

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, including

- 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, and the graduate program coordinator and 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 degrees, which are outlined below. Students in outcomes-based programs must complete the minimum number of credits for the degree. 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
 - No more than 15 didactic credits may be transferred as part of the Plan of Study
 - 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.
- 15 credits must be 700-800 level didactic courses
 - Didactic credits requirements do not apply to outcomes-based programs.

Course Waivers or Substitutions

Course waivers or substitutions may be made with the **Waive/Substitute Course eForm**. This is an advisor initiated form. Students do not have access to this form.

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.

Transfer of credit is requested at the time a Plan of Study or Change to Plan of Study is filed in the Graduate College.

For students not using a previous master's degree, a maximum of 15 credits of graduate-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions) may be eligible to be used in completing the student's degree program.

Students using a previous master's degree towards the 90 graduate credits required may also transfer up to 15 credits from another doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from an accredited doctoral institution may be allowed in individual cases. Courses taken as a non-degree student are not eligible for transfer.

Transfer credit coursework must:

- meet degree program requirements
- be graduate level
- be verified by an official transcript from the transfer institution with grades posted
 - Transcript(s) must be filed in the Graduate College at the time the transfer of credit is requested
- must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a baccalaureate degree
- carry only grades of A or B on a 4.0 scale

- Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory graded courses are not eligible for transfer
- not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension education, or workshop course
- not be internship, individual study, special topics, or research courses
- have been earned within a 10-year period at the time of the student's final defense

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 with transfer credit questions.