

Office/Contact: Graduate School

Source: SDBOR Curriculum Definitions; SDBOR Policy 2:5; SDBOR Policy 2:8; SDBOR Policy 2:23; SDBOR Policy 2:29

Link: <https://www.sdbor.edu/administrative-offices/academics/academic-affairs-guidelines/Pages/default.aspx>; <https://www.sdbor.edu/policy/Pages/Section-2-Academic-Affairs.aspx>

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**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Policy and Procedure Manual**

SUBJECT: Credit Requirements for Graduate Credential Programs

NUMBER: 2:17

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1. Purpose

This policy sets forth the guidelines establishing the minimum number of credit hours required for graduate programs in accordance with SDBOR policy and aids program officials when proposing new graduate programs or modifying existing programs.

2. Definitions

- a. Capstone Component: an assignment, exercise or project allowing for the assessment of the student's integrated understanding of the program coursework or the discipline as a whole.
- b. Comprehensive Exam: a two-part exam required of doctoral students. The exam is conducted under the supervision of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee and will determine the student's integrated knowledge of the discipline. The first portion is a written exam and the second portion is an oral exam. The student must pass the written portion before proceeding to the oral portion.
- c. Core Coursework: graduate courses required for all students enrolled in the credential program or specialization. Core coursework cannot have an x788, x789, x798, or x898 suffix.
- d. Dissertation: a document prepared by the student containing the research findings gained within x898 coursework and submitted in partial support of fulfilling the degree requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy.
- e. Dissertation Defense: a public, oral examination performed at or near the end of a doctoral program to primarily determine the student's integrated understanding of the discipline and defense of the Dissertation. The exam is conducted within x898 coursework and under the supervision of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee.
- f. Final Oral Exam: a public, oral examination performed at or near the end of a master's program to primarily determine the student's integrated understanding of the discipline and defense of the thesis. The exam is conducted within x798 coursework and under the

supervision of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee.

- g. Graduate Certificate: a self-standing graduate credential that contains a sequence, pattern, or group of academic credit courses that focus upon an area of specialized knowledge or information and have specifically defined student learning outcomes and contains a sub-set of curriculum offered in degree programs.
- h. Graduate Credential: referring to a graduate certificate, master's degree, or doctoral degree.
- i. Graduate Specialization: a designated plan of study, within a master's or doctoral program, which provides the student an alternative to the primary format of the degree program.
- j. Graduate Student Advisory Committee: as described in University Policy 2:27.
- k. Remediation Opportunity: a program afforded to a student who has failed an academic exercise where the student shall: 1) be provided feedback regarding the deficiencies of their performance; 2) be provided resources useful to remediate their deficiencies; and 3) be allowed an appropriate length of time to prepare for the next attempt at the academic exercise.
- l. Thesis: a document prepared by the student containing the research findings gained within x798 coursework and submitted in partial support of fulfilling the requirements of a master's degree (option A).
- m. Transfer Credit: course credit that parallels the scope and depth required for the degree or that meets electives required for the degree and completed at 1) a United States regionally accredited institution (other than the University) or 2) a foreign institution which has standing equivalent to U.S. regional accreditation and is applied to a degree program.
- n. Validated Course: an expired University course that has been determined acceptable for the student's plan of study by the academic unit.

### 3. Policy

#### a. Graduate Credential Programs

- i. To receive a graduate credential, students must be admitted into the graduate program.
- ii. In accordance with SDBOR Policy 2:29, a minimum of 60% of the credits applied toward a graduate credential must be completed at the University. The University may partner, on occasion, with external entities to provide University coursework.
- iii. In accordance with SDBOR Policy 2:29, credential programs may not require that more than 75% of required credits be completed at the University, and all such courses must be clearly stated in the University's graduate catalog.
- iv. All x788, x798, and x898 courses must be completed at the University.
- v. In accordance with SDBOR Policy 2:8, credit applied toward graduate credentials

should be at the 500-level and above.

- vi. In accordance with SDBOR Policy 2:8, no more than 50% of the credits applied toward a master's or doctoral degree may be at the 500-level.
- vii. In accordance with SDBOR Policy 2:8, no more than three (3) credits in workshop courses at the graduate level may be applied toward completion of a master's or doctoral degree. Graduate-level workshop courses are numbered x593, x693, x793, and x893.
- viii. No more than twelve (12) credits earned while a non-graduate credential seeking student may be applied to a graduate credential.
- ix. Validated credits plus credits earned while a non-graduate credential seeking student should not constitute more than 50% of credits on a plan of study.
- x. In accordance with SDBOR Policy 2:29, when requirements of a specialized accrediting agency exceed the requirement stated in this policy or in SDBOR policy, those of the specialized accrediting agency take precedence.
- xi. Core Coursework
  - 1. The graduate certificate curricula should require no fewer than three (3) credits of core coursework.
  - 2. The master's degree curricula should require no fewer than five (5) credits of core coursework.
  - 3. The 90 credit doctoral program curricula should require no fewer than six (6) credits of core coursework. The 60 credit doctoral program curricula should require no fewer than two (2) credits of core coursework.
  - 4. Specializations offered within a master's or doctoral program require no fewer than nine (9) total credits which should be unique from the degree program core coursework and core coursework required by another specialization.

xi. Master's Programs

1. Master's Thesis Option (Option A)

- a. Option A requires no fewer than 30 total credits with no fewer than five (5) credits and no greater than ten (10) credits of x798 coursework. The Final Oral exam must be completed successfully.
- b. Coursework with an x788 suffix may not be used in satisfaction

of Option A.

2. Master's Research/Design Paper Option (Option B)
  - a. Option B requires no fewer than 32 total credits and completion with no fewer than two (2) credits, and no greater than five (5) credits, of x788 coursework.
  - b. Coursework with an x798 suffix may not be used in satisfaction of Option B.
3. Master's Coursework Only Option (Option C)
  - a. Option C requires no fewer than 35 total credits.
  - b. Coursework within an x788 or x798 suffix may not be used in satisfaction of Option C.
4. Master's Coursework Only Option (Option D)
  - a. Option D requires no fewer than 30 total credits
  - b. Option D master's programs are generally considered "professional" and not necessarily designed to support progression into more rigorous academic degrees. The program must conform to the following:
    - i. Establish an advisory board composed of individuals knowledgeable of the business, industry, government or non-profit groups which are likely to employ graduates of the program. The advisory board should meet at least once annually and provide written guidance for program improvement to program officials.
    - ii. Option D master's programs must be specifically approved using normal program approval processes. Only students enrolled in such programs are eligible.
5. Master's programs require completion of a Capstone Component. The Capstone Component must be conducted under the supervision of no fewer than two (2) graduate faculty and approved through normal curriculum processes. Capstone Components must be associated with graduate coursework.
  - a. The Capstone Component for an Option A is the Final Oral Exam. This Exam should be conducted with a presentation of and defense of the thesis to the public. The Graduate Student Advisory Committee may also conduct an interview of the student in executive session.
  - b. The Capstone Component for Options B, C, and D may include

a research paper, oral exam, portfolio of the student's work or other suitable exercise.

xii. Doctoral Programs

1. Doctoral programs require completion of no fewer than 90 credits. A 60-credit program may be completed provided the student has first completed a master's degree in a similar discipline.
2. Doctoral programs must require no fewer than 18 credits of x898 course work.
3. Doctoral programs require completion of a Comprehensive Exam and a Dissertation Defense.
  - a. The Comprehensive Exam is composed of written and oral examination components. The written portion should be successfully completed prior to attempting the oral examination component. Each component must be successfully completed to pass the comprehensive examination. The Comprehensive Exam may be structured in one of the following manners:
    - i. The Graduate Student Advisory Committee will supervise the Comprehensive Exam conducted within x898 coursework.
    - ii. The Comprehensive Exam will compose a course entitled "Comprehensive Exam." The instructor of record will be a graduate faculty member and the examination will be conducted and evaluated by no fewer than three (3) graduate faculty members from the discipline.
  - b. The Comprehensive Exam should be completed no later than the semester prior to, and no fewer than 60 calendar days prior to, the dissertation defense.
  - c. The Dissertation Defense is conducted under the supervision of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee and should be conducted with a presentation of and defense of the dissertation to the public. The Committee may also conduct an interview of the student in executive session.

xiii. Students assigned failing grades for the master's Capstone Component, for either the written or oral component of the Comprehensive Exam or for the Dissertation Defense component, as applicable, should be provided one (1) Remediation Opportunity for each component prior to consideration of dismissal.

xiv. Awarding specializations following degree issuance

1. Specializations may be added following issuance of the degree provided all specialization coursework is completed within the allowed timeframe

for completion of the degree. For example, given that a master's degree should be completed in six (6) years: if Student A enrolls in a master's degree program in Fall 2016 and completes the degree in Fall 2020, Student A must complete all coursework for a specialization by Fall 2022. Validated coursework is not allowed to support specializations following the issuance of the degree.

- xv. Graduate Certificate programs consist of 9 to 12 credit hours.
- xvi. Graduate certificates may be paired together or serve as a stackable credential with credits that apply to a higher level credential.
- xiv. Time Allotments and Expired Coursework
  - 1. Master's and doctoral degree programs should be completed within six (6) and eight (8) years, respectively. If a student's program is not completed within the allowed time, the student will be reviewed by the Director of the Graduate School or designee. The review will be conducted considering the student's entire academic performance and weighed against a) the necessary research, clinical, and/or scholarly abilities to complete their chosen graduate degree and b) the rate of progress toward degree completion at the time of review. The review will include input from the student, Student Advisory Committee Chair (if applicable), Department Head and college dean. The review will result in one of three possible outcomes: 1) Approval of a program completion timetable which includes succinct dates and precise milestones toward degree completion. The program completion timetable must be approved by the student, Graduate Student Advisory Committee, Department Head and Director of the Graduate School or designee. Failure to meet any milestone by the stated date will result in an immediate review of the student's program; 2) Placing the student on academic probation; 3) Dismissing the student from the program.
  - 2. The time allowed to complete the degree will begin the semester of first enrollment. If the student is not continuously enrolled and is re-admitted into the program, the Director of the Graduate School or designee will determine the applicable first semester of enrollment.
  - 3. Coursework at the time of graduation that is older than six (6) years and eight (8) years for master's and doctoral programs, respectively, is considered expired and is ineligible for inclusion on the plan of study. However, expired coursework may undergo a process of validation for use in a plan of study. Validation requires the following conditions:
    - a. The coursework is issued by the University. Courses transferred from other institutions, including other SDBOR institutions, are not eligible for validation.
    - b. The coursework was completed at the graduate level.
    - c. The department offering the course confirms the student's knowledge of the course material is sufficient and current. An

explanation of the method used for this determination and the rationale for choosing the method is required. Approval is required from the Director of the Graduate School or designee.

d. Validation is not allowed for x788, x798 and x898 coursework.

xv. Credit sharing between University graduate credentials

1. Graduate credits used for meeting graduate credential requirements may be shared among credentials determined by the following rules:

a. A doctoral degree using the 60-credit plan may not be paired with a master's degree.

b. A single graduate certificate may be shared, in entirety, with credits for a master's or doctoral degree.

i. Example 1. Master's Program A and Certificate Program B are approved for 30 and 15 credits, respectively. A student could share all 15 certificate credits with the master's program. The student could complete 30 credits and receive two (2) credentials.

c. Otherwise, the maximum allowable credit shared between graduate credentials is 12 credits.

2. Validated credit or course credit with an x789, x888, or x889 suffix may not be shared between graduate credentials.

xvii. Transfer Credit

1. Transfer credit should be a "B" or better ( $\geq 3.0/4.0$ ). The issuing institution must transcript the course using an A-F designation; that is, courses with the pass/fail designation are not eligible for transfer.

2. Coursework applied toward an issued graduate credential at another institution is not eligible to apply toward a University graduate credential.

3. Transfer credit should be transferred equal to or less than the credits awarded by the issuing institution.

4. Transfer credit should be recognized by the issuing institution to fulfill requirements for graduate degrees.

5. If the transcript from the issuing institution does not state the level of the credits, the credits should be transferred at the 500-level. (SDBOR Policy 2:5)

6. Transfer credit should be requested at the time of filing a Plan of Study with the Graduate School and supported by an original transcript from the issuing institution.

7. Transfer credit should be approved by the advisor and/or Graduate Student

Advisory Committee and the Director of the Graduate School or designee.

8. Transfer credit must be issued by a United States regionally accredited university or by a foreign institution which has standing equivalent to U.S. regional accreditation.

4. Procedures

- a. Completion of a separate graduation application is required for each program credential. Graduation applications must be submitted to the Graduate School.

5. Responsible Administrator

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee, is responsible for the annual and ad hoc review of this policy and its procedures. The University President is responsible for approval of this policy and modifications to this policy.

SOURCE: Approved by President on 06/16/2015. Revised; Approved by President on 01/30/2018. Revised; Approved by President on 04/21/2021.