



ACADEMIC AFFAIRS GUIDELINES

Section 2.3	Academic Programs	
Title:	Curriculum and Program Definitions	
Number (Current Format)	Number (Prior Format)	Date Last Revised
2.3.2.1.A	II.F.1, 2.1	10/2018
Reference:	BOR Policy 2.3.2 – New Programs, Program Modifications, Curricular Requests, and Inactivation/Termination Policy BOR Policy 2.3.7.A – Undergraduate General Education Curriculum	
Related Form(s):		

1. Undergraduate Degree Programs

1.1. Bachelor’s Degree

Universities award a bachelor’s degree to a student for satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study. Bachelor’s degree programs shall require one hundred twenty (120) credit hours. The Board of Regents may grant exceptions those cases in which a program must comply with specific standards established by external accreditation, licensure or regulatory bodies or for other compelling reasons approved by the executive director in consultation with the Board of Regents’ president (Board Policy 2.6.1). A diploma and transcript signify the measure of achievement and verify the degree. The bachelor’s degree enables a student to acquire a certain amount of general learning and become proficient in a particular field of study or a profession. The curricular structure of a bachelor’s degree program includes a system general education core curriculum (thirty [30] credit hours per Board Policy 2.3.7), support courses, major courses, and electives.

1.2. Associate Degrees

1.2.1. Associate of Arts Degree/Associate of Science

Associate of Science (A.S.) and Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree are typically two-year transfer degrees. Within Regental institutions, these degrees are often (but not always) complementary to existing four-year bachelor’s degrees in closely aligned academic fields. Universities award an associate degree to a student for satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study. Associate degree programs shall require sixty (60) credit hours. The Board of Regents may grant exceptions those cases in which a program must comply with specific standards established by external accreditation, licensure or regulatory bodies or for other compelling reasons approved by the executive director in consultation with the Board of Regents’ president (Board Policy 2.6.1). The curricular structure of an associate degree program includes a system general education core

curriculum (twenty-four [24] credit ours per Board Policy 2.3.7), support courses, major courses, and electives. Up to sixteen (16) credit hours at the 300 and 400 level may be required. More than sixteen (16) credit hours at the 300 and 400 level may be required if specified by an accrediting agency.

1.2.2. Associate of Applied Science Degree

An Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree is a non-transferable degree. Coursework for such degrees may be transferable to Regental institutions only when a specific articulation agreement exists (see Board Policy Section 2.2). Regental institutions may not offer AAS degrees pursuant to Section 3 of Article XIV of the South Dakota Constitution.

2. Certificates

A certificate program is a sequence, pattern, or group of academic credit courses that focus upon an area of specialized knowledge or information and develop a specific skill set. A certificate may include either undergraduate and/or graduate courses and include courses offered collaboratively with another Regental university. Completion of a certificate appears on student transcripts.

Certificates typically serve one of three purposes: serving as a standalone education credential option for students not seeking additional credentials (i.e., bachelor's or master's degree), serving as a value added credential that supplements a student's major field of study, or serving as a stackable credential with credits that apply to a higher level credential (i.e., associate, bachelor's, or master's degree). Standalone certificates typically address areas of high workforce demand or a specialized body of knowledge. Such certificates require well-defined learning outcomes that provide clear pathways to further education and employment. Proposals for new certificates must identify one or more of these three purposes as justification for authorization of the credential.

Certificate programs are typically a subset of the curriculum offered in degree programs and include previously approved courses. Certificate programs by design are limited in the number of credit hours required for completion. Certificate programs consist of nine (9) to twelve (12) credit hours, including prerequisite courses. Proposals to establish new certificates as well as proposals to modify existing certificates must recognize and address this limit. In rare cases, unique circumstances or standards for licensure will state requirements leading to certificate programs approved for more than twelve (12) credit hours.

3. Graduate Degree Programs

3.1. Doctor of Philosophy

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programs prepare a student to become a scholar; that is, to discover, integrate, and apply knowledge, as well as communicate and disseminate it. A well-prepared doctoral graduate develops the ability to understand and critically evaluate the literature of the field and to apply appropriate principles and procedures to the recognition, evaluation, interpretation, and understanding of issues and problems at the frontiers of knowledge. The doctoral graduate will also have an appropriate awareness of and commitment to the ethical practices appropriate to the field.

A central purpose of scholarship is the extension of knowledge, and students in a doctoral program become scholars by choosing an area of specialization and a professor with whom to work. Individualized programs of study may then be developed and committee members selected cooperatively as course work is completed and research undertaken. When all courses are completed, the research finished, the dissertation written, and all examinations passed, the doctoral graduate should have acquired the knowledge and skills expected of a scholar who has made an original contribution to the field and has attained the necessary expertise to continue to do so.

3.2. Professional Doctoral Degree

The professional doctoral degree requires two or more years of professional study past the baccalaureate degree. This degree prepares an individual for entry into the practice of a recognized profession. Examples of professional doctorates are the M.D., Pharm. D., J.D., DVM, Ed. D., Au.D., and DPT degrees.

3.3. Educational Specialist

The Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree/certificate is a post-master's award recognizing completion of an organized program of study beyond the master's degree that does not meet the requirements for a doctoral degree.

3.4. Master's Degree

In broad terms, the master's degree indicates that the recipient has mastered a program of advanced, specialized study in a particular field. Normally, degree titles indicate one of two major categories. The first category, the Master of Arts (M.A.) and Master of Science (M.S.) degrees, provides an introduction to scholarship activities and research. These degrees often serve the needs of individuals teaching in public schools or community colleges and/or preparation for further graduate study. The second category leads to professional master's degrees, such as the M.Ed. or M.B.A. While similar to the M.A. and M.S., these programs tend to emphasize professional practice.

Despite differences in titles and objectives, all master's degrees share common characteristics. The degree normally requires one to two years of full-time study (or equivalent) and the completion of a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit, depending on the plan of study. Award of the degree depends upon completion of a coherent program designed to ensure mastery of specified knowledge and skills, rather than a random accumulation of credits beyond the baccalaureate degree. The basic components of the degree may vary in emphasis, but generally include a common core in the discipline. The common core typically includes:

- a concentration in a subfield of study;
- cognate courses outside the department as a means of broadening the curriculum or provide needed skills;
- an integrative experience to synthesize the program's content and/or to translate theory into practice such as seminars, practicums or internships, etc.;
- a summative experience to measure achievement and intellectual growth such as a thesis, research paper, and/or comprehensive examination.

4. Plans of Study Within Degrees

4.1. Academic Major

An academic major or primary area of study within a degree program enables students to make in-depth inquiry into a discipline or a professional field of study. Majors consist of a specific set of goals and objectives achieved through a series of courses whose connections define an internal structure and whose sequence advances levels of knowledge and understanding. A major introduces students to a discipline or field of study and related areas through a foundation of theory and method. A major that focuses on a specific discipline draws its courses predominantly from one department. A major that is interdisciplinary or encompasses a professional field of study usually obtains its courses from more than one department.

The number of credit hours required for a major and its organizational structure will vary, depending on whether it aims at disciplinary or professional preparation. Variations are due to the demands of accrediting agencies, certification requirements, professional competence and expectations. Undergraduate majors in the traditional liberal arts commonly require thirty (30)-forty-five (45) credit hours within the discipline. In addition, these majors typically require a specified set of support courses. When combined, these requirements rarely exceed sixty-four (64) credit hours and, once core requirements and other institutional requirements are excluded, the total credit hours of “unique” requirements should not exceed sixty-four (64) credit hours. Students majoring in these fields therefore have opportunities to complete additional structured or elective studies. While programs currently in place may not meet this guideline, proposals to establish new programs as well as proposals to modify existing programs must recognize and fall within these limits.

In some cases, an undergraduate major combines with a specific set of supporting courses to develop a “composite” major. Programs in this category, such as most programs in secondary education, include a major plus a minor or, in some cases, even a double major. Requirements for offerings in this category therefore should follow from the larger pattern being set out in these guidelines. Specifically, those developing composite majors should demonstrate, if possible, that the major as a whole establishes a program of study with requirements comparable to those at other universities. Further, all proposals of majors that fall in this area must establish that the separate parts are in line with the requirements for separate programs. As an example, for a university proposing an offering in math education, the math requirements for this major should be similar to or less than those required of students pursuing the B.A./B.S. in mathematics. Further, the requirements in education should be comparable to those of the other secondary education programs on campus. While programs currently in place may not meet this guideline, proposals to establish new programs as well as proposals to modify existing programs must recognize and address these limits.

Undergraduate majors in professional fields require a range of credit hours. In some cases, accreditation standards may establish expected ranges. In other cases, licensure or certification requirements may set these standards. However, in all cases, comparisons with other programs in the same professional field should recognize and follow

established limits. Proposals for new professional majors or proposals to modify existing professional majors must address the specific impacts of accreditation/licensure requirements as well as the comparative requirements established and commonly followed at other colleges and universities. While programs currently in place may not meet this guideline, proposals to establish new programs as well as proposals to modify existing programs must recognize and must address these limits.

4.2. Double Majors & Second Degree

4.2.1. Students shall earn a double major by successfully completing the established program requirements that are approved by the Board of Regents.

4.2.2. Students seeking to complete a double major resulting in the awarding of a second degree, must complete a minimum of an additional thirty (30) credit hours.

4.3. Academic Minor

An academic minor enables a student to make an inquiry into a discipline or field of study beyond the major or to investigate a particular content theme. Minors provide a broad introduction to a subject and therefore develop only limited competency. Minors consist of a specific set of objectives achieved through a series of courses. Course offerings occur in a specific department or may draw from several departments (as in the case of a topical or thematic focus). In some cases, all coursework within a minor is proscribed; in others cases, a few courses may form the basis for a wide range of choices. The award of an academic minor is dependent upon a student completing the requirements for an academic major and all graduation requirements; a minor cannot be awarded as an independent credential. A student may not receive a minor and major in the same fields.

Minors by design are limited in the number of credit hours required for completion. Minors typically consist of eighteen (18) credit hours, including prerequisite courses. Proposals to establish new minors as well as proposals to modify existing minors must recognize and address this limit.

The majority of Regental system academic programs require one hundred and twenty (120) credits to graduate; minors exceeding the eighteen (18) credit hour thresholds significantly hinder students' ability to graduate in one hundred and twenty (120) credit hours. In rare cases, unique circumstances or standards for licensure will state requirements leading to academic minors approved for more than eighteen (18) credit hours.

4.4. Specialization

A specialization is a designated plan of study within an existing degree program. It provides a student an alternative to the primary format of the major or it may be one of several tracks within a broad major. Specializations contain courses within the discipline(s) of the existing program. Specializations appear in the institutional catalog and on the transcript. Majors that offer specializations typically have one-third to two-thirds of the credits in common with the remaining course work fulfilling the requirements of the specialization(s) offered.

4.5. Emphasis

An emphasis is a concentration within a major accomplished by individual student choices within a plan of study. For example, within a major on adult health the student may focus on the older adult. An emphasis is not a separate program. A catalog may describe an emphasis but not detail it as a specific plan of study. Transcripts do not specify emphases.

NOTE: THESE GUIDELINES SERVE AS AN INTERNAL WORKING DOCUMENT AS PROGRAMATIC DEVELOPMENT AND MODIFICATION OCCURS. JUST AS THESE GUIDELINES DO NOT PROSCRIBE SPECIFIC LIMITS THAT CANNOT BE ABROGATED WITH JUSTIFICATION, THEY ALSO DO NOT PROVIDE LICENSE TO MEET THESE THE UPPER LIMITS ESTABLISHED IF COMMON PRACTICE IS DIFFERENT. IN SUM, THESE GUIDELINES BEGIN THE PROCESSES BUT THE COMMON PRACTICES AND THE COMMON REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACADEMY PROVIDE EQUALLY COMPELLING LIMITS.

SOURCE:

AAC December 2015; AAC October 2017; AAC April 2018; May 2018 (Clerical); October 2018 (Clerical).