

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: New Programs, Program Modifications, and Inactivation/Termination

NUMBER: 2.3.2

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards, processes, and procedures by which academic curricula and programs receive approval and modification. This policy is designed to ensure all programming and curriculum are of the highest quality, facilitate student success, increase workforce and strategic alignment, and mitigate duplication.

B. DEFINITIONS

- 1. Board of Regents:** Defined as the constitutional body responsible for governing the Unified System of Public Higher Education in South Dakota, which encompasses its supervision, coordination, management, and regulation. Board of Regents Policy 1.1.1, 1.1.2 and SDCL § 13-49 through § 13-53 provides the authority to govern academic programming.
- 2. Institution:** Defined as one of the six (6) universities: Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, South Dakota State University, and University of South Dakota.
- 3. Program and Curriculum Terminology:**
 - 3.1. Academic Program:** This is defined as undergraduate (associate or bachelor) and graduate/professional (master, specialist, doctorate) degrees approved and offered at each of the Regental institutions.
 - 3.2. Academic Certificate:** A program comprised of undergraduate, graduate, medical or law credit hours typically centered upon a focused area of study. The coursework required may be embedded within the degree, or it may be independent of a degree.
 - 3.3. Accelerated Graduate Program:** An accelerated graduate program is a graduate program at a Regental institution that allows a student to count specific courses for undergraduate and graduate credit simultaneously.
 - 3.4. Undergraduate Degree:** A student's primary area of study at the associate or bachelor's level:
 - 2.3.1. Associate Degree:** A program comprised of undergraduate credit hours, typically with a combination of focused area of study (major) courses and general education courses. The program conforms to the commonly accepted minimum program length of 60 credit hours.
 - 2.3.2. Bachelor's Degree:** A program comprised of undergraduate credit hours, typically with a combination of focused area of study (major) courses and

general education courses. The program conforms to the commonly accepted minimum program length of 120 credit hours.

3.5. Graduate Degree: A student's primary area of study at the master's, specialist's or doctoral level:

2.4.1. Master's Degree: A program comprised of advanced study and course work beyond the bachelor's degree, typically in academic fields or professional fields.

2.4.2. Specialist's Degree: A program which requires a minimum of 60 credit hours beyond a baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 30 credit hours beyond a master's degree.

2.4.3. Doctoral Degree: The program is the highest academic qualification and is typically in research fields or professional fields.

3.6. Specialization: A designated plan of study within an existing degree program or major, 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. Specializations may attach to only one major. Associate degree programs shall not have specializations. Completion of the academic specialization shall be indicated on the student's academic transcript.

3.7. Minor: A designated plan of student enabling a student to make broad but limited inquiry into a discipline or field of study beyond the major. Minors are only awarded in conjunction with completion of a degree program and the awarding of a bachelor's degree. Completion of the minor shall be indicated on the student's academic transcript.

3.8. 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. Emphasis shall not print on the transcript.

3.9. Transcript: A transcript is documentation of a student's permanent academic record.

4. Program Actions:

4.1. Intent to Plan: A preliminary request to plan a new undergraduate (associate or bachelor) and graduate/professional (master, specialist, doctorate) degree program.

4.2. Full Proposal – Degree: A proposal requesting authorization to implement a new undergraduate (associate or bachelor) and graduate/professional (master, specialist, doctorate) degree program.

4.3. Full Proposal – Academic Certificate/Specialization/Minor: A proposal requesting authorization to implement a new academic certificate, specialization, or minor.

4.4. Inactive: An inactive program is a program a university has authority to offer, but the program does not admit new students and has not formally terminated. A presumption exists that inactive status is a temporary status; universities review inactive programs periodically to determine the feasibility of reactivating or terminating the program.

- 4.5. Minor Program Modification:** Changes to courses (additions, revisions, or deletions) that do not change the nature of the program, distribution of courses in the program, or total credit hours required for the program.
- 4.6. Substantive Program Modification:** Changes to total credits (required in discipline, supportive courses, elective courses, or required for the program), program name, existing specialization, CIP code, or other similar changes.
- 4.7. Teach-Out:** A program designated as inactive that is determined for program closure, is placed in Teach-Out. During the Teach-Out stage, a comprehensive plan (in compliance with regional accreditation requirements) will be developed by the university to ensure all students are guided through options to complete or transfer to another program and appropriate options for all human, facility, and fiscal resources are identified.
- 4.8. Program Closure:** A planned termination of a program.

C. POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Board of Regents Policy 1.1.1, 1.1.2 and SDCL § 13-49 through § 13-53 provides the authority to govern academic programming.
2. Approval of an intent to plan does not overwrite the Full Proposal process and does not guarantee approval of the Full Proposal.
3. The Board of Regents will receive the Full Proposal and act on that proposal.
4. If the Board of Regents approves the Full Proposal and the university is seeking accreditation, this approval allows the university to proceed toward accreditation.
5. Approval of a new program does not indicate that the SDBOR or the university have identified the program as a funding priority.
6. The Board of Regents approves academic programs that are recorded on a transcript, including specializations, certificates, undergraduate minors, undergraduate degrees and majors, graduate degrees, and location of study.
7. The Board of Regents encourages academic departments and colleges to be innovative and to explore creative programming intended to meet the workforce demands and that serve the academic disciplines, students, and the state of South Dakota.
8. The Board of Regents discourages duplication of programs except in cases where regional or state workforce demand provides strong rationale for additional offerings. The university requesting the program must provide justification within the full proposal. The Regents may not approve given the duplication of programming.
9. All program requests should consider the academic program request with these critical elements: Strategic Impact, Academic Quality, Student Success, Financial Health and Internal and External Market Evaluation.
10. Academic certificates, specializations and minors are designed to support the system workforce, increase student skills, address student demand for a particular area of study, and facilitate student viability in an area of interest.

11. Accelerated Graduate Programs: Accelerated graduate programs accepting thirteen (13) total credit hours up to a maximum of twenty-five (25) total transfer credit hours require formal approval by the Board of Regents (See Academic Affairs Guideline Form 2.20).
12. A program may only be in an inactive status for a maximum of five years before final action must be taken to re-open or close (Program Closure). The exception will be if a program is identified for program closure due to program productivity per BOR Policy 2:34.
13. All program actions must comply with the university accrediting body, and program accreditation body (for those with special accreditation).

D. NEW PROGRAM REQUEST TIMELINE AND OVERVIEW

1. New Program

1.1. Initial Program Exploration: Each university will define the internal process through which new programs are requested. If the internal university process approves the request, then the university shall proceed to the Intent to Plan step.

1.2. Intent to Plan:

1.2.1. Step 1: Intent to Plan: The university will complete the intent to plan form. The BOR Executive Director (or designee) will review the plan and act upon that intent to plan. The intent to plan if approved will move to the next step.

1.2.2. Step 2: Intent to Plan: The approved intent to plan form shall move to the Academic Affairs Council (AAC). The universities shall provide this intent to plan to the appropriate faculty and academic leadership for feedback. AAC will provide appropriate feedback, strategic consultation, and collaboration.

1.2.2.1. Timeline: The university has 24 months following the review by AAC to proceed to submit the Full Proposal. If a Full Proposal is not received by this deadline, it will be inactivated.

1.2.2.2. Exemption to Intent to Plan: An Intent to Plan is not required for associate degree programs that meet the following criteria and align with the institutional mission:

1.2.2.2.1. The program is a two-year equivalent of an existing bachelor's degree program currently approved at the university, or

1.2.2.2.2. The program proposal has 80% of the curriculum common with an existing bachelor's degree program currently approved for the university, or

1.2.2.2.3. The program is stackable to two or more bachelor's degree programs approved for the university, or

1.2.2.2.4. The BOR Executive Director determines the program will have an immediate impact on an emerging critical workforce shortage area in South Dakota as documented by the university.

1.2.3. Step 3: BOR academic leadership will provide a report to BOR Committee A regarding all intent to plan requests submitted. A report to the full Board of Regents will be placed under Routine Informational Items.

1.3. Full Program Proposal:

1.3.1. Step 1: Full Program Proposal: The full proposal application shall go to the BOR academic affairs staff who will review the submission to ensure it is complete, comprehensive, and within the university mission. The full proposals will include feedback from university academic leadership, faculty, enrollment management and finance and administration.

1.3.2. Step 2: Full Program Proposal: The full proposal application will move to AAC. AAC will provide appropriate insights, recommendations, and feedback to the university. If a proposed program duplicates another university program, AAC can request that the proposal be held for additional consideration at a future meeting.

1.3.3. Step 3: Full Program Proposal: If AAC recommended additional review, the university will submit back to AAC an updated version of the application proposal. Upon agreement, the proposal shall move to a final review by the university President.

1.3.4. Step 4: Full Program Proposal: Required graduate external review process (BOR Policy 2.3.3) unless waived by the BOR Executive Director (or designee) shall be processed.

1.3.5. Step 5: Full Program Proposal: At the next appropriate Council of Presidents (COPS) meeting, BOR academic leadership will provide the full proposal application as a part of the Board of Regents Agenda review. If there are concerns, a President may request a discussion.

1.3.6. Step 6: Full Program Proposal: BOR academic leadership will submit to BOR as an agenda item for consideration during their next meeting. During the BOR meeting, the university may be asked to provide additional information or respond to questions about the proposal.

1.3.7. Step 7: Full Program Proposal: The BOR will act upon the full proposal application. If denied, there is no further action. If approved, the BOR academic affairs staff will complete the necessary technical processing for the program to launch.

2. New Academic Certificates, Specializations, and Minors

The process to request a new academic certificate, specialization, and/or minor shall be governed by Academic Affairs Guidelines.

2.1. Initial Academic Certificate/Specialization/Minor Exploration: Each university will define the internal process through which new academic certificates, specializations, and minors are requested. If the internal university process approves the request, then the university shall proceed to the Full Proposal step.

2.1.1. Certifications

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/professional 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 allow a certificate to be approved for more than twelve (12) credit hours.

2.1.2. Specializations

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. A specialization may attach to only one major. Associate degree programs shall not have specializations. While no minimum or maximum number of credits exists for a specialization, universities should align credit hours with current university and system policies and guidelines on academic majors and minors.

2.1.3. Minors

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.

Per BOR Policy 2.6.1, degree seeking students may complete requirements for a minor at any Regental university that has been approved to grant that minor. This minor will be recorded on the transcript in conjunction with a degree/major at that university or a degree/major at any other Regental university. A minor will only be recorded on the transcript in conjunction with a degree and major. A minimum of 50% of the minor program must be completed at the institution granting the degree.

2.2. Full Proposal:

- 2.2.1.** Full Program Proposal is submitted to BOR academic affairs staff who will review the submission to ensure it is complete and comprehensive.
- 2.2.2.** Full Program Proposal is submitted to AAC by the university and reviewed. AAC will provide appropriate insights, recommendations, and feedback to the university. AAC can request that the proposal be held for additional consideration at a future meeting.
- 2.2.3.** Full Program Proposal is updated based on feedback from AAC. The university President conducts the final review of the proposal.
- 2.2.4.** Full Program Proposal is submitted to the Council of Presidents and Superintendents (COPS) by the university and reviewed.
- 2.2.5.** Full Program Proposal is submitted to BOR as a consent agenda item for their next meeting.
- 2.2.6.** If approved, the BOR academic affairs staff will complete the necessary technical processing for the academic certificate, specialization, or minor to launch.

E. PROGRAM MODIFICATION TIMELINE AND OVERVIEW

1. Minor Modification

The minor program modification process shall be governed by Academic Affairs Guidelines.

2. Substantive Modification

The substantive program modifications process shall be governed by Academic Affairs Guidelines.

3. Program Revisions

Any revisions to a currently approved academic program exempted from the intent to plan and full proposal will be reported and approved by the Regents during a regularly scheduled meeting. Exemption from the full program request is very limited and must be approved by the Executive Director. AAC Guidelines outline information regarding the process to be followed by the institutions.

F. PROGRAM MORATORIUM AND SUNSET TIMELINE AND OVERVIEW

1. Inactivation/Termination

- 1.1.** Program Inactivation: The process to inactivate a program shall be governed by Academic Affairs Guidelines.
- 1.2.** Program Termination: The process to terminate a program shall be governed by Academic Affairs Guidelines.
- 1.3.** Site Termination: The process to terminate a site shall be governed by Academic Affairs Guidelines.

FORMS / APPENDICES:

- [AAC Form 2.3.2.1.F\(Form\)](#) – Accelerated Graduate Program Request Form
- Definition References:
 - [Higher Learning Commission Policy Book](#)
 - [National Center for Education Statistics – Glossary](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Education – Structure of U.S. Education](#)

SOURCE:

BOR May 1993; BOR January 2002; BOR December 2003; BOR August 2005; BOR March 2017; BOR December 2018; BOR March 2022; BOR October 2023.