

# Program of Study Policies

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The Graduate School is responsible for the administration of the University graduate academic policy. This section identifies Graduate School policy related to the development of the student's Program of Study during the degree completion process. Final approval for all academic policies rests within the Graduate School and the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President.

## Program of Study

Using the *Graduate Catalog* for the academic year of admission, the student must develop, with their graduate committee, a program of study consisting of all graduate-level courses required for degree completion according to University-approved program requirements referenced in the Minimum Degree Completion Requirements (see Academic Performance) and those outlined in the respective program description. Changes made to the student's program of study must be approved by the entire committee; the approval should occur prior to the student's registration in course(s), particularly if the course is a substitution for a required program course.

A student may be required to take an English as a Second Language (ESL), Learning Skills (LSK), Cooperative Education (CP), undergraduate course, or audit a course. These courses are not eligible for inclusion in the Program of Study.

A student who has taken a course at the 4000 level at MSU CANNOT enroll in the same course at the 6000 level without explicit permission of the instructor and Graduate Coordinator of the department offering the course, the academic advisory committee, Graduate Coordinator, Department Head, and Academic Dean.

## Minor

A minor is a block of approved coursework offered by a current MSU program or concentration. The hours used to fulfill the minor are **over and above** the required hours for the degree(s) being sought. No sharing of hours is allowed between the graduate degree being sought and the minor pursued. The option of a minor is at the discretion of the minor's program coordinator (and has been approved as a minor by MSU UCCC and IHL) and must be approved by the student's major professor and/or graduate committee. The minor coursework is designated on the student's program of study.

Students should work with their major professor to understand if there are any financial implications associated with pursuing a minor. It is at the discretion of the faculty whether funding can be used to support coursework associated with a minor.

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 and meet all academic performance policies.

A minor in a master's or educational specialist program must meet the following requirements:

- At least 9 hours of graduate coursework in the minor field of study;
- Approval of the student's major professor and/or graduate committee;
- Approval of the Program Coordinator from the minor area;
- An MSU Graduate Faculty member from the minor area who serves as minor professor on the student's graduate committee;
- Fulfillment of any additional requirements as specified by the major and minor areas, and
- A 3.00 or higher GPA on the minor coursework.

A minor in a doctoral program must meet the following requirements:

- At least 12 hours of graduate coursework in the minor field of study;
- Approval of the student's major professor and graduate committee;
- Approval of the Program Coordinator from the minor field of study;
- An MSU Graduate Faculty member from the minor area who serves as minor professor on the student's graduate committee;
- Fulfillment of any additional requirements as specified by the major and minor areas; and
- A 3.00 or higher GPA on the minor coursework.

## Shared Credit, Transfer Credit, and Concurrent Degrees

### Shared Credit (asynchronous credit)

**Shared** credits are defined as those credits earned in another graduate program at MSU that are now being applied to an additional graduate degree program at MSU. Note that shared credit is used when a student is not enrolled concurrently (for such cases, please see the concurrent degree section below).

- Master's and Educational Specialist degrees: If the student wishes to share credit hours *from* a degree program *to* a subsequent program at the Master's or Educational Specialist level, he or she may be allowed to share up to 12 hours of graduate credit. If the current program requires more than 36 hours, the committee may approve for a student to share up to 1/3 of the required credit hours toward the current program of enrollment.
- Doctoral degrees: If the student wishes to share credit hours *from* a previous graduate program *to* a subsequent program at the doctoral level at MSU, he or she may be allowed to share up to 50% of the required credit hours of the current program of enrollment. Shared credit hours may not exceed 50% of the coursework requirement, exclusive of dissertation/research credit.

## Concurrent Degrees

An applicant may apply and be admitted into more than one degree program concurrently. The programs may exist within the same department, or the student may enroll in two programs in two different departments. In the case of the latter, concurrent degree matriculation requires approval of both departments submitted to Graduate School admissions staff.

- Concurrent degrees at the same level: If the student is approved to pursue two degrees concurrently at MSU at the same level, no more than 12 hours of coursework used in one degree program may be applied toward meeting the requirements for the second degree.
- Concurrent degrees at different levels (not within the same program area): If the student is approved to pursue two degrees concurrently at MSU at different levels, no more than 50% of the coursework requirements from the lower degree may be applied toward meeting the requirements for the higher degree.
- Concurrent degrees at different levels (within the same program area): If the student is approved to pursue two degrees concurrently at MSU at different levels within the same program, students may be permitted to exceed the 50% rule to fulfill the requirements of the higher degree, subject to approval by the graduate committee and Graduate Coordinator.

## Transfer Credit

**Transferred** credits are defined as those credits earned in graduate work at another university, whether or not used to satisfy the requirements of a previously earned degree. 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.
3. All transfer coursework must be current and relevant as determined by the student's graduate committee.

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 not eligible for transfer.

Master's or Educational Specialist students can transfer up to 12 hours of graduate credit. If a Master's or Educational Specialist program requires more than 36 hours, the committee may approve transfer credit of up to 1/3 of the required credit hours. At the doctoral level, transfer credit cannot exceed 50% of the coursework requirement. Thesis/Dissertation research credit hours cannot be transferred unless there is an MOU in place that governs a particular student's situation.

In all cases, the decision to accept and designate transfer work is rendered by the student's graduate advisor and committee. Once it is determined that the course meets the required criteria, the student must submit a Transfer Approval form containing required signatures and an official transcript to the Graduate School. Transfer courses are denoted using the name that appears on the original transcript and the MSU equivalent or designation of Special Topic (6990/8990) listed of the equivalent MSU course.

Transfer credit cannot be used in combination with shared credit to exceed the 50% policy regarding graded coursework requirements. Transfer credit cannot be used to satisfy provisional admission requirements. Additional details for domestic, international, and military credit are provided below.

### Transfer of Domestic Credit

A student seeking to transfer courses from a domestic university 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 U.S. is responsible for submitting transcripts, course descriptions, and syllabi in English for review by the relevant academic unit for the course under consideration. Approval is at the sole discretion of the reviewing academic unit which will work with 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 grade. These grades will not be included in the calculation of the student's final grade point average but will count towards the required credit hours for the degree.

### 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 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 grade. These grades will not be included in the calculation of the student's final grade point average but will count towards the required credit hours for the degree. Evaluations by the American Council of Education (ACE) may be used by programs in making decisions concerning the transfer of military courses.

## Course Repeat Policy

A student may retake a course if approved by their major professor, Graduate Coordinator, Department Head if applicable, and Academic Dean if applicable. If a student does not have a major professor, the academic advisor signs as the major professor. 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. If a student earns a "D" or "F" grade, they are allowed to drop that course from their program of study and substitute an equivalent course at the same level pending approval from their department. If they choose to do so, however, they are no longer allowed to retake a second course after a grade of "D" or lower. Per standing policy, a second grade of "D" or lower shall result in dismissal. The initial attempt for the repeated course is still included in the calculation of the student's GPA.

**Note: The repeated course (or program approved equivalent) must be taken at MSU, unless otherwise approved by the Graduate Coordinator, Department Head and/or Academic Dean.**

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.

## Incomplete Grades

Assigning and changing incomplete grades is governed by the academic policy AOP12.12 (<http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/1212.pdf>).