.

4. Using Outcomes

The Performance-Based Funding Model

Board staff provides the results of the Excess Hours data analysis (as well as the student-level data that it was based upon) to each university Data Administrator for their review prior to the data being approved by each university Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors as part of the Accountability Report process. The Percentage of Bachelor's without Excess Hours is reported as an overall total and by student type (FTIC, AA Transfer, and Other Transfer). The percentage for all students is used in the Performance-Based Funding model.

- Board staff compare newly submitted HTD data to prior year data and ask university Data Administrators about any odd trends. It is important to note that if the university implemented any methodology, or procedural changes that cause an impact to the data, then Board staff will require the university resubmit the prior year HTD using the same improved method/process. This is needed to ensure that the year-over-year change in data is based on actual performance and not due to a technical methodological/procedural change to the data collection processes.