

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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**Graduate Education Policy Guide**

**Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees**

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## **POLICY SUMMARY**

### **POLICY PURPOSE**

This policy governs the application of credits for students to satisfy the University's minimum credit requirements for Master's Plan A, B, and C degrees and doctoral degrees.

### **POLICY LOCATION**

## **University Policy Library – Education and Student Life Policies**

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 2018

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Colleges and graduate programs will wish to collaborate regarding their roles in the review and approval processes related to this policy.
- Graduate credits taken prior to the award of the baccalaureate degree, from the University or other accredited institutions, may be considered for application toward students' graduate degree requirements.
- Transfer limits have been eliminated and replaced by a focus on the minimum number of graduate course credits students must take while enrolled in their University graduate degree program.
- The acceptance of credits to meet requirements of two University master's-level degrees (i.e., common credits) has been eliminated, with the exception of Regents-approved joint/dual graduate degree programs.
- The acceptance of credits to meet the requirements of a University master's-level and a University doctoral degree (i.e., common credits) is allowed only when the master's and doctoral degrees are from the same or related graduate program.

### **COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Establish, communicate and execute the college's role related to the *Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees* policy.
- Ensure that any program-specific criteria are consistent with University policy.

### **PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Determine whether to establish program-specific criteria more stringent than – but consistent with – the University-wide policy.
- Communicate to the college any program-specific criteria related to this policy.
- Publicize University-wide and (if applicable) program- and/or college-specific policies.
- Advise students to ensure compliance with University-wide and, if applicable, program- and/or college-specific policies.
- Review and act on students' graduate degree plans to ensure policy compliance.
- Establish and publicize procedures for reviewing and acting on students' requests for exceptions to program-specific policies.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Adjudicate academic student complaints related to this policy that are not successfully addressed at the local level, per University procedure.
- Coordinate the comprehensive review process for this policy, per University requirements.

## GRADUATE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Plan coursework and (if applicable) thesis credits in compliance with University-wide and college/program-specific policies.
- Submit graduate degree plan for review and approval in a timely manner.

## POLICY COMPARISON

The following is a comparison of the *Application of Graduate Credits to Degree Requirements* policy (**in effect fall 2011 through summer 2018**) and the *Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees* policy (**effective fall 2018**):

### WHAT STAYS THE SAME

- Colleges and graduate programs may establish more stringent criteria than – but consistent with – this U-wide policy
- Graduate-level coursework taken as follows is eligible for consideration:
  - taken at the University
  - taken outside the University
  - taken in pursuit of a previous or concurrent graduate degree
  - taken as a non-degree-seeking student
  - taken as a non-admitted student
- The University's 48-credit minimum for doctoral students must include
  - at least 12 graduate-level course credits
  - 24 University doctoral thesis credits (8888)
- Master's thesis credits (8777) and/or doctoral thesis credits (8888) not used to fulfill Plan A master's requirements may be used to meet Plan B master's project credit requirements in the same graduate program (*note: processes related to the change of thesis credits to Plan B project credits will remain in effect*)
- Earned master's thesis credits (8777) in one University graduate program cannot be applied toward the thesis credit requirement for another University graduate program
- Earned doctoral thesis credits (8888) in one University graduate program cannot be applied toward the thesis credit requirement for another University graduate program
- Thesis credits taken at other institutions cannot be applied to meet master's or doctoral course or thesis credit requirements
- Plan B project credit requirements can only be used to fulfill Plan B master's degree requirements
- Each graduate course on a graduate degree plan can be applied toward either the major or minor/other requirement, but not both
- Graduate credits applied toward a minor field cannot also be applied toward another minor field
- A maximum of nine 4-level course credits may be used to satisfy the master's or doctoral credit requirement. Graduate programs may impose a lower maximum

### WHAT IS DIFFERENT

- Graduate course credits taken before the award of a baccalaureate degree (from the University or other accredited institution) may be counted toward a graduate degree if
  - the graduate program/college approves inclusion of pre-baccalaureate credits toward their students' graduate degree requirements; and
  - the pre-baccalaureate courses were not used to meet either credit or degree requirements for the baccalaureate degree (i.e., no double-counting)
- A student's graduate degree plan associated with each University graduate degree must comprise a minimum number of graduate-level credits earned while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that University graduate program -- and not applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements\*
  - Master's Plan A degree
    - Students must meet the University's 30-credit minimum (at least 20 course credits + 10 8777 thesis credits), or the graduate program's minimum credit requirement, whichever is higher
    - Of the minimum 20 course credits, at least 12 must be University credits taken while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that Master's Plan A program
    - Those 12 credits cannot also be applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements\*
    - The 12-credit requirement also applies to graduate programs that require more than 20 course credits
  - Master's Plan B degrees
    - Students must meet the University's 30-credit minimum (coursework), or the graduate program's minimum credit requirement, whichever is higher
    - Of the minimum 30 course credits, at least 20 must be University credits taken while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that Master's Plan B program
    - Those 20 credits cannot also be applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements\*
    - The 20-credit requirement also applies to Plan B master's programs that require more than 30 course credits
  - Master's Plan C degrees
    - Students must meet the University's 30-credit minimum (coursework), or the graduate program's minimum credit requirement, whichever is higher
    - Of the minimum 30 course credits, at least 20 must be University credits taken while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that Master's Plan C program
    - Those 20 credits cannot also be applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements\*
    - The 20-credit requirement also applies to Plan A master's programs that require more than 30 course credits
  - Doctoral degrees
    - At least 12 University graduate course credits taken while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that doctoral program are required
    - Those 12 credits cannot also be applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements\*
  - Doctoral degrees that do not require doctoral thesis credits (8888)
    - Students must meet the University's 48-credit minimum, or the doctoral program's minimum credit requirement, whichever is higher

- At least 36 University graduate course credits taken while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that doctoral program are required
- Those 36 credits cannot also be applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements\*
- The 36-credit minimum also applies when more than 48 course credits are required for the doctoral program

**\*Exception:** Students earning a master's and a doctoral degree from the same **or a related** University graduate program, or who have been approved for a change of degree objective within the same **or related** program, may apply as many graduate course credits toward both graduate degree objectives as allowed by the program/college.

## ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- How will the college and its programs collaborate to determine whether, in what ways, and for what purpose the college will be involved with issues related to this policy? How will those decisions be communicated to stakeholders?
- While decision-making authority with regard to imposing more stringent requirements than those outlined in this University policy is within the purview of the graduate programs, colleges and programs may determine that some level of college involvement is advantageous.

This may be particularly important to colleges and programs with regard to new aspects of the policy, such as:

- Option to accept graduate level, pre-baccalaureate courses to meet minimum credit requirements
  - Does the college wish to allow its programs to accept such coursework?
  - Who makes/communicates the decision and the rationale behind the decision?
  - If pre-baccalaureate coursework will be considered, what criteria must be met? For example,
    - only pre-baccalaureate coursework from the University
    - syllabi provided for the pre-baccalaureate coursework
    - written support of instructor and/or advisor
    - minimum GPA for coursework to be accepted
    - only coursework that satisfies specific degree requirements
    - other?
  - If pre-baccalaureate coursework will be considered, but the college/program criteria for acceptance are not met by a student
    - what is the process to review/act on requests for exceptions to college/program criteria?
    - who is responsible for the final decision regarding these exception requests?
- Requirement that a student's graduate degree plan for each University graduate degree must comprise
  - a) a minimum number of graduate-level credits earned while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in that University graduate program (i.e., 12 of 20 master's Plan A; 20 of 30 master's Plans B and C; 12 of 24 PhD; and 36 of 48 professional doctorate) that b) have not been applied to any other graduate program's degree requirements
    - Does the college wish to establish a higher minimum than required by University policy?
    - Who makes/communicates the decision and the rationale behind the decision?
    - If the college/program minimum is not met by a student
      - what is the process to review/act on requests for exceptions to the college/program standard?

- who is responsible for the final decision regarding these exception requests, and how is that decision communicated to the student?
- Option to accept coursework from a related University graduate program to meet the minimum program-specific course requirements (i.e., 12 of 20 master's Plan A; 20 of 30 master's Plans B and C; 12 of 24 PhD; and 36 of 48 professional doctorate)
  - What criteria must be met for programs to be identified as related?
  - Who decides whether programs are related?
  - Does the college offer related programs within the college, or programs related to those offered by other colleges?
  - How will students and other stakeholders be informed about related programs? By whom?
  - If a student wishes to apply coursework from a program not identified as related to meet the minimum program-specific course requirements
    - what process is in place to review/act on requests for exceptions to the program/college-specific standard?
    - who is responsible for the final decision regarding these exception requests, and how is that decision communicated to the student?

When colleges/programs consider whether to adopt more stringent requirements than those established by this University policy, and/or the new opportunities allowed by the policy, other issues to consider include how decisions may impact students

- academically (depth/breadth of knowledge; time-to-degree)
- financially (tuition/fees; potential loss of income due to longer time-to-degree)
- other