



# ACADEMIC AFFAIRS GUIDELINES

<b>Section 2.3</b>		Academic Programs	
<b>Title:</b>		Curriculum and Program Overview	
<b>Number (Current Format)</b>	<b>Number (Prior Format)</b>	<b>Date Last Revised</b>	
2.3.2.1.A	II.F.1, 2.1	05/2025	
<b>Reference:</b>	<a href="#">BOR Policy 2.3.2</a> New Programs, Program Modifications, Curricular Requests, and Inactivation/Termination Policy <a href="#">BOR Policy 2.3.7</a> Undergraduate General Education Requirements <a href="#">AAC Guideline 2.3.7.A</a> Undergraduate General Education Curriculum <a href="#">BOR Policy 2.6.2</a> Awarding of Degrees, Graduation Dates and Catalog of Graduation <a href="#">AAC Guideline 2.6.2.B</a> Transcript Designation Guidelines		
<b>Related Form(s):</b>			

## 1. Purpose

Programs and the subsequent curriculum identify both the Regental system and university requirements set forth to fulfill a credential. This guideline serves to establish additional clarification for both the institution and their students.

## 2. Governance

No language in these guidelines abrogates the requirements of BOR policies governing academics, or other applicable laws or regulations. These procedures must be implemented and enforced consistent with all applicable BOR and institutional policies, as well as applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

## 3. Definitions

All policy programming definitions can be found in BOR Policy 2.3.2, 2.3.7, 2.6.1 and 2.6.2.

**3.1 Core Curriculum:** A set of required courses or disciplinary or topical areas required of all students within the major to develop knowledge, skills and ways of thinking.

**3.2 Degree Type:** Recognized by the US Department of Education, this is by degree level and the type of degree awarded (e.g., Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science in Education, etc.).

**3.3 Elective Courses:** Electives courses may be chosen by the student to complete the number of credit hours required by their program of study, after they have completed all major requirements.

**3.4 Program of Study:** An academic pathway of courses leading to a degree in a specific discipline.

**3.5 Student Plan of Study:** A list of course requirements and other program elements a student selects per semester and for the academic year to complete their degree requirements outlined in the program of study. The list of undergraduate or graduate requirements is outlined in the students declared academic catalog.

**3.6 Support Courses:** Courses that complement the courses within the major and are often prerequisites for required courses in the major.

#### **4. Academic Program and Degree Terminology**

All academic programs are defined as certificate, undergraduate degree (associate or bachelor) and graduate/professional (master, specialist, doctorate) degree approved and offered at each Regental institution.

##### **4.1 Certificate**

A formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of a postsecondary education program. The certificate program is typically comprised of 9-12 undergraduate, graduate, medical or law credit hours centered upon a focused area of study. The coursework required may be embedded within the degree or it may be independent of a degree.

##### **4.2 Associate Degree**

Associate degree programs require a minimum of sixty (60) undergraduate credit hours, typically with a combination of focused area of study (major) courses and general education courses.

##### **4.3 Baccalaureate Degree**

Baccalaureate degrees require one hundred twenty (120) credit hours, typically with a combination of focused area of study (major) courses, general education courses, and elective courses. Any changes above the 120-degree credit hour maximum must be presented in the form of a request for a waiver to degree-credit hour length through the institution's vice president for academic affairs with a rationale for such changes and a listing of both the existing and proposed curriculum (see 4.7 Exceptions in this section).

##### **4.4 Master's Degree**

Master's degrees are established at a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours. Depending upon the program, these master's degrees may require plans of study that include a degree completion activity such as a comprehensive exam, internship, portfolio, professional report, recital, thesis, or other project defined by the program

##### **4.5 Educational Specialist**

The Specialist in Education degree requires a minimum of 60 credit hours beyond a baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 30 credit hours beyond a master's degree. This degree is not a terminal degree and is designed for educators who want to advance their skills, knowledge, and leadership in the field of education.

##### **4.6 Doctoral Degrees**

A doctoral degree is the highest academic qualification and is typically in research fields or professional fields.

#### **4.6.1 Doctoral Degree Professional Practice**

A doctoral degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years.

#### **4.6.2 Doctoral Degree Research/Scholarship**

A doctoral degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement.

#### **4.6.3 Doctoral Degree-Other**

A doctoral degree that does not meet the definition of a doctoral degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.

### **4.7 Exceptions**

The Board of Regents may grant exceptions for credit hour requirements in any of the degrees offered when 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 and approved by the Board of Regents.

### **4.8 New or Modified Program Requests**

The Board of Regents requires all requests to come through processes defined in BOR Policy 2.3.2 and AAC Guidelines found in folder 2.3.2.

### **4.9 Academic Programs Student Credit Hour Requirement**

BOR Policy 2.6.1 outlines student credit hour requirements for completion of the academic program. Students should review their plan of study to ensure that they meet the requirements for residency as outlined in BOR Policy.

## **5. Undergraduate Degree Components**

Every program of study must include general education curriculum and major core content and may include support and/or elective courses. The structured elements of general education and the major shall be scribed for degree audit and available for student evaluation.

### **5.1 General Education**

General education is required as core curriculum managed by the Regental system and outlined in BOR Policy 2.3.7. General Education requests may be directed through BOR Policy 2.3.7 and AAC guidelines found in folder 2.3.7.

### **5.2 Academic Major**

Undergraduate majors in certain academic disciplines commonly require thirty (30) to forty-five (45) credit hours within the field of study. Additionally, these majors typically require a specified set of support courses. When combined, these requirements rarely exceed sixty-four (64) credit hours. Once core requirements and other institutional

requirements are excluded, the total credit hours of "unique" requirements should not exceed sixty-four (64) credit hours. Exceptions to these limits may be granted by the Board of Regents when programs must meet standards set by external accreditation, licensure, or regulatory bodies, or for other compelling reasons endorsed by the institutional chief academic officer and approved by the system chief academic officer.

### **5.3 Elective Courses**

Elective courses may be a designated requirement in a program of study which are within the 120 remaining credit hours. These are in addition to the required core curriculum for general education and the academic major.

## **6. Optional Program Elements**

### **6.1 Baccalaureate Minor**

An academic minor enables a student to make an inquiry into a discipline or field of study beyond the major. Minors typically consist of eighteen (18) undergraduate credit hours. Minors are only awarded in conjunction with completion of a degree program and the awarding of a bachelor's degree. A minor may be taken at any of the universities. Completion of the academic minor shall be indicated on the student's academic transcript.

### **6.2 Specialization**

A specialization is a designated program of study with an existing degree program and 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.

### **6.3 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. The emphasis is not a separate program and will not be included on the student transcript. A catalog may describe an emphasis but not detail it as a specific plan of study.

## **7. Plan of Study**

The Board of Regents supports a planning software solution that allows students to create a schedule for their course requirements required by their program of study. The plan of study should focus on meeting the program requirements around the course scheduling rotation. The student's specific academic catalog should be utilized when developing a plan of study with the academic advisor.

## **8. Transcription of Academic History and Awarding of Credentials**

The student academic transcript is the permanent record of a student's academic history. The transcript includes all coursework taken, the grades received, and credentials conferred. The academic student transcript shall include all Regental university history ensuring only one transcript per student.

The Regental system transcribes only the following conferred credentials: certificates, undergraduate and graduate degrees (including specializations, masters, and doctoral.) as well as undergraduate minors. BOR Policy 2.6.2 governs the awarding of credentials as well as AAC Guideline 2.6.2.B.

**SOURCE:**

AAC December 2015; AAC October 2017; AAC April 2018; May 2018 (Clerical); October 2018 (Clerical); May 2025.