

# Program of Study Policies

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## Program of Study

Using the *Graduate Catalog* for the academic year of admission, the student must complete with his/her graduate committee a program of study consisting of all graduate-level courses required for degree completion according to the University-approved requirements and the program requirements. The student and committee must also identify research skill requirements and/or other requirements for degree completion. A student may be required to take an ESL, LSK, or undergraduate course; however, these courses or an audited course cannot be included on a program of study. Courses taken in previous graduate work that fulfill current degree requirements are not part of the current program of study but are listed on the Attachment Sheet ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/grad\\_prog\\_of\\_study\\_attach\\_ed.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/grad_prog_of_study_attach_ed.pdf)) to show fulfillment of the requirement.

## Program of Study Changes

If a program of study submitted to the Graduate School subsequently changes, the student must submit a change of program form to make required additions and deletions.

## Prerequisites

Students may be required by their degree program to take prerequisite or leveling courses. The department will decide when the student has satisfied these requirements. Prerequisites that are part of contingent admission to the program must be met before the student can fulfill graduation requirements.

## Transfer and Sharing of Credit Hours

A total of 9 credit hours can be **shared** between two MSU degrees in which a student is enrolled concurrently (see Dual Degrees in this publication). For those cases other than dual degrees, a total of 9 credit hours can be **shared** or **transferred** to a student's program of study. The three potential sources of credit hours are one or a combination of the following: those earned as a student in a graduate program at another university, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree (**transferred**); those earned in another graduate program at MSU, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree (**shared**); and those earned as an unclassified student at MSU (**transferred** to a degree program). Credit hours can be shared between or transferred to degrees of the same or different level (Graduate Council, November 2011). See Transfer Credit below for more information on the Transfer policy.

## Transfer Credit

Transfer credit hours from other domestic universities, international universities, or military educational programs may be used to fulfill requirements for graduate degrees at MSU provided they meet the following criteria:

1. where appropriate, credit hours were earned in programs fully accredited by the appropriate regional and national accrediting bodies;
2. credit hours contribute to the current program of graduate study; and
3. credit hours were taken within the appropriate time limit for the current program at completion of the degree (reference General Degree Requirements under Master's, Educational Specialist, or Doctor of Philosophy).

Only courses in which grades of B or higher were earned are accepted for transfer. Courses with grades of Pass/Fail or S/U are generally not eligible for transfer. Students can transfer up to 9 hours of courses used to earn a previous degree (per Graduate Council, November 2011).

In all cases, the decision to accept and designate transfer work begins with the student's graduate advisor or committee. Once it is determined that the course meets the required criteria, the student must submit a Transfer Approval Form containing required committee signatures and an official transcript to the Office of the Graduate School (see Transfer Approval Form on the Office of the Graduate School Website). Transfer courses may be given the name that appears on the original transcript but must have the designation of Special Topic (6990/8990). Alternatively, the course may be re-titled using the name, symbol, and number of the equivalent MSU course.

Transfer credit cannot be used to satisfy provisional admission requirements. See the Transfer Credit section under each degree.

## Transfer of Domestic Credit

A student seeking to transfer courses from domestic universities is responsible for submitting transcripts, as well as course descriptions and syllabi as required by the graduate advisor or committee for review. The committee will determine those courses appropriate for transfer based on assessment of course content. Credits transferred from domestic universities will be included in the calculation of the student's final grade point average.

## Transfer of International Credit

A student seeking to transfer courses from universities outside the US is responsible for submitting transcripts, course descriptions, and syllabi in English for committee review. The committee will determine appropriate courses for transfer based on assessment of course content and will work with

the Office of the Graduate School to ensure that the equivalent of a grade of B or higher was earned. The Office of the Registrar will note such courses on the MSU transcript followed by an S. These grades will not be included in the calculation of the student's final grade point average.

## Transfer of Military Credit

A student seeking to transfer courses from military educational programs is responsible for submitting transcripts, course descriptions, and syllabi for committee review. The committee will determine appropriate courses for transfer based on assessment of course content and will work with the Office of the Graduate School to ensure that the equivalent of a grade of B or higher was earned. The Office of the Registrar will note such courses on the MSU transcript followed by an S. These grades will not be included in the calculation of the student's final grade point average. Evaluations by the American Council of Education (ACE) may be used by programs in making decisions concerning the transfer of military courses.

## Course Retake Policy

A student may retake a course if his/her Request to Retake a Course ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/request\\_to\\_retake\\_a\\_course.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/request_to_retake_a_course.pdf)) request is approved. Only one course per degree can be repeated, and this policy applies to any graduate course taken since the beginning of enrollment in the current program. The repeated course must be taken at MSU. A record of both courses taken will remain on the permanent transcript, and both grades will be included in the computation of the final GPA. **No additional program credit hours are generated from a repeated course.**

Some courses are approved for repeated enrollment and credit (e.g., internships, special topics, thesis, dissertation, etc.), and additional program credit hours can be generated in these cases.

## Minor

A minor is a current block of approved coursework derived from a master's or doctoral degree program or concentration other than the major program and must be approved for a master's, educational specialist, or doctoral program (per Graduate Council, March 2005). The option of a minor is at the sole discretion of the major area in which the program is offered and must be designated on the student's program of study. A 3.00 GPA in the minor courses is required.

Up to one-third of the required hours for a minor may be transferred to MSU. Hours transferred toward fulfillment of a minor must be relevant in content to the graduate program when the degree is awarded and must fit within the time-limit requirements for the specific degree (per Graduate Council, September 2005 and March 2010).

A minor in a master's program requires

1. at least 9 hours of graduate coursework;
2. approval of the student's major professor;
3. a MSU faculty member from the minor area serving on the student's graduate committee;
4. approval of the graduate coordinator from the minor area; and
5. any additional requirements as specified by the major and minor areas.

A minor in a doctoral program requires:

1. at least 12 hours of graduate coursework;
2. approval of the student's major professor;
3. approval of the graduate coordinator from the minor area;
4. a member from the minor area on the student's graduate committee; and
5. additional requirements specified by the major and minor areas.

## Combined B.S./M.S. Degree Program or 5-Year Bachelor's/Master's Degree Program

Combined B.S./M.S. or 5th year bachelor's/master's degree programs are offered by Biological Sciences, History, Computer Science and Engineering, and Plant and Soil Sciences.

### Biological Sciences

A student accepted into the combined B.S./M.S. program is allowed to enroll in graduate courses in the student's final undergraduate semester. The student and advisor may select up to 9 hours that will satisfy both undergraduate and graduate requirements. These courses may be split level (i.e., split 4000-6000 level) or 8000 level classes. The student should take the courses for graduate credit (i.e., 6000 level or higher). To register for graduate courses, the student must submit to the Graduate School a completed Undergraduate Request to Enroll in Graduate Courses(s) form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/undergraduate\\_request\\_to\\_enroll\\_in\\_graduate\\_course.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/undergraduate_request_to_enroll_in_graduate_course.pdf)) .. The combination of undergraduate and graduate credit hours may not exceed 13 hours within a semester. After successfully completing the graduate-level classes, the student and undergraduate advisor will complete a request to receive undergraduate credit for the course. After receiving the request, the Registrar will grant credit for the undergraduate course and give the same grade as received for the graduate course. For the case of a split-level class, the transcript will show credit

for both the 4000 and 6000 levels on the transcript. In the case of an 8000 level class, an undergraduate course of the same title will be entered on the transcript to allow dual credit.

See the Department of Biological Sciences in the College of Arts & Sciences section of this publication for complete information.

## Computer Science and Engineering

The 5-Year B.S./M.S. Program enables a student to complete both a bachelor's degree in Computer Science or Software Engineering and a master's degree in Computer Science in approximately five years. The program has the following features.

A student must apply for admission to the program no sooner than the end of the sophomore year (60 hours or more of graded courses). The criteria for admission assesses whether the applicant possesses those qualifications and interests that indicate to the department's Graduate Studies Committee that the applicant will be successful in the MSU M.S. in Computer Science program. The applicant must have an overall GPA of 3.5.

A student must have senior standing to enter the program. A student is classified as an undergraduate until all the requirements for the undergraduate degree are fulfilled, at which point the student is then classified as a graduate student.

A maximum of 9 hours of graduate courses taken after entering the program and prior to completing the bachelor's degree can count toward both the bachelor's degree and the program of study for the Master of Science in Computer Science degree. In order to count toward the master's degree, such courses must conform to other requirements for the M.S. degree. The program will follow procedures established by the Registrar for dual counting. During the senior year, the student will submit a normal admission application package for the M.S. degree, including GRE scores.

See the Department of Computer Science and Engineering in the Bagley College of Engineering section of this publication for complete information.

## History

The History Department offers undergraduate students with an interest in history the opportunity to complete a Master of Arts in History with an additional year of post-baccalaureate study. This program offers both the thesis and non-thesis options outlined in the regular Master of Arts degree program.

Students may apply to the program once they have accumulated 60 hours of graded coursework and 15 hours of graded coursework in history. Applicants must have maintained a 3.5 GPA in both their cumulative undergraduate coursework and their coursework in history. All applications will be reviewed at the start of the semester for which the student has been admitted into the program; students whose GPA has fallen below the minimum requirement or who have failed to complete HI 3903 with a B, will be removed from the program. If a student intends to apply for this program he or she should meet with the graduate coordinator during the advising period prior to the semester for which the student intends to apply for admission to select the appropriate courses. The student must apply to the Graduate School for regular admission into the graduate program during his or her last year of enrollment as an undergraduate.

To register for a graduate course, the undergraduate student completes an Undergraduate Request to Enroll in Graduate Courses(s) form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/undergraduate\\_request\\_to\\_enroll\\_in\\_graduate\\_course.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/undergraduate_request_to_enroll_in_graduate_course.pdf)) and submits the completed form to the Office of the Graduate School.

See the Department of History in the College of Arts & Sciences section of this publication for complete information.

## Plant and Soil Sciences

Highly qualified undergraduates at Mississippi State University are encouraged to consider applying to the combined B.S./M.S. degree program. This program permits concurrent enrollment in the Agronomy or Horticulture B.S. and the Agronomy, Horticulture, or Weed Science M.S. degree programs during the student's final year of undergraduate studies with enrollment in up to nine hours of graduate courses for which undergraduate credit is also awarded. Students need to consult with a potential graduate advisor to ensure graduate credit could be applied to a program of study for the M.S. degree. Application to this program may be made as early as the end of the junior year (i.e., after completion of 90 or more hours of graded undergraduate courses). This option is only available for students pursuing a thesis-based Master of Science degree in Agriculture with a concentration in Agronomy, Horticulture, or Weed Science.

Once the student is accepted into the combined program, the student and the advisor may select up to 9 hours that will satisfy both undergraduate and graduate requirements. These courses may be split-level (i.e., 4000-6000 level) or 8000 level classes, and the student should take the courses for graduate credit (i.e., 6000-level or higher). To do so, he/she must submit a completed Undergraduate Request to Enroll in Graduate Course(s) form ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf\\_forms/undergraduate\\_request\\_to\\_enroll\\_in\\_graduate\\_course.pdf](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf_forms/undergraduate_request_to_enroll_in_graduate_course.pdf)) to the Office of the Graduate School requesting such permission. The combination of undergraduate and graduate credit hours may not exceed 16 hours within a semester. After successfully completing the graduate-level classes, the student will also receive credit for the course at the undergraduate level with the same grade awarded. In the case of a split-level class, the transcript will show credit for both the 4000- and 6000-level on the transcript. In the case of an 8000-level class, a special topics undergraduate course of the same title will be entered on the transcript to allow dual credit.

See the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences section of this publication for complete information.