

Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges

Academics

POLICY NAME: Academic Degrees and Programs

POLICY NUMBER: 4140

A. PURPOSE

To establish consistent definitions and descriptions for the academic degrees and programs offered by the Nebraska State College System.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **Baccalaureate Degree:** The academic award bestowed on an undergraduate student who completes one hundred twenty (120) unduplicated credit hours and meets other academic requirements, including, but not limited to, sufficient credits in the major, general studies, upper division level courses, and a minimum grade point average overall and in the major.
2. **Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) Major:** An academic program that ranges from thirty (30) to forty (40) credit hours of coursework that will prepare individuals for management and/or leadership opportunities.
3. **Certificate:** A cluster of undergraduate courses that develops specific knowledge and/or skills and supports an occupational outcome or industry certification. This credential does not itself lead to a degree. An undergraduate certificate shall range from nine (9) to fifteen (15) credits of predominantly upper division courses.
4. **Certificate of Advanced Studies:** A cluster of graduate courses that concentrate on specific knowledge and/or skills aligned to an area of specialization or industry certification. These courses are available to non-degree seeking graduate students; however, they may also be used toward the completion of a graduate degree. A certificate of advanced studies shall include a minimum of nine (9) credit hours.
5. **Comprehensive Examination:** A summative assessment over a program of study, administered in oral or written form that includes questions regarding course work and other materials relevant to a graduate student's field of study.
6. **Comprehensive Major:** An academic program that represents an expanded study of a discipline and leads to an undergraduate degree. It may consist of a

core and an option and ranges from at least forty-eight (48) credit hours to no more than fifty-seven (57) credit hours.

7. **Core:** A cluster of courses in a comprehensive major that comprises the foundation for all options and shall include a minimum of twelve (12) credit hours. A core leads to an undergraduate degree when combined with an option/concentration.
8. **Endorsement:** A series of courses which leads to teacher certification in accordance with standards established by the Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE).
9. **General Studies:** A series of courses designed to assist the student in acquiring the intellectual foundation that will last for a lifetime of learning. General studies coursework will result in the graduation of students who are intellectually curious, proficient in their own field of study, knowledgeable and informed in the affairs of the world, and able to participate in society in a manner that will emphasize the role of individual contributions in the development of a better world.
10. **Graduate Degree:** The academic award bestowed on a student who completes a minimum of thirty (30) credit hours in an academic discipline and meets other academic requirements, including, but not limited to, completion of a baccalaureate degree, sufficient credits in the graduate core, and a minimum overall grade point average.
11. **Graduate Major:** A set of core courses that comprise the foundation for a graduate degree and addresses the established accreditation and/or professional graduate standards for the program.
12. **Focus Area:** A cluster of courses within a graduate program that concentrate on a specific area of specialization within a larger academic discipline. A focus area shall include a minimum of twelve (12) credit hours.
13. **Internship:** A meaningful work experience that allows the student to apply classroom theoretical knowledge and skills in a practical work setting and develop related job skills under the guidance of trained and established professionals.
14. **Minor:** An academic program that concentrates on a subject but does not itself lead to an undergraduate degree. A minor shall range from eighteen (18) to twenty-one (21) credit hours.
15. **Option/Concentration:** A series of courses within a comprehensive major that, when combined with a core of courses, if required, leads to an undergraduate degree. An option or concentration is a sub-specialty of a major and shall include at least eighteen (18) credit hours.
16. **Scholarly/Creative/Action Research Project:** A scholarly or creative work that does not necessarily conform to the format of a thesis. The project should relate to a graduate student's area of interest and professional practice.

17. Subject Major: An academic program that concentrates on an academic discipline and ranges from thirty (30) to thirty-six (36) credit hours. A subject major shall be combined with a minor or second major to lead to an undergraduate degree.

18. Thesis: A document that presents a graduate student's formal research and findings on a topic related to the graduate student's field of interest. The format should conform to the most current professional standard of the discipline.

C. POLICY

1. General Degree Requirements

- 1.1. All academic degrees and programs in the Nebraska State College System shall conform to the following descriptions and definitions when prescribing degree, program and graduation requirements.
- 1.2. Degrees and programs are based upon a unit of educational measurement referred to as a credit hour, which is defined in Board Policy 4141.
- 1.3. Supportable and articulated requests for exemptions to the established definitions and descriptions for academic degree and programs must be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval and will be documented in Section 4 below.

2. Baccalaureate Degree Requirements

- 2.1. Upper Division Coursework
 - The Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees shall include a minimum of thirty-six (36) credit hours of upper division coursework.
 - The Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree is designed to accommodate transfer students who have completed a technical associate degree from an accredited community or technical college or the equivalent in prior course work and life experience and shall include a minimum of twenty (20) credit hours of upper division coursework.
- 2.2. Teacher Education Endorsements
 - The number of credit hours required to complete a teaching endorsement shall not exceed the minimum credit hours required by NDE by more than ten percent (10%) for field endorsements with fifty (50) or more minimum credit hours established.
 - The number of credit hours required to complete a teaching endorsement shall not exceed the minimum credit hours required by NDE by more than twenty percent (20%) for field endorsements with

fewer than fifty (50) minimum credit hours established and all subject endorsements.

2.3. General Studies

- The general studies program shall be clearly aligned to the College's established student learning outcomes and range from thirty (30) to thirty-seven (37) credit hours.
- The number of general studies program credit hours may be extended up to forty (40) if an upper division (300 or above) capstone course is included in the requirements and provides students with a culminating general studies experience.
- Upper division coursework may be included as options for students to select to meet general studies requirements, but only the general studies capstone course shall be mandated as an upper level course requirement.

3. Graduate Degree Requirements

Programs may include a culminating experience, such as a thesis, internship, comprehensive examination, a scholarly/creative/action research project, nationally normed instruments, simulations, practicums or other valid experiences appropriate to a student's degree program as determined by the discipline and/or a student's graduate committee.

4. Approved Academic Program Exemptions

- 4.1. Teacher education field endorsement programs may require more than one hundred twenty (120) credit hours for degree completion.
- 4.2. The Certified Public Account (CPA) program may require more than one hundred twenty (120) credit hours for degree completion.
- 4.3. The WSC Industrial Technology comprehensive major may require more than the current limit of fifty-seven (57) credit hours; approved for sixty-three (63) credit hours – April 2022.

FORMS/APPENDICES:

None

SOURCE:

Policy Adopted: February 1995

Policy Revised: June 2011, March 2015, January 2016, September 2016, June 2017, January 2020, January 2021, January 2022, March 2022, April 2022