

Federal Compliance

The following paragraphs discuss Youngstown State University's compliance with federal laws pertaining to higher education and with Higher Learning Commission policies referred to in Chapter 8 of the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition (HLC Policy I.C.7)

The Commission “expects an affiliated institution to be able to [1] equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to [2] justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in accredited institutions of higher education, and to [3] justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs, program length, and program objectives.” (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.2-1).

1. All Youngstown State University classes offered for credit are equated to semester credit hours.

YSU converted from quarters to semesters in fall 2000, after considerable preparation and revision of the entire curriculum. Fall and spring semesters last 16 weeks each, including 15 weeks of instruction and one week for final examinations per semester. The summer schedule includes four sessions:

- one 12-week session;
- two six-week sessions that run back-to-back, starting and ending on the same dates as the 12-week session; and
- one additional six-week session in the middle of the summer that overlaps the other six-week sessions to facilitate scheduling for teachers and students in the public schools (whose spring and fall terms do not coincide with YSU's).

In accordance with state law and Ohio Board of Regents guidelines, each semester credit hour is equivalent to 15 50-minute classes plus two hours of final-exam time, or a total of 870 minutes. For lecture classes, semester hours are equal to class hours. Lab classes may have a ratio of two or three class hours per week per semester hour of credit. The state allows “flexibly scheduled” courses if time and effort are commensurate with class time and effort in regularly scheduled courses.

YSU's semester scheduling guidelines—passed by the Academic Senate on February 10, 1999, and updated in 2005—and summer scheduling guidelines—updated in 2006—are available online at <http://www.yzu.edu/provost/communications/policies-forms.shtml>. YSU courses and assigned semester-hour credits are listed in the *Undergraduate* and *Graduate Bulletins*, available in

print and online (see <http://www.yсу.edu/catalog/catalog.shtml> and <http://www.yсу.edu/GradSchool/bulletin.shtml>). Courses taken and semester hours accumulated are posted on students' transcripts, along with the grades earned. Academic calendars and exam schedules are published in the *Schedule of Classes* and are available online from links on the Provost's Office web site at <http://www.yсу.edu/provost> and elsewhere.

To facilitate transfer among Ohio's post-secondary institutions, the state legislature mandated, in 2003, revision of the state's Articulation and Transfer Policy. The Ohio Board of Regents appointed faculty teams (several of which included YSU faculty members) to develop Transfer Assurance Guides (TAGS)—formal, statewide specifications that align 70% or more of the learning outcomes among certain courses at the various institutions. The TAGS ensure transfer of approved courses (both in general education and introductory courses for specific majors) among the state's post-secondary institutions (see <http://regents.ohio.gov/transfer/index.php>).

In addition, each public college and university and some private institutions in Ohio participate in the state's Course Applicability System (CAS), an electronic database of course equivalencies that show how a course at one institution transfers to another.

2. The length of all YSU degree programs has been approved by the Youngstown State University Board of Trustees and the Ohio Board of Regents and is consistent with standards among comparable institutions of higher education.

By state law, Ohio's public and private institutions must submit proposals for new degrees and degree programs to the Ohio Board of Regents. No institution may offer a proposed degree or program until the proposal has successfully passed each step of the respective (undergraduate or graduate) state approval process.

The Ohio Board of Regents maintains a database of hours required for each academic program at Ohio's colleges and universities and requires each institution to report each degree awarded, including the number of hours each student amasses for the degree. Comparative information about degrees awarded, time to degree, and hours per degree appears in the annual state *Performance Report* (<http://regents.ohio.gov/perfrpt/index.php>). Time to degree for YSU students is published annually in the institutional *Performance Report* summary on Youngstown State University's Institutional Research and Policy Analysis web site (<http://www.yсу.edu/institutional-research/perfreportR.shtml>).

Course- and program-proposal guidelines are available on YSU's Academic Senate web site (<http://www.yсу.edu/acad-senate/>). Youngstown State University offers 24 associate degree programs, ranging from 60-75 semester hours;

102 bachelor's degree programs, ranging from 124–141 semester hours; 58 master's degree programs, ranging from 30–79 semester hours; and one doctoral program with 69 semester hours. Some programs include multiple options or tracks, resulting in slight variations in number of hours within a particular program. The length of programs accredited by program-specific accrediting agencies is consistent with requirements of the agencies.

Program descriptions are published in the *Undergraduate* and *Graduate Bulletins*, and academic departments maintain printed curriculum sheets for their majors. Advisors and students in a growing number of colleges, departments, and programs (e.g., the College of Fine and Performing Arts; the College of Business; English; Journalism; Theater; Computer Science; Chemistry; Psychology; and Economics) use the University's automated degree-audit system to help track progress toward a degree.

3. Youngstown State University justifies its program-specific tuition and publicizes the cost of tuition to prospective and current students.

Like many other universities, YSU charges tuition based on the student's residency (in-state, regional service area, out-of-state); the number of credits taken (with a "bulk rate" for 12–16 semester hours), and the level of courses and programs (undergraduate, graduate). Information about tuition and fees is readily accessible in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, the *Graduate Bulletin*, the *Schedule of Classes* and the *Your Right to Know* publication (<http://www.ysu.edu/righttk.pdf>). Almost all YSU programs fall within the regular tuition structures. Five YSU programs have or have had program-specific tuition:

- MFA in Creative Writing
- Master of Public Health
- Executive MBA (on hiatus—has not been offered the past two years and won't be offered until at least 2010, when the College of Business moves to a new building)
- Joint Engineering (no longer offered)
- Nurse Anesthetist Option within the Master of Science in Nursing program (standard base YSU tuition, but additional fees for training at St. Elizabeth Health Center)

MFA and Master of Public Health Consortium Programs: The MFA in Creative Writing and the Master of Public Health are members of state-approved consortia whose tuition is set by the consortia rather than the individual universities. Students in both programs may take courses at any member university.

Tuition for the MFA consortium is \$436 per credit. YSU's base (i.e., non-consortium), in-state graduate tuition of \$286.60 per credit is lower than in-state tuition for comparable non-consortium programs at other member universities (\$342.47 per credit at Akron; \$439.25 per credit at Cleveland State University; and \$408 per credit at Kent State University); and students in non-consortium programs at all four universities pay a separate, per-credit general fee in addition to tuition. The MFA consortium tuition rate, which includes *combined* tuition (i.e., instructional fees) and general fees, reflects the sum of the highest tuition and the highest general fee among the participating institutions.

The MFA in Creative Writing is part of the Northeast Ohio Universities Master of Fine Arts in Creating Writing—a multidisciplinary, interdepartmental consortium with courses and faculty at Youngstown State University, Cleveland State University, Kent State University, and the University of Akron. Administrative responsibility for directing the program rotates among the universities. As stipulated in the initial proposal to the Ohio Board of Regents,

The MFA in Creative Writing tuition and fees will be set annually by the [consortium's] Administrative Committee in late winter/early spring and approved by the boards of trustees at each participating institution. . . . Any increases will be implemented annually to all students enrolled in the program, not by cohort. Tuition will be determined on a per-credit-hour basis taking into consideration the current Ohio Board of Regents fee assumption rate and tuition rates of similar programs. . . . A separate general fee cannot be charged. . . .

YSU's Master of Public Health program is part of the Consortium of Eastern Ohio Master of Public Health—a multidisciplinary, interdepartmental consortium with courses and faculty at Youngstown State University, Cleveland State University, the University of Akron, Ohio University (which recently joined the consortium), and the Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy (NEOUCOM). Many courses are taught by distance learning, and students may take courses at any of the campuses. The \$450 per-credit tuition for the MPH consortium is based on NEOUCOM's tuition, since the program is centered there, and on tuition at other MPH programs in the state.

Information about tuition for both consortium programs is available to current and prospective students on page 44 of the hard-copy and online *Graduate Bulletin* (<http://www.ysu.edu/GradSchool/bulletin.shtml>). The University emended the online edition of the *Bulletin* in fall 2007 to indicate more clearly that consortium tuition rates reflect *combined* instructional and general fees; the emendation will be made to the hard-copy edition the next time the *Bulletin* is printed.

Programs on Hiatus and Discontinued Programs: Since the Executive MBA program—a cohort program requiring an international experience—is not currently offered, fees for that program are not published in the current *Graduate Bulletin*. When the program is offered, information about the program-specific tuition and fees is readily accessible in program brochures and on the YSU web site.

The program’s base tuition is equal to base tuition for YSU’s standard graduate programs, but the “total tuition and fees” are higher than standard graduate tuition and fees because students are billed for tuition, fees, books, a required international trip (air fare, hotel, select meals), and other program-related expenses. The overall tuition and fees for YSU’s Executive MBA program are lower than the tuition and fees for other Executive MBA programs in the region.

YSU discontinued its participation in the Joint Engineering program—an undergraduate program in a consortium called the Academic Alliance of Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania—in 2000 or shortly thereafter, when no new students enrolled in the program. During the years YSU participated, the Joint Engineering program tuition was listed on the tuition/fees pages of the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.

Nurse Anesthetist Option: Students in the Nurse Anesthetist option within the Master of Science in Nursing program—a cooperative program between Youngstown State University and the St. Elizabeth Health Center School for Nurse Anesthetists—pay standard base YSU tuition and fees, plus fees for clinical training they receive at the School for Nurse Anesthetists. The additional fees are based on program costs and objectives. YSU collects both the tuition and the clinical fees but remits the clinical fees to St. Elizabeth Health Center.

Organizational Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act (HLC Policy I.A.5)

The Commission “expects that its affiliated institutions comply if required with the Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. . . . Therefore, institutions will provide teams for review and consideration the most recent default rates (and any default reduction plans approved by the Department of Education) and any other documents concerning the institution’s program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act, including any results of financial or compliance audits and program reviews.”

The Commission expects institutions receiving Title IV funds [1] “to provide copies of documents relevant to Title IV compliance or . . . a clear index of where those documents might be readily found”; [2] to “evaluate the . . . default rate, if any, and . . . plans for reducing default”; and [3] to comment on “other Title IV-mandated student notification requirements such as campus crime-reporting and

release of completion/graduation rates, with particular focus on deficiencies or corrective actions demanded by the USDE or other governmental agencies.”

“If renewal of eligibility, program audits, or other USDE actions raise significant issues, the organization will . . . address those issues and subsequent corrective measures in the self-study report.” (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.2-2)

1. Youngstown State University will provide copies of documents relevant to Title IV compliance to the Higher Learning Commission site team.

Documents relevant to Title IV compliance are available in the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (Program Participation Agreement; and Eligibility and Certification Approval Report) and the Office of General Accounting (annual A-133 audit results). Copies of some documents are also available in the accreditation Resource Room.

2. Youngstown State University’s FY 2005 and FY 2004 federal loan default rates were below national averages.

Youngstown State University’s official default rates for the past three years, computed by the Department of Education, are as follows:

Fiscal Year 2005

- Number of borrowers entering repayment: 3,145
- Number of borrowers who entered repayment and defaulted: 139
- Official cohort default rate: 4.4%

Fiscal Year 2004

- Number of borrowers entering repayment: 2,562
- Number of borrowers who entered repayment and defaulted: 124
- Official cohort default rate: 4.8%

Fiscal Year 2003

- Number of borrowers entering repayment: 2,162
- Number of borrowers who entered repayment and defaulted: 118
- Official cohort default rate: 5.4%

Youngstown State University also submits, through the Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP), default rates for the Perkins Loan Program. On June 30, 2007, the cohort default rate was 17.50%. The University has implemented additional policies and procedures—such as switching from quarterly to monthly billing—to decrease the cohort default rate.

Youngstown State University's Collections Manager, Susan Beiling, has responsibility for Federal Perkins Loan collections. A Perkins Loan Specialist (who is a full-time employee in YSU's Student Accounts Office) performs the daily administration, billing, and repayment responsibilities for the Perkins Loan Program.

By Ohio statute, Youngstown State University must use the Office of the State Attorney General for collection of delinquent loans. The University assigns delinquent Perkins loans to the Department of Education; loan balances under \$25 that are identified as uncollectible are written off.

For more information about the Federal Perkins Loan Program at Youngstown State University, you may contact Susan Beiling at sebeiling@ysu.edu.

3. Youngstown State University complies with the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act (i.e., the Clery Act), the Federal Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act, and Title IV-mandated requirements regarding disclosure of campus crime and graduation rates, as well as Title II requirements on disclosure of teacher-preparation information.

Youngstown State University prints the following information in *Your Right to Know*, an annual compendium of information mandated by federal law:

- descriptions of campus/community safety, disability, counseling, and security services;
- crime-reporting information;
- campus crime rates;
- graduation rates for student-athletes, minorities, and other students;
- athletics gender and revenue statistics;
- information about the Federal Sex Crimes Prevention Act and state and local sexual-offender registries;
- drug and alcohol laws, both federal and state;
- University drug and alcohol regulations; information about the effects of selected "date rape," prescription, and other drugs; and abuse-prevention programs;
- student records and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) information;

- student fees, charges, and fines; and
- pass rates on the PRAXIS exams.

As noted in the publication, the information on crime rates is compiled as follows:

The Crime Prevention Resource Center of the Youngstown State University Police Department compiles the crime statistics data from the Uniform Crime Reports and the report files. Input data [are] received from the Resident Housing Office, the Student Disciplinary Office, the Youngstown Police Department, and surrounding area law enforcement agencies. The other policy disclosures required by the Clery Act are received from the appropriate offices for inclusion in the *Your Right to Know* publication. As with the Uniform Crime Reports, data [are] compiled for the previous calendar year. The Clery Act also requires that the data for the two years prior to the current year be published.

Your Right to Know is posted online (<http://www.ysu.edu/righttk.pdf>) and available annually to all YSU students, faculty, and staff. A letter is mailed to all enrolled students telling them where the print publication can be picked up and giving them the URL for the online version. *Students* may obtain copies or information from the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, 141 Tod Hall. *Employees* may do so in the Office of Human Resources, located on the third floor of Jones Hall. Copies in alternate format are available in the Office of Disability Services in Wick House.

Campus crime alerts, links to area sexual-offender registries, and a link to comparative statistics on campus crime are posted on the Youngstown State University Police Department web site at <http://www.ysu.edu/police/>. The YSU Police Department maintains mutual-aid agreements with the Youngstown City Police Department, the Mahoning County Sheriff's Department, the St. Elizabeth Health Center/Humility of Mary Police Department, other police departments in Mahoning County, and other state universities in Ohio to facilitate cooperation and exchange of information.

Federal Compliance Visits to Off-Campus Sites and Campuses (HLC Policy I.C.2)

Federal regulations for recognition of accrediting agencies require the Commission to conduct a variety of evaluation activities to review and monitor the development of off-campus sites and campuses. . . . The Commission has determined that an off-campus site is a location at which a student can complete fifty percent or more of a degree program. (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.2-3)

Youngstown State University has only one “campus” as defined by the Commission. That campus is the main campus, not an “off-site” campus; only the main (downtown Youngstown) campus provides full administrative services and has an administrative head.

YSU reports off-campus “sites,” at which 50% or more of a program can be completed, in the Annual Report to the Higher Learning Commission.

In 2006-07, YSU offered courses and programs at three off-campus “sites” (Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio; Edgewood High School in Ashtabula, Ohio; and Lorain County Community College in Elyria, Ohio). In 2005-06, there was one additional off-campus site (First Energy in Beaver Valley, Pennsylvania), for a program that was being phased out.

In addition to these “sites,” YSU regularly offers courses at several off-campus “locations,” including the Butler Institute of American Art adjacent to campus; Southwoods Commons in Boardman, Ohio; the Trumbull Correctional Institute in Leavittsburg, Ohio; and San Salvadore Island, Bahamas.

Institution’s Advertising and Recruitment Materials (HLC Policy IV.B.2)

[W]henver an organization makes reference to its affiliation with the Commission, it will include the Commission’s address and phone number. . . . In including the Commission’s contact information, the organization should use the URL of the Commission’s Web site, rather than its street address, and its local, rather than toll-free, phone number. To avoid confusion, particularly among prospective students, organizations should clearly and prominently provide their own contact information so students know how to reach them. (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.2-3)

Several years ago, the University began revising references to affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission to list the URL of the Commission’s web site, rather than its street address, and the Commission’s local, rather than toll-free, phone number. Statements in any publications that still use the street address and 800 number will be emended when the publications are reprinted.

The *Undergraduate Bulletin* (<http://www.yzu.edu/catalog/frontsection.pdf>; p. 7), the *Graduate Bulletin* (<http://www.yzu.edu/GradSchool/bulletin.shtml>; p. 10), and the current *Viewbook* (which is designed for prospective students) use the URL and local phone number of the Commission, as directed in the *Handbook of Accreditation*.

Upon finding in fall 2007 that some web sites and publications maintained by individual departments still include the Commission's street address and toll-free number, the self-study coordinators sent an official University announcement asking all departments that refer to the Commission to include the URL and local phone number of the Commission and to delete the street address and toll-free number. Publications containing the street address and toll-free number will be changed the next time they are printed.

Official YSU publications also include contact information for Youngstown State University, so that students know how to reach the University. YSU's address and phone number appear in the footer to many pages on the University's official web site and in University publications.

Relationships with Professional Accrediting Bodies (HLC Policy III.A.1)

. . . An organization identifies in its Annual Report to the Commission any adverse actions taken by professional accreditation agencies. (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.1-3)

Many of Youngstown State University's academic programs hold program-specific professional accreditation; all programs are in good standing.

Program descriptions in the *Undergraduate* and *Graduate Bulletins* include information about program-specific accreditations. No accrediting body has taken adverse action against YSU programs. Therefore, the University has had no adverse accrediting actions to report in its Annual Reports to the Higher Learning Commission.

Reports on professional/program-specific accreditations and recent actions by accrediting bodies are presented at Youngstown State University's quarterly Board of Trustees committee meetings and appear in printed agendas for the Board of Trustees' Academic and Student Affairs Committee.

Requirements of Institutions Holding Dual Institutional Accreditation (HLC Policy III.A.3)

The Commission accredits a small number of organizations that also are affiliated with one or more CHEA-recognized or federally recognized institutional accrediting agencies. (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.1-2)

Youngstown State University does not hold dual institutional affiliation. The University is not accredited by any CHEA-recognized accrediting body or any federally recognized institutional accrediting body other than the Higher Learning Commission.

Organizational Records of Student Complaints (HLC Policy IV.B.4)

The Commission “expects an affiliated organization to provide a comprehensive evaluation team with an organizational account of the student complaints it has received and their disposition. This account should cover the two years of operation preceding the comprehensive evaluation. . . . One manner of accounting is a log that tracks complaints from inception to disposition. . . . [T]he Commission believes that the reporting obligation should focus principally on nontrivial complaints, either academic or nonacademic, made formally in writing, signed by a student, and addressed to and submitted to an organizational officer with the responsibility to handle the complaint.” (Handbook of Accreditation, p. 8.2-4)

Youngstown State University complies with the Commission’s expectations for maintaining records of student complaints and their disposition.

Informal student complaints are addressed as expeditiously as possible, typically within the office or department within which the complaint originates. Informal or “second-hand” complaints that come directly to the Office of the President or the Office of the Provost are generally referred to the appropriate office or department with responsibility for the area of the complaint. The University Ombudsperson (Jack Fahey), whose office is located in Kilcawley Center (YSU’s student center), facilitates resolution of informal student complaints, guided by standards of neutrality, and impartiality, confidentiality, and informality outlined in the Ombudsperson Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (http://www.ombudsassociation.org/standards/stds_Practice_1-07.pdf).

The President has delegated authority for matters related to student conduct to the Vice President of Student Affairs. As noted under Criterion 1e8, four University officials—(1) the Provost, or designee (currently an Associate Provost); (2) the Vice President of Student Affairs, or designee (currently the Associate Director of Student Life); (3) the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research; and (4) the Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, or designee—have primary responsibility for handling formal complaints by or against students.

Procedures and timelines for handling formal complaints are outlined in *The Code: A Handbook of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct* (<http://www.yсу.edu/thecode.pdf>). Records of *formal, written* student complaints are maintained in the office of the official with responsibility for handling the respective complaint:

- The Office of the Provost, located in 222 Tod Hall, handles undergraduate student *academic* grievances related to student allegations that a faculty member substantially deviated from the syllabus. Procedures and timelines for academic grievances are outlined in the *Academic Senate Bylaws* (Bylaw 6.2j-i; <http://www.yсу.edu/acad-senate/bylaws.htm>) and *The Code*.
- The Office of Student Life, located in 2101 Kilcawley Center, handles formal complaints related to allegations of student *misconduct*, including cheating and plagiarism. Procedures and timelines are outlined in *The Code*.
- The Office of Graduate Studies and Research, 359 Tod Hall, handles graduate student complaints. Procedures and timelines are outlined in *The Code* and in Section IV of the *Graduate Studies Policy Book* (<http://www.yсу.edu/GradSchool/pdf/policy.pdf>).
- The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, 223 Tod Hall, handles complaints related to discrimination or sexual harassment. Procedures are outlined in *The Code* (also see <http://www.yсу.edu/eod/complaint.shtml>).

All four offices provided the self-study coordinators with logs of formal, written complaints handled during 2005-06 and 2006-07 (students filed no formal, written complaints of discrimination or sexual harassment during the two years preceding the comprehensive evaluation). The logs are available in the Resource Room; complete files are housed in the respective official's office.

The Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs received only one non-conduct-related, formal, written complaint from a student during the 2005–06 and 2006–07 academic years. The complaint, concerning an application-fee waiver, was received on July 6, 2005, and resolved on July 11, 2005.

The President's Office received four formal, written complaints from students during the 2005–06 and 2006–07 academic years (two for each year). Two of the four were referred to the Office of the Provost; one, to the Vice President of Student Affairs; and one to the Dean's Office in the College of Arts and Sciences. Time of resolution for three of the four ranged from four days to a little more than one month. The fourth complaint, pertaining to a student's rent in the University Courtyard Apartments, was received on March 21, 2006, and resolved on May 1, 2006.

