

Doctoral Degree Policies

Plan of Study

The Plan of Study should be submitted to the Graduate College for approval at the end of the first year of graduate study and at least one month prior to scheduling the comprehensive/preliminary examination. Revisions may be made with the Request for Change form. Plans of Study, and all changes to them, must be approved by the student, the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader of the student's program, and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Each program has the responsibility of defining the requirements for a doctoral degree in its disciplinary area. This information should be made available to students on the website and in the program handbook. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the requirements, rules, and recommendations.

Didactic Credit-Based Doctoral Degrees

Didactic credits are courses that are taught in a class setting by an instructor; they are numbered 601-689, 691; 700-789, 791; 800-889 and 891. A doctoral degree is made up of both didactic credits and non-didactic credits, such as practicums, seminars, or research credits. The 600 number range indicates a stacked undergraduate/graduate course, 700 and 800 are master's and doctoral level courses, and 800 courses are reserved for doctoral students only.

Bachelor's to Doctoral Degree

- Minimum of 90 graduate credits total for a PhD; minimum of 86 graduate credits for the DNP
- 27 of the 90 must be didactic credits
- 15 of the 27 didactic credits must be 700 or 800 level course work

Master's to Doctoral Degree

- Minimum of 60 graduate credits total
- Minimum of 45 credits total completed at NDSU
- 15 of the 60 credits must be 700-800 level or equivalent didactic courses
- Only 30 credits from a completed master's degree can be used as transfer credit except where expressly allowed by policy or transfer agreement; any additional graduate credits to be transferred to NDSU must have been earned as part of a doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline at another accredited doctoral institution.
- Specific programs may require completion of additional credits

Outcomes-Based Doctoral Degrees

Ph.D. programs using an outcome-based curriculum are not expected to include a minimum number of didactic credits. The total number of credits required for a degree is the same as didactic credit-based programs, but the credits can be earned through any credit-based academic activity.

Programs must have an approved statement of expected program outcomes and a strategy for measuring the desired outcomes. The program outcomes must include, but are not limited to:

1. Ability to synthesize information
2. Demonstrated ability to think critically
3. Effective written and oral communication skills
4. Mastery of major methods or analytical approaches of the field
5. Ability to contribute creatively to the discipline
6. Professional and ethical behavior standards consistent with the expectations of the discipline
7. Professional and workplace skills necessary to succeed in chosen career path

Changes in curriculum must be submitted through the [proper curriculum approval channels](#).

Transfer of Credit

All graduate credits used to meet the requirements of a doctoral degree must be approved by the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Bachelor's to doctoral students: The doctorate requires a minimum of 90 graduate credits (86 credit for the DNP). A minimum of 27 credits of didactic coursework are required; no more than 15 didactic credits may be transferred as part of the Plan of Study. All transfer credits for students with a bachelor's degree working toward a doctoral degree at NDSU:

- must be graduate-level course work from regionally accredited colleges or universities (or equivalent for international institutions) to be eligible for acceptance in transfer;
- 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 no more than 10 years prior to graduation with a doctoral degree at NDSU
- must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course;
- must not be internship, individual study, special problem, or research (disquisition) courses;
- must not have been used to fulfill the requirements of a previous baccalaureate or master's degree (with the exception of accelerated master's degrees);
- must be verified by an official transcript; and
- will not be used in calculation of the grade point average.

Master's to doctoral students: The doctorate requires a minimum of 60 credits beyond the master's degree; therefore, no more than 30 credits from a previously earned master's degree may be transferred into a doctoral program at NDSU, except where expressly allowed by policy or transfer agreement. The previous master's degree must be meaningfully related to the discipline in which a doctoral degree is pursued.

In addition to a maximum of 30 credits applied toward an earned master's degree, transfer of up to 15 credits from another doctoral program in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from an accredited doctoral institution can be allowed in individual cases, for a total of 45 transfer credits. Strict limitations apply. Approval from the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of Graduate Studies is required as part of an approved Plan of Study.

All transfer credits in addition to the 30 for a prior master's degree for students working toward a doctoral degree at NDSU:

1. must be doctoral-level coursework in the same or a meaningfully related discipline from a doctoral program offered by a regionally accredited university (or equivalent for international institutions) to be eligible for acceptance in transfer;
2. must be approved in a Plan of Study by the supervisory committee, the graduate program leader, and the Dean of Graduate Studies;
3. must not be courses graded Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory;
4. must carry only grades of A or B on a 4-point scale;
5. must have been earned no more than 10 years prior to graduation with the doctoral degree at NDSU;
6. must not be a continuing education, correspondence, extension, or workshop course;
7. must not be internship, individual study, special problem, or research (disquisition) courses;
8. must be verified by an official transcript; and
9. will not be used in calculation of the grade point average.

Notes:

1. The petition for transfer of credits is part of the development process for the Plan of Study. Individual courses at the master's or doctoral level that have been accepted in transfer have to be listed in the transfer credit section of the Plan of Study, and they are to be counted toward the required credit total for the Plan of Study.

If 30 credits are accepted in transfer from a previously earned master's degree into a doctoral degree program, the accepted master's degree is listed in the header for the Plan of Study, and the Plan of Study lists only the required courses beyond the master's degree (for a minimum of 60 credits). If individual doctoral credits are accepted for a doctoral degree at NDSU, these additional courses need to be listed in the transfer credit section of the Plan of Study, and they are to be counted toward the required total for the Plan of Study.

2. It is the responsibility of the student to provide official transcripts of graduate courses taken elsewhere to the Graduate School.
3. Departments and programs have the right to further restrict or completely eliminate acceptance of transfer credits for their degree programs. Prospective students are encouraged to contact the respective academic department or the Graduate School for information on exceptions to this graduate credit transfer policy.

Time Limitation

Graduate credit for any coursework that is more than 10 calendar years old at the time of the final examination cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements unless a petition for exception was approved. The final examination is valid for one year. Should a student not have his/her disquisition approved by the Graduate School or fail to meet other degree requirements within that timeframe, the final examination must be retaken.

If a period of time two years or greater lapses before the disquisition is approved by the Graduate School, the student must reapply, re-defend the dissertation and must register for a minimum of two (2) credits. The student's degree will post at the end of the semester in which the disquisition is approved by the Graduate School.