



## Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policies Chapter 3 – Educational Policies

### 3.17 Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

#### Part 1. Definitions.

**Subpart A. Academic Program:** An academic program (hereinafter referred to as a program) is a cohesive pattern of collegiate level credit courses and experiences leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate. Programs are designed to (1) prepare students for advanced study, (2) qualify students for an occupation or range of occupations, and/or (3) increase students' knowledge and understanding in a specific area/discipline. Accomplishment of program objectives requires a set of defined learning experiences in which a student must demonstrate competencies in a wide range of skills and knowledge that constitute a major or is certified by a credential. All programs shall be clearly within the scope of the mission of the institution.

**Subpart B. Credit:** A credit is the unit of measure normally associated with specific courses and experiential learning activities. While credits are the units of measure utilized in this policy, their use is not intended to limit nor reduce opportunities to certify skills and competency attainment through alternative student outcome assessment approaches. The goal of education is the attainment of specific knowledge, skills and values. Creative approaches to the awarding of credit in response to demonstrated student skills attainment, above and beyond credit for prior learning and credit through examination programs, are both encouraged and desired.

**Part 2. Criteria.** Degrees, diplomas, and certificates awarded for program completion by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities shall meet the criteria specified under Subparts A-G.

**Subpart A. Certificate.** Certificates may be awarded after the successful completion of a specialized program of study. A certificate shall include 9 to 30 semester credits. A certificate program proposed with fewer than nine or greater than 30 semester credits requires special approval by the chancellor.

**Subpart B. Diploma.** A diploma may be awarded after the successful completion of a program intended to provide students with employment skills. A diploma shall include 30 to 72 semester credits. Program credit lengths proposed to exceed 72 semester credits require special approval by the chancellor. At least one third of the credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the awarding of the diploma; this requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the institution's faculty and approval by the president of the college.

### **Subpart C. Associate in Arts and Associate in Science Degrees.**

1. An Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science degrees may be awarded after the successful completion of a program of 60 to 64 semester credits. Program credit lengths proposed to exceed 64 semester credits require special approval by the chancellor. The Associate in Science and Associate in Arts degrees are designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree. At least 20 semester credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the awarding of the degree; this requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the institution's faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.
2. An Associate in Science (AS) degree may be awarded after the successful completion of a program in a designated field or area which transfers to a baccalaureate major in a related scientific, technical, or non-liberal arts professional field. An Associate in Science degree must have one or more articulation agreement(s) between the institution awarding the Associate in Science degree and an institution awarding a related baccalaureate degree. An AS degree may also be designed to prepare students for employment. An Associate in Science program shall include a minimum of 30 semester credits in general education credits. An Associate in Science degree is designed to provide a substantial general education component. General education courses shall be selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. An Associate in Science degree may include the entire Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.
3. An Associate in Arts (AA) degree may be awarded after the successful completion of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum designed to constitute the first two years of a baccalaureate degree. An Associate in Arts degree shall include the entire Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

### **Subpart D. Associate in Fine Arts Degree.**

1. An Associate in Fine Arts (AFA) degree may be awarded after the successful completion of a program in a designated discipline in fine arts. The AFA degree is designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree, as specified in an articulation agreement between the partnering institutions. An AFA degree offered by a college must have at least one articulation agreement between the institution awarding the degree and an institution awarding a baccalaureate degree in a related fine arts discipline as provided under Procedure 3.17.1.
2. An AFA degree may be awarded after the successful completion of a program of 60 to 64 semester credits. Program credit lengths proposed to exceed 64 semester credits require special approval by the chancellor. At least 20 semester credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the awarding of the degree; this requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the institution's faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.
3. An AFA degree shall include a minimum of 24 semester credits in general education, and general education credits shall be selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum except as provided for in Procedure 3.17.1.

### **Subpart E. Associate in Applied Science Degree.**

1. An Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degrees may be awarded after the successful completion of a program of 60 to 72 semester credits. Program credit lengths proposed to exceed 72 semester credits require special approval by the chancellor. At least 20 semester credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the awarding of the degree; this requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the institution's faculty and approval by the president of the college.
2. An AAS degree may be awarded after the successful completion of a program primarily intended to prepare students for employment. An AAS degree may be designed to transfer to a related baccalaureate major. An AAS program shall include a minimum of 25 percent of the total semester credits in general education credits. General education courses shall be selected from at least three of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. At least 30 semester credits shall be program related occupational or technical credits.

### **Subpart F. Baccalaureate Degree**

1. A Baccalaureate degree may be awarded after the successful completion of a program of 120 to 128 semester credits. At least 40 semester credits of the required credits for the degree shall be in non major areas of general education, including the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. At least 40 semester credits of the required credits for the degree shall be upper division credits. At least 30 semester credits shall be taught by the faculty recommending the awarding of the degree; this requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the institution's faculty and approval by the president of the university. Program credit lengths proposed to exceed 128 semester credits require special approval by the chancellor.
2. The Bachelor of Arts (BA) shall represent a general liberal arts degree with a major in the liberal or fine/performing arts areas.
3. The Bachelor of Science (BS) shall represent a degree with a major in a professional area other than the liberal or fine/performing arts.
4. The chancellor may also consider programs culminating in a more specified baccalaureate degree such as the Bachelor of Music (BMus), the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA), the Bachelor of Elective Studies (BES), the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), the Bachelor of Nursing (BSN), the Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS), or another more specified baccalaureate degree.

### **Subpart G. Master's Degree**

1. A Master's degree may be awarded to a holder of a baccalaureate degree or equivalent after the successful completion of 30 to 54 semester credits in a coherent program of study which indicates mastery of specified knowledge and skills substantially beyond those required by a baccalaureate in the particular field. At least one half of the required credits, exclusive of thesis or starred paper requirements, shall be credits restricted exclusively to graduate student enrollment.
2. The Master of Arts (MA) shall represent completion of a course of graduate studies in the liberal or fine/performing arts, which does not include a professional component.
3. The Master of Science (MS) shall represent completion of a course of graduate studies in science, business, industry, nursing, or education, or studies in the liberal or fine arts which includes a professional component.

4. The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) shall represent completion of a course of graduate studies in education by persons without prior certification as teachers.
5. The chancellor may also consider programs culminating in a more specified master's degrees such as the Master of Fine Arts (MFA), the Master of Business Administration (MBA), the Master of Public Administration (MPA), or the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN).

**Subpart H. Specialist Degree.** A Specialist degree is designed to prepare specialists in a professional area for which a master's degree is not sufficient. The Specialist degree may be awarded to a holder of a master's degree or equivalent after the successful completion of a course of graduate study of at least 30 semester credits. The Specialist degree may be awarded to a holder of a bachelor's degree after the successful completion of a course of study of at least 60 semester credits.

**Subpart I. Doctoral Degree.** A doctoral degree may be awarded upon completion of a program of study designed to prepare an individual in an applied, professional field. The program shall include at least 72 semester credits in graduate-level courses, including up to 12 credits for a dissertation or capstone project, culminating with the acceptance of a dissertation or equivalent capstone project. No more than 40 percent of the required number of total credits may be credits from graduate courses completed before admission to the program. Credits earned at another Minnesota state university under provisions of an agreement for a collaborative doctoral program are not subject to this limit. At least 75 percent of the required number of total credits for a doctoral program, exclusive of credits for dissertation or capstone project, shall be in courses with registration restricted exclusively to graduate students.

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*Date of Implementation: 07/01/99*

*Date of Adoption: 12/18/96*

*Date and Subject of Revision:*

*3/22/06 – Part 2, Subpart I was added to support the system's new authority to offer applied doctoral degrees.*

*03/17/04 - add Part 2. Subpart D, criteria for a new associate degree, an Associate in Fine Arts (AFA).*

*03/19/03 - delegates authority for program approval to the chancellor; changes the credit-length of certificate program; clarifies the types of Associate in Science degrees; changes the minimum number of required general education and required upper-division credits in baccalaureate program to 40; adds Bachelor of Applied Science degree; and includes technical and editorial changes to improve clarity.*

*6/16/99 - simplifies & clarifies the policy as well as changes the credit language from quarters to semesters*