Doctoral Degree Policies

Plan of Study

Some programs do not require a Plan of Study to be filed with the Graduate College. Refer to your program handbook for more information.

The Plan of Study is an agreement between the student, the academic program, and the Graduate College that specifies all courses required to earn the graduate degree. This includes:

- any qualifying transfer credits (see transfer credit policy below)
- up to 10 credits taken as a non-degree NDSU graduate student toward the degree
- any previously earned master's degree if being used toward the total 90 credits

The Plan of Study must be approved by the student, the supervisory committee, the graduate program coordinator, and the Dean of the Graduate College and must be filed with the Graduate College by the end of the student’s second semester of study and at least one month prior to scheduling the comprehensive/preliminary examination.

NDSU has minimum requirements for doctoral degrees, which are outlined below. Each program is responsible for defining the requirements for a major in its disciplinary area and making this information available to students. Each student is responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements, rules, and recommendations.

Bachelor's to Doctoral Degree

- Minimum of 90 graduate credits total; minimum of 86 graduate credits for the DNP
- 27 credits must be from didactic courses
  - 15 of which must be 700 or 800 level course work
  - Didactic credits requirements do not apply to outcomes-based programs.
- Specific programs may require completion of additional credits

Master's to Doctoral Degree

- Minimum of 90 graduate credits total; minimum of 86 graduate credits for the DNP
  - Thirty credits from a previously earned master's degree may be approved to fulfill 30 of the 90 doctoral program credits required. The previous master’s degree must be meaningfully related to the discipline in which a doctoral degree is pursued.
  - Up to 15 transfer credits from another doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from an accredited doctoral institution may be allowed in individual cases.
  - Minimum of 45 credits total completed at NDSU
  - 15 credits must be 700-800 level didactic courses
- Specific programs may require completion of additional credits

Course Deletions or Substitutions

Course deletions or substitutions may be made with the Change to Plan of Study (https://powerforms.docusign.net/20c075c4-741c-4c43-8767-4c4838ddfa1/?env=na38&acct=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7&accountid=1ceb9a57-b6a3-4df7-b655-d64cf8f1c2d7) form. The student, advisor, graduate program coordinator, and the Dean of the Graduate College must approve changes.

Transfer of Credit

NDSU graduate-level course work is not considered transfer credit, even if those credits were taken while in a different graduate program.

Official transcripts with grades posted from the transfer institutions must be on file in the Graduate College prior to approval of the Plan of Study. Transfer credits are reviewed by the supervisory committee and program administrator during Plan of Study creation for confirmation of use in the student’s NDSU program.

Departments and programs have the right to further restrict or eliminate acceptance of transfer credits for their degree programs. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the respective academic department or the Graduate College for information on exceptions to this graduate credit transfer policy.

To be considered, transfer credits:
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- must be graduate-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions)
- must be approved in a Plan of Study by the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of Graduate Studies
- must not be courses graded Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
- must carry only grades of A or B on a 4-point scale
- must have been earned within a 10-year period at the time of the final examination
- must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course
- must not be internship, individual study, special problem (equivalent to NDSU's 696/796 Special Topics credits), or research courses
- must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a previous baccalaureate degree
- must be verified by an official transcript
- will not be used in calculation of the cumulative grade point average