SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Policy and Procedure Manual

SUBJECT: Credit Requirements for Graduate Credential Programs
NUMBER: 2:17

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. 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.

   b. 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.

   c. Graduate Credential: referring to a graduate certificate, graduate minor, master’s degree, or doctoral degree.

   d. Graduate Minor: an area of study within a master’s or doctoral program which enables a student to make an inquiry into a discipline or field of study or to investigate a particular content theme and should be organized around a specific set of objectives. Minors are intended to provide a broad introduction to the subject and therefore develop only limited competency.

   e. Graduate Specialization: a designated plan of study, within a master’s or doctoral program, which provides a student an alternative to the primary format of the degree.

   f. 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.
g. 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. 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 ten (10) 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 professional accreditation exceed the requirement stated in this policy or in SDBOR policy, the accreditation requirements take precedence.

xi. Core Coursework

   1. The graduate minor or 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.
   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 of 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 with 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. The curriculum incorporates a comprehensive component to assess the student’s ability to integrate knowledge acquired throughout the program (e.g. capstone experience).

iii. Option D master’s programs must be specifically approved using normal program approval processes. Only students enrolled in such programs are eligible.

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, from a regionally accredited institution.

xiii. 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 6 years: if Student A enrolls in a master’s degree 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.)

xiv. Graduate Certificate Programs

1. Graduate certificate programs consist of 12 credits including prerequisites (SDBOR Academic Affairs Committee, January 2013).

xv. Graduate Minor Programs

1. Graduate minor programs consist of 18 credits and are limited to students enrolled in master’s and doctoral graduate degree programs.

xvi. 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 Dean of the Graduate School may reconsider the student’s continuation.

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 Dean of the Graduate School will determine the applicable state date.

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 Dean of the Graduate School.

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

xvii. Credit sharing between University graduate credentials

1. Credit can be used for the satisfaction of more than one graduate credential issued by the University and may be paired to share credit as described below.

   a. Each graduate credential may be paired with itself or any other graduate credential. For example, two master’s degrees may be paired or a graduate certificate and Doctor of Philosophy.

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

2. The allowable credit shared between graduate credentials equals the sum of the minimum required credit hours for each credential divided by six (6). The maximum allowed is 50% of either credential program. Decimals will be truncated to a whole number.

   a. Example 1. Programs A and B are approved for 30 credits and 36 credits, respectively. A student could share a maximum of 11 credits between these programs; 30 +36 = 66; 66/6 = 11.

   b. Example 2. Master’s Program A and Certificate Program B are approved for 35 and 12 credits, respectively. A student could share a maximum of six (6) credits between these programs; 35+12=47; 47/6 = 7.8; 7.8 truncates to 7; 7 is greater than 50% of 12; therefore 6 is allowed.

3. Once a graduate credential participates in a credit pairing, the graduate credential may not be paired with a third credential. Credit hours may not be used three (3) times to satisfy graduate credential requirements.

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

xviii. Transfer Credit

1. Transfer credit should be a “B” or better (≥ 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 a 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 student advisory committee and Dean of the Graduate School.

8. Transfer credit must be issued by an accredited university.

4. Procedures

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

b. Validation requires a written request from the student, completed by the department issuing the course, and submission to the Graduate School. Approval of validated coursework is required by the Dean of 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.