

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policy 301.11 – Undergraduate Degree Requirements ~~(new)~~ (existing) ~~(removed)~~

Effective: November 17, 2006; Issued: November 27, 2006

1. Board Policy:

A. The standard requirement ~~Requirements~~ for baccalaureate degrees offered by units of the Montana university system (MUS) ~~are limited to a maximum of~~ is 120 semester hours of credit. Degree requirements can also be met through outcomes-based courses or programs, which assess whether a student has acquired necessary knowledge and/or abilities to complete major degree requirements. Consistent with board policy 301.19, a student may meet degree requirements with Prior Learning Assessment credit. Units will award a baccalaureate degree to a student who demonstrates the appropriate knowledge and abilities through credit-bearing courses, outcomes-based assessments, or both. ~~Exceptions to this policy must be recommended by the units, reviewed by the office of the commissioner of higher education, and approved by the board of regents. Exceptions will be limited in number and approved only on the basis of the criteria listed below.~~

~~B. The campuses of the MUS are encouraged to develop outcomes-based programs as alternatives to the awarding of undergraduate degrees based upon the earning of credit hours. Degree requirements for these programs will be based upon what the student must know and be able to do to earn a baccalaureate degree in a specific major. The campus will award the degree to a student who demonstrates the appropriate knowledge and abilities without regard for the earning of credit hours or the amount of time spent working toward the degree.~~

C. Units of the MUS are authorized to award the following degrees: ~~the Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree, a specialized baccalaureate degree that builds on an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. Because an AAS degree is ordinarily considered a terminal credential, guidelines for the BAS degree are appropriate. The BAS is an “inverted degree” with the following characteristics:~~

1. Bachelor of Arts (BA): A BA degree emphasizes broad education in the humanities, arts and social sciences. No more than 40% of the credits required for a degree can be in the major.

2. Bachelor of Science (BS): A BS degree focuses on scientific, analytical, technical, creative, professional, and research-oriented subjects, often requiring additional coursework. No more than 67% of the credits required for a degree can be in the major.

3. Bachelor of Practice: A bachelor's degree focused on practical or pre-professional training, often requiring additional coursework, with a specific designator consistent with the field of study (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Bachelor of Fine Arts). No more than 67% of the credits required for a degree can be in the major.

4. Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS): A BAS degree is a specialized baccalaureate degree that builds on an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. A student must complete a general education program that meets the requirements of board policy 301.10. At least 60 credits from the student's AAS degree may count toward the BAS degree. The remainder of the ~~120~~ credits required for the degree, including upper-division credit requirements for graduation at the campus, must be met through upper-division coursework in an area of concentration customized to connect the student's AAS degree and educational/occupational goals. ~~This part of the BAS degree may be 20-30 credits, depending on the number of credits completed to satisfy the general education requirements of paragraph C (2) above.~~

D. In determining the number of credits in a degree program under this policy, campuses will include every class that a student must complete to earn the credential, including (but not limited to) pre-requisite classes, classes that must be completed to apply for admission to a program and general education coursework. The only classes that are excluded from this credit calculation are remedial or developmental courses.

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- E. Baccalaureate degrees require general education, major-required, and elective credits.
1. **General Education Core:** Consistent with BOR policy 301.10, these courses provide foundational skills and knowledge across disciplines such as humanities, natural sciences, mathematics, and social sciences.
 - a. BA degrees may require additional humanities and language core coursework.
 - b. BS degrees may require additional math and science core coursework.
 2. **Major-Required:** Courses in this category focus on the student's primary field of study. This includes discipline core courses, additional requirements for a degree (for example, a foreign language), prerequisites and restricted electives.
 3. **Electives:** Courses in this category provide students with the flexibility to explore subjects beyond their core major requirements and/or fulfill total credit requirements. These credits must be unrestricted.

II. Definitions

A. Major -A major at the baccalaureate level is a designated and coherent sequence of courses in a discipline, related disciplines, or professional area a student completes as a part of the degree program. Majors may range from 31 to 80 semester hours or the equivalent number of outcomes-based courses. The minimum upper-division coursework required in the major must be proportional to, but not exceed, the total upper-division coursework required by a campus. Study in the major will conclude with a capstone, integrating experience in which the knowledge and skills learned in the major are applied or demonstrated.

B. Minor - A designated and coherent sequence of courses in a discipline, related disciplines, or professional area which provides support or enhancement of a student's major in a baccalaureate program. Minors may range from 18 to 30 semester hours or the equivalent number of outcomes-based courses. The minimum upper-division coursework required in the minor must be proportional to the total upper-division coursework required for the degree.

C. Concentration - Specialized sequences of courses available to students in an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree that appear on the transcript upon completion. Concentrations can be required or optional. Each concentration consists of a shared programmatic core of required courses, plus required and/or elective courses specified for the concentration. The courses specified for the concentration must constitute at least one-third of semester hours or outcomes-based courses required for the program.

III. Procedure:

A. Campuses seeking exceptions to [this policy](#) must submit formal requests to the board of regents for approval, following the guidelines established by policy 303.1. The request shall be considered a Level II change. The rationale for the exception must document the existence of one or more of the criteria in paragraph B below.

B. Criteria [evaluated before granting an exception](#):

1. Accreditation standards of the appropriate specialized accrediting agency ~~mandate a baccalaureate program of over 120 credit hours.~~
2. Licensing standards of the profession ~~involved require a baccalaureate program of over 120 credit hours.~~
3. Employment and initial success in the profession ~~require a baccalaureate program of over 120 credit hours.~~

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C. The burden of proof will be on the campuses requesting exceptions to document that any or all of the above conditions are present with regard to their particular situation.

D. The board of regents understands that additional hours beyond the minimum required for the baccalaureate degree would be desirable for many students to broaden their general education, to deepen their knowledge and preparation in a specific discipline, and to improve their chances for employment. The board anticipates that the advising process will make these opportunities known to students. However, the desirability of additional education to achieve these or other goals is not sufficient rationale for an exception to the 120-hour requirement, which is intended for students who wish to enter the job market or pursue graduate/professional education as soon as possible.

E. Campuses wishing to award outcomes-based undergraduate degrees will submit proposals for approval by the board of regents in the normal process for approval of degrees.

History:

Item 89-002-R1195, Undergraduate Requirements; Montana University System, approved by the Board of Regents on March 29, 1996; as revised November 18, 1999 (Item 104-103-R0999). Revised May 20, 2005 (Item 127-114-R0505), language and format changes. Revised November 17, 2006 (Item 133-101-R1106).