

# ACADEMIC ALTERNATIVES

Southwest Minnesota State offers a variety of degree programs and a variety of approaches to attain those degrees. Listed below are some options for you.

## A. Advanced Placement (AP)

(SMSU Policy A-040) (<http://catalog.smsu.edu/policies-procedures/advanced-placement/>)

Southwest Minnesota State University participates in the Advanced Placement Program administered by the College Entrance Examination Board. Southwest Minnesota State University will award credit for the successful completion of an approved Advanced Placement Study Program. Such programs are available to students in participating high schools.

To receive Advanced Placement credit, you must:

1. Have the approval of the high school,
2. complete the test with a score of 3 or higher, and
3. enroll at Southwest Minnesota State University following high school graduation.

All records must be forwarded from the College Entrance Examination Board and the University reserves the right to evaluate such records and determine the credit to be assigned. However, 3 semester hours of credits will be awarded per examination on which you have a score of 3 or higher.

## B. International Baccalaureate (IB)

To receive IB credit, you must:

1. Have the approval of the high school,
2. complete a higher exam with a score of 4 or higher, and
3. enroll at Southwest Minnesota State University following high school graduation.

All records must be forwarded from the International Baccalaureate Organization and the University reserves the right to evaluate such records and determine the credit to be assigned. However, 3 semester hours of credits will be awarded per higher examination on which you have a score of 4 or higher.

## C. Common Market

The Common Market is a cooperative, statewide program allowing you to enroll at another Minnesota state university (within MnSCU) for one term, or three different Minnesota state universities (within MinnState) for a total of three terms. The courses, grades, and credits are transferred as SMSU resident credits and are computed in the grade point average. However, you should be advised that in order to receive a degree from Southwest Minnesota State University, you must have completed the requirements for an approved major, 14 semester credit hours (SCH) of which must be taken at SMSU. (See also: Graduation Requirements on page 6). The Registrar serves as the director of the Common Market program at SMSU.

## D. Departmental Credit by Examination

### Departmental Credit by Examination Policy

Any undergraduate student, currently enrolled at SMSU, who has gained knowledge in certain fields through post high school training

or experience and who believes he/she has sufficient knowledge (background information) normally gained through a regular course offered by SMSU, may apply to take a comprehensive examination for credit in that course.

1. SMSU Departments shall have the responsibility for the establishment of criteria to be used in the evaluation of the credit by examination. The departments have the right to accept or reject application for credit by examination. The student is expected to demonstrate a competence comparable to, but not necessarily identical with, that obtained by students receiving credit for the course in the usual manner.
2. Students must be enrolled at SMSU the semester during which the examination is administered and pay a non-refundable fee in advance. This fee is determined by the MinnState Board of Trustees.
3. Credit by examination is not available to students under the following conditions:
  - a. if they have been previously or are currently enrolled in the course;
  - b. if they have previously taken the course for audit; or
  - c. if they have previously taken an examination for the same course.
4. Credit by examination will not be granted for internships, field experiences, independent study, seminar courses, or practice teaching.
5. Credits earned by examination must be awarded by the 40th instructional day of the semester. If not, they will be awarded the following semester.
6. The instructor must use the Credit/No Credit grading system in awarding a grade for credit by examination. There is a 20 credit limitation on the number of credits earned by examination outside the major which a student may apply towards graduation.
7. Credit by examination may not be used as a means to convert CEU's (Continuing Education Units) to credit.
 

Departmental Credit by Examination Procedure

  - a. Students will contact the department Chairperson and the instructor in the program area where they wish to take the examination to determine if that particular course can be offered by examination.
  - b. Students will obtain the "Credit by Examination" form from the Registration and Records Office.
  - c. Students will complete the form as indicated and is responsible for obtaining the required signatures which include those of the instructor and of the Department Chairperson. The instructor will confirm the time and place of the examination.
  - d. The student will take the form to the Registrar so that eligibility may be determined in accordance with the criteria established under 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 above.
  - e. Students will take the credit by examination form to Business Services to pay the appropriate, non-refundable examination fee. The number of credits will be the same as the number listed in the regular course schedule for that course. Students will not be allowed to take the examination until the form has been stamped "paid" by Business Services.
  - f. Students will take the form to the instructor giving the examination at the scheduled time. The instructor will keep the form and enter a Credit or No Credit grade after the examination has been graded. If the grade is No Credit, no entry will be made on the student's transcript and the student may enroll in the course in order to receive college credit for it.

*Note: While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, SMSU reserves the right to correct any clerical errors herein. Also, you can submit feedback.*

- g. After awarding the CR/NC grade, the instructor will send the completed form to the Registration and Records Office for processing.
- h. Under no circumstances will a student be allowed credit by examination if he/she is currently enrolled in that course and has gone on record as having paid tuition for the course. The examination must be completed before the student has enrolled in the course.
- e. Students may transfer CLEP credits from accredited institutions, but the credit will be evaluated at the time of admission in accordance with the admission policy of the University.
- f. Ordinarily, a student will not be granted credit for an examination if the content is more elementary than courses the student has taken. Exceptions may be made with the approval of the department in which the examination is given.

## E. CLEP (College Level Examination Program) Credit by Examination

### CLEP Credit by Examination Policy

Southwest Minnesota State University will award credit for successful performance on specified tests in the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests. Courses and/or subjects for which CLEP General and Subject examinations are available, levels of acceptable performance, number of credits awarded and restrictions on use of those credits will be determined by the academic departments and the faculty.

CLEP examinations taken before a student matriculates at Southwest Minnesota State University

Score reports must be presented to the University for evaluation and acceptance at the time of admission. If credit for CLEP examinations appears on the transcript of a student transferring from an accredited post-secondary institution, the same criteria used in evaluating and accepting all other credits shall apply.

CLEP exams taken during your enrollment at Southwest Minnesota State University

### Evaluation Policy

1. The Office of Academic Affairs will provide the Admissions Office, the Registrar and the Counseling and Testing Services with a record of current courses for which CLEP examinations are acceptable, levels of acceptable performance, number of credits awarded and restrictions on the use of those credits. Academic Affairs will review and update this information periodically with the Academic Departments and the Faculty Association, and keep the Academic Departments informed of any changes in CLEP examinations or standards.
2. Counseling & Testing Services will provide information about the College Level Examination Program and administer the examinations to interested students.
3. The following regulatory provisions are in effect for CLEP examinations.
  - a. CLEP examinations will be evaluated by the Transfer Specialist and the department concerned, and credit will be granted in terms of the curriculum of Southwest Minnesota State University.
  - b. A student must receive a score in the 50th percentile to be granted credit, as determined by the appropriate department.
  - c. No more than 20 credits of Credit/No Credit may be counted toward graduation in courses outside the major. This limitation includes Credit/No Credit, credit by examination, and CLEP. The student is advised to check his/her status regarding the number of Credit/No Credit units with the Registrar prior to taking CLEP examinations.
  - d. CLEP examinations may be applied toward the fulfillment of major requirements as determined by the Department.

## F. Extended Learning (Off-campus)

In order to accommodate students at distance, SMSU has created opportunities for off-campus delivery. Sites have been developed at several locations throughout the state. The degree delivery is offered via on-line courses in conjunction with articulated courses at local community colleges. Please contact the Office of Extended Learning & Academic Outreach (507) 537-6251 for further information.

## G. Honors Program

(SMSU Policy A-015) (<http://catalog.smsu.edu/policies-procedures/honors-program/>)

This program is designed for outstanding, highly motivated students and should begin in the freshman year. Entering students are eligible if they have had a sound high school record, high ACT scores and can provide a recommendation from at least one high school teacher or counselor. In addition, students presently enrolled may apply for entrance to the program if they have not completed more than 20 hours of the standard Liberal Arts Core/Minnesota Transfer Curriculum requirements, have earned a 3.50 grade point average, and can provide recommendations from advisors.

The program is chiefly a substitute for the standard LAC/MTC program. It does not require any specific course work. The student, in consultation with his/her advisor and the Honors Review Board, designs his/her own program of LAC/MTC. In addition to the LAC/MTC substitute, the student may enroll in a 4-8 semester hour Honors project designed by the student and his/her major advisor and approved by the Honors Review Board. Each student will also successfully complete an Honors Senior Interdisciplinary Seminar as well as an Honors Senior Dialogue involving at least three faculty members from among non-major disciplines plus the Honors Director.

To continue in the program the student must maintain a 3.3 cumulative grade point average, overall. Students successfully completing the program will be graduated with special honors at the commencement exercise.

The Honors Review Board and the Honors Program Director will be composed of faculty members selected by the procedures approved by the faculty for committee selection.

Students who have been in the Honors Program and who complete an approved course of study as a substitute for LAC/MTC, but who fail to complete the other requirements including the cumulative 3.3 GPA requirement, will not be graduated with special honors, but will be graduated if all other requirements for graduation have been met.

Any student who meets the qualifications specified above and enjoys the challenge and excitement of helping to design his/her own course of Liberal Arts studies should request further information from: Director, Honors Program, Southwest Minnesota State University, BA 109, (507) 537-7206.

## **H. Independent Study**

If you wish to pursue a specific area of study or become involved in a research project that is not available through the traditional curriculum, it is possible to receive instruction and credit through independent study. Contact your advisor and the chair of the department involved.

## **I. Internships/Field Experience**

An internship or another type of outside-the-classroom experience offers you the chance to add an experimental component to complement your traditional classroom work. Career Services, along with your academic department, can be a contact point for internship opportunities and questions. While the authority to direct the academic components of the internship rests with the academic departments, Career Services can assist you in identifying sources and securing an internship.

## **J. Credit for Prior Learning**

The purpose of this policy is to provide all students at Southwest Minnesota State University with opportunities to demonstrate university level learning gained in non-credit or experiential settings according to procedures and practices established for evaluating and granting undergraduate credit for such learning.