

A-045 GRADUATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

These policies and procedures pertain to graduate students.

Admission for Program Enrollment

At the graduate level, application is made to the program at the same time it is made to SMSU.

Eligibility for Admission

A person who has a Bachelor's or higher degree, awarded by an accredited institution of higher education, may apply for admission.

Application Requirements

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- A completed application (either on paper or online).
- An official transcript stating a bachelor's degree or higher has been completed. An official transcript bears the seal of the university and signature of the registrar. Applicants who graduated from a university in the Minnesota State system need not request a transcript.
- A non-refundable application fee.

Each Graduate program establishes additional admission policies which may include additional materials to be submitted or minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements above that which is required by the University.

Students who do not use English as their first language must demonstrate the ability to study in English by meeting the Graduate English proficiency requirements.

Section 2 – General Programs and Policies

The following policies govern graduate programs from both the University and student perspectives.

Program Overview

Graduate courses are numbered at the 500 or 600 level. While some 500-level courses may be cross-listed with 400-level courses, 600-level courses are graduate-level only.

Descriptions of the Master's programs are located in the SMSU catalog.

The minimum credit requirement varies by program. Normally, programs shall require no fewer than 30 graduate-level credits and no more than 54 graduate-level credits. Stacked programs (4+1 or 3+2) shall require no fewer than 24 graduate-level credits offered at the 600 level and no fewer than 30 for the full degree.

Students need to complete at least one-half of the coursework at the 600 level.

Steps for Pursuing a Degree

Advisors are initially assigned to the student upon acceptance into the program. Students develop their plans with their advisors, which are reviewed once a semester.

Students apply for graduation with the Registration and Records Office one semester before the term of graduation.

Grading Policy

All grades earned at the graduate level will apply to the Grade Point Average (GPA).

A grade of "C-" or below will not apply toward the program completion. Students may be required to repeat courses where a grade of "C-" or below is earned.

A maximum of two (2) Cs will be allowed.

A student may repeat a course upon availability. The better grade will be the grade used in the GPA.

Academic Standing

A minimum graduate-level cumulative GPA of 3.0 must be maintained throughout the graduate program. Review of Academic Standing occurs at the end of each term (Fall, Spring, and Summer).

Students who fall below the minimum cumulative GPA will be placed on academic probation. Probation letters will come from the Registration and Records office. The letter will be signed by the Registrar, the Dean, and the Graduate Coordinator.

If the student raises the cumulative GPA to 3.0 or higher, the student will be moved to good academic standing. Students who fail to bring their cumulative GPA to 3.0 or higher will be dismissed from the graduate program and the University.

A student may be dismissed for academic reasons upon recommendation and approval of the Dean. A student on academic probation who does not achieve the 3.0 minimum cumulative GPA during the next academic semester will be dismissed from the Graduate program. Dismissal letters will come from the Registrar's Office. The letter will be signed by the Registrar, the Dean, and the Graduate Coordinator.

Students may be readmitted to the Graduate program when approved by the Graduate Council and/or Advisor. To be readmitted, students must meet all application requirements at the time of readmission specified for the program. The student must submit a Graduate Readmit Form.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeals

Graduate students must establish and maintain a cumulative minimum grade point average of 3.0. Students who do not maintain a 3.0 GPA for two consecutive terms will be dismissed from their program and the University.

Students who are dismissed may appeal their academic standing through the Academic Appeals Committee. It is the responsibility of the Dean's Office to communicate the timeline for the appeals. See G-005.1, "Satisfactory Academic Appeals (<http://catalog.smsu.edu/policies-procedures/g0051/>)."

If the appeal is denied, students would have to reapply for admission to the University and into the graduate program. Readmission to the graduate program is not guaranteed.

The Department may exercise its discretion in determining whether to (a) allow the student's Graduate advisor to help them update the

student's Graduate degree completion plan, or (b) recommend the student complete an application for a Leave of Absence.

Graduation

The candidate must meet all SMSU program requirements as specified in the Academic Catalog in effect at the time that the Program Plan was approved by the Graduate Advisor of the degree program. The Advisor and the Registrar will certify that all requirements have been met.

The candidate must file a Graduation Application for Graduate Students with the Registration and Records Office.

A candidate will be recorded as "Graduated" in the semester in which all SMSU program requirements are completed.

Candidates are eligible to participate in a commencement ceremony if they have completed all but 9 credits of their degree program, complete the degree application, meet cumulative and major GPA, and have taken care of all holds.

Academic Honesty

Graduate students will follow SMSU Policy A-034, "Academic Honesty."

Elective Professional Development Courses/Non Degree Status/Microcredentialing/Adult Education (AE)

These courses will be assigned a specific number and do not fulfill SMSU Graduate degree requirements.

Websites

Each department offering a Graduate program maintains a website with the most current information on the program.

Recommended Contact Hours

A recommended number of contact hours per credit is 15:1 for a lecture and 45:1 for practicums. If there is a governing body that recommends something specific, that should be followed.

Non-Specified Policies

Anything not specified in these policies and procedures will be governed by University policies and procedures.

Section 3 - Transfer Credits/Petitions

A limited number of credits earned from another accredited institution may be accepted for credit toward a Graduate degree at SMSU.

Transfer Credits Allowed

The total number of transfer credits allowed is determined by each program. No more than nine (9) semester hours of credit may be transferred into a SMSU Graduate program. Exceptions include the Content Area Emphasis in the Masters of Education which allows the transfer of no more than (18) semester hours of credit from content courses recognized by a concurrent enrollment content area. There may be additional exceptions per articulation agreements.

Only grades of C (2.0) or higher are accepted for transfer. A maximum of two (2) C grades may be transferred into the University.

Accredited Institutions

The transferring institution must be regionally accredited for granting Graduate degrees.

Official Transcripts

Official transcripts must be on file in the Graduate Office.

The credits must be certified as graduate credits by the originating institution.

The course credits required to graduate, including transfer credits, were earned within seven years from the date of the first graduate course applied to the graduate degree. (See "Statute of Limitations.")

Transcripts must include:

1. Student's complete scholastic record
2. Official seal of the granting institution
3. Signature of the issuing officer

Petition Process for Transferring Credits

An Official Petition Form must be completed and submitted for each petitioned course.

A course description (syllabus preferred) must be submitted with the petition.

Transfer credits must be approved by the appropriate SMSU instructor, the Graduate Department, and the Dean.

Upon petition, departments may approve additional transfer credits as long as they do not exceed the 9 credits.

International Transfer Credit

Course credits toward a Graduate degree may be transferred from those international institutions with which SMSU has entered into a formal transfer agreement.

Students who wish to transfer graduate-level credits to SMSU from accredited international universities must submit their transcripts to an approved foreign credential evaluation service.

Credits from other international institutions with graduate degree programs but which SMSU has not entered into a formal transfer agreement must be approved by the Department and Graduate Council, or the Department and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

All other transfer credit criteria apply.

Section 4 - Full-Time Status/Normal Load

Each program shall determine the number of credits required for a student to be classified as full time for purposes other than Financial Aid. For financial aid, a minimum of five graduate credits per term are needed for full-time status.

Graduate Student Maximum Load Limit

Graduate students may enroll in a maximum of 12 credits per term. Students enrolled in an accelerated program may enroll in a maximum of 15 credits per semester.

Students may apply to their Department for an exception to the maximum load limit in unique and specialized circumstances, for example: an upcoming enlistment in the U.S. military service.

If a student is granted an exception to the maximum load limit, the 3.0 (B) GPA still applies.

Overloads will not be granted when a student's GPA is below 3.0 (B).

Overload requests must be approved by the student's Advisor and either the Program Director or the Department Committee.

The auditing of graduate courses does not count in the student's maximum load limit.

Such a recommendation does not guarantee the acceptance of a Leave of Absence request by the Department or the Graduate Council.

Policy on Leave of Absence

Graduate students who have begun coursework in a University Graduate program may apply for a Leave of Absence of one or more continuous semesters at the Office of the Registrar.

An application for a Medical Leave of Absence should be made before the beginning of the upcoming semester. Examples of a Medical Leave of Absence include but are not limited to: the death of a family member requiring arrangements and/or estate/executor responsibilities, miscarriage or difficult birth requiring continuing medical and/or psychological intervention, or a life-threatening accident or illness for the Graduate student or an immediate family member.

An application for a Military Leave of Absence should be made before the beginning of the upcoming semester. Examples of a Military Leave of Absence include, but are not limited to: deployment of a member of the U.S. National Guard, enlistment, or draft into a branch of the U.S. military service.

In specific situations, such as an upcoming 18-month deployment, a Military Leave of Absence may be granted or extended.

Requests for leaves of absence other than medical or military will be referred to the Graduate Council for review and recommendation.

To resume Graduate studies after a leave of absence, the student must notify the Director of the Graduate Office.

Section 5 – Statute of Limitations

Course Completion Requirements

The student must complete all course credits earned toward a Graduate degree within a seven-year time period from the date of the first enrollment in an applicable graduate-level course, including any required comprehensive exams, Thesis paper, or required research project.

This seven-year time limit includes courses taken at other Graduate degree-granting institutions and transferred to SMSU for credit toward a Graduate degree.

Recourse/Remediation

If a Graduate degree is not completed within a seven-year time period, the following avenues of recourse/remediation may apply:

Course credits that have expired (are older than seven years) must be retaken for credit; this includes any transferred credits that are older than seven years.

In extenuating circumstances, such as an official leave of absence for medical causes or from military service, students may request an extension through the appeal process. (See System Procedure 5.12.1, "Military Service and Veterans with Disabilities.")

Section 6 - Graduate Grade Appeals Process

Graduate students are afforded the right to appeal grades awarded. (See G-005, "Academic Appeals.")

Note: For specific policies of Departments with Graduate Programs refer to Graduate Department websites.

Note: The Graduate Programs at SMSU are committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in employment and education opportunity in compliance with all Minnesota State and Federal policies. (See Board Policy 1B.1, "Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education (<https://www.minnstate.edu/board/policy/1b01.html>).")

Policy History

Date of Adoption: April 26, 2011

Date of Revision: December 13, 2024

Date and Subject of Amendments

12/13/2024 – Revised and updated entire policy and procedure, including language to support 4+1 and 3+2 stacked programs.