

# SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

## Policy Manual

**SUBJECT:** Academic Program Student Credit Hour Requirements

**NUMBER:** 2.6.1

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### **A. PURPOSE**

This policy endorses the requirement for academic quality by the accrediting organization ensuring students receive optimum transfer of knowledge, competencies, and experience deemed essential for degrees conferred by the degree granting institution, certify that students have met institutional and program standards, and provide faculty with the basis to act as a reference for students seeking employment.

### **B. DEFINITIONS**

- 1. Academic Program:** This is the Degree, Major and as applicable the Specialization approved by the Board of Regents for the degree-granting institution.
- 2. Accrediting Institution:** Holding accreditation from one of the following regional accrediting bodies, unless otherwise specified: Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).
- 3. Course Student Load:** The number of allowable credit hours per semester, term.
- 4. Credits in Residence:** A course offered by any of the degree-granting institutions at any approved site using any approved method of delivery for the approved academic program.
- 5. Degree-Granting Institution:** A Regental institution approved to offer an academic program to degree-seeking students.
- 6. Degree-Granting Institutional Credits:** An institutional credit is a credit offered by the degree granting institution.
- 7. Degree-Seeking Student:** A student that has been admitted to a program of study by the degree granting institution.
- 8. Home Institution:** This is the primary degree-seeking academic program Regental institution for the degree-seeking student.
- 9. Host Institution:** This is a secondary degree-seeking academic program or minor at another Regental institution that a degree-seeking student can attend.
- 10. Program:** This policy applies to all undergraduate (associate or bachelor) and graduate/professional (master, specialist, doctorate) degrees.

**11. Transfer Credits:** The accrediting organization allows for external and internal Regental transfer of credit by degree-seeking students per BOR Policy 2.2.2 (series). These credits are not considered credits in residence.

**12. Validated Credits:** Credit earned for college-level courses by validation methods such as Credit by Exam, CLEP, AP, portfolio, etc. within the Regental system will not be considered “credits in residence.”

**C. PRINCIPLES, EXPECTATIONS AND 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. The academic program of study will implement various teaching practices that may include high impact practices and other in-depth study within their major ensuring students are provided quality education preparing the student for the workforce.
3. The university shall, where appropriate, implement best practices, curriculum programming that enhances the overall program, and reflect recommendations where they advance student outcomes.
4. The accrediting organization does require a percentage of credits to be provided by the degree-granting institution, and therefore, this policy will document the requirements of the credits in residence.

**D. UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE GRANTING INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENTS**

1. Each baccalaureate level degree program offered shall require one hundred twenty (120) credit hours and each associate level degree program offered shall require sixty (60) credit hours. Exceptions may be granted for 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. All programs as of June 30, 2012, must adhere to these requirements.
2. Minimum number of total credits that must be earned from the degree-granting institution shall be:

Baccalaureate	25% of the total required credits
Associate	25% of the total required credits
Certificate	50% of the total required credits

Those certificates that are system certificates shall be exempt from this credit hour requirement. In addition, when the requirements set by a specialized accrediting agency exceed the requirements set forth in this policy, those of the specialized accrediting agency take precedence.

3. Number of the last credits earned preceding completion of the degree that must be earned from the degree-granting institution shall be:

Baccalaureate	15 of the last 30 hours
Associate	8 of the last 15 hours

The institution chief academic officer may make exceptions to this requirement in those cases where there are unique factors, such as participation in an approved study abroad program or in other similar authorized experiences.

4. Minimum number of credits specified in the major or minor requirements that must be completed at the degree granting institution shall be 50 percent. However, this requirement may be waived for students enrolled in common courses offered by one of the other Regental universities. In addition, the institution chief academic officer may make exceptions to this requirement for individuals based on the student's prior learning experiences, or internal Regental system transfer courses that have been approved and equated to the degree granting institution. At no time can the exceptions exceed 10 percent of the requirements.
5. With prior approval by the Board of an authorizing inter-institutional agreement degree seeking students at one institution may complete requirements for and may have transcribed a major offered at the partner Regental institution. This major will be recorded on the student's transcript in conjunction with a degree/major at the student's home university. These majors from a second/host Regental institution will only be recorded on the transcript in conjunction with a degree and major at the student's home institution.
6. 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.
7. Student course load status is based on the number of credit hours for which a student is enrolled (this applies to fall, spring, and summer semesters).

½ Time Status	6 credit hours minimum
¾ Time Status	9 credit hours minimum
Full Time Status	12 or more credit hours
Overload Status	19 or more credit hours

To be eligible for overload status, a student must have a 2.70 cumulative grade point average and approval by the Dean of the student's division/college at the home institution.

8. Undergraduate Student Course Load Status for Determining FICA Exemptions and Exemptions from South Dakota Re-Employment: For the purposes of determining undergraduate student employee exemptions under §31.3121(b)(10) of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) and Revenue Procedure 2005-11, undergraduate students must take a minimum of 6 credit hours in the fall, spring and summer terms.

Exemptions from South Dakota Re-Employment should follow the same guidelines as FICA Exemptions in accordance with FUTA standards. See also Board Policy 5.6.

#### **E. GRADUATE INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENTS**

1. Minimum percentage of degree granting institutional credit hours in the graduate degree program that must be completed from the degree granting institution: 60 percent.
2. Maximum percentage of degree granting institutional credit hours in the graduate degree program that may be required from the degree granting institution: 75 percent.
3. Program may require that certain courses be completed from the degree granting institution. Courses that must be completed from the degree granting institution must be specified in the degree granting institution's graduate catalog.
4. When the requirements set by a specialized accrediting agency exceed the BOR requirements, those of the specialized accrediting agency take precedence.
5. To be eligible for overload status, a student must have approval by the Graduate Dean at the student's home institution. The Graduate Dean at the home institution may certify that a student enrolled for less than 9 credit hours is to be considered full time for purposes of awarding assistantships and tuition reduction.
6. Graduate student course load is based on the number of credit hours for which a graduate student is enrolled. Each institution determines graduate course load status based on individual program requirements.
7. Graduate Student Course Load Status for Determining FICA Exemptions and Exemptions from South Dakota Re-Employment: For the purposes of determining graduate student employee exemptions under §31.3121(b)(10) of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) and Revenue Procedure 2005-11, graduate students must take a minimum of 5 credit hours in the fall, spring, and summer terms. Exemptions from South Dakota Re-Employment should follow the same guidelines as FICA Exemptions in accordance with FUTA standards. See also Board Policy 5.6.

#### **F. REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION**

Each degree-granting institution will have a formal process for requesting an exception to these guidelines. This process may require the System Academic Vice President or designee to approve if required by the institution.

**REFERENCES:**

- BOR Policy Manual Section 2.2.2 – Transfer Policies

**FORMS / APPENDICES:**

None

**SOURCE:**

BOR January 1999; BOR August 2002; BOR June 2004; BOR August 2005; BOR May 2009; BOR October 2011; BOR December 2011; BOR December 2013; BOR April 2015; BOR December 2020; BOR August 2022; August 2022 (Clerical); BOR August 2023; October 2023 (Clerical); BOR May 2024.