

**Western Michigan University  
Faculty Senate  
Memorandum of Action**

MOA – 22/03

**Revision of Graduation Requirements to Establish Minimum Credits for a  
Doctoral Degree and Clarification of Previous Credit Use Encased in a  
Completed Doctoral and Specialist Degrees**

**Name of Council(s)/Committee(s):** Graduate Studies Council

**Approval Date:**  
8 December 2022

**Implementation Date:**  
Upon Administrative Approval

**Responsible Office(s) and Responsible Enforcement Official(s):**  
Graduate College Dean

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Require a minimum of 60 credits for a doctoral degree at WMU. Also add language to both the doctoral and specialist program transfer credit sections that, under certain conditions, allows credits from previous completed graduate degrees to be used in the program, without them counting within the overall program time limit.

Dawn Anderson

8 December 2022

Dawn Anderson, Chair, Graduate Studies Council

Date

Approve                       Disapprove                       Other Action  
Comments:

Sarah Summy, WMU Faculty Senate President

Date

Approve                       Disapprove                       Other Action  
Comments:

Julian Vasquez Heilig, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date

Approve                       Disapprove                       Other Action  
Comments:

Edward B. Montgomery, WMU President

Date

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**RATIONALE/PURPOSE**

Current WMU policy, offered within the Graduate Catalog, specifies a minimum number of credits for all degrees and certificates, except for the doctoral degree. For doctoral degree requirements, the catalog only specifies that 30 credits plus dissertation credits (12 credits minimum) are required after admission to the doctoral program.

Current WMU practice has been to require at least 60 credits for doctoral programs beyond a Bachelor's degree. Such credits can include previous graduate credits, as long as the university minimum of 30 credits, plus dissertation credits, is met. Yet, given the absence of this number in policy, questions have arisen regarding the overall minimum number of credits for receiving a doctoral degree from WMU, with some asking if having just 42 credits post a bachelor's degree might be adequate for a doctoral degree.

In exploring this issue, it was revealed that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) does not specify a minimum for doctoral degrees, but a review of peer, MAC, and Michigan schools reveals that the vast majority require 60-90 credits beyond the bachelor's degree, and 33-60 credits beyond the master's degree (See Table on the last page of this document). The GSC reviewed such data and recommend that the existing practice of requiring at least 60 credits post bachelor's degree is appropriate and should be enacted into policy.

It is important to note that WMU graduate programs vary widely in practice. Some of our graduate programs are very credit-intensive and others measure progress through research/discovery, internships, and other means, where course credit is less meaningful. Some of our doctoral programs accept only students with a master's degree, but others accept students into the doctoral program directly from the bachelor's degree. Therefore, there should be a policy regarding an overall minimum number of credits that is clear and transparent to all situations.

In addition, existing practice has been that any credits brought into a doctoral program from a completed degree do not count within the overall time limit for that degree (if a certain grade is achieved and if approved by the advisor for placement within the program of study). This practice has worked well, and needs to be stated clearly in the policy for the doctoral programs, and should also be added to the policy for specialist degree programs. These are both degrees in which there may be many years between a student completing their masters and then beginning their next advanced graduate degree. Revising the policy will result in the need for fewer program extensions and related paperwork.

## STAKEHOLDERS

This revised policy will make things clearer for graduate faculty and students as new programs are developed. It also will support graduate students whereby less paperwork will be needed for program extensions when work from completed graduate degrees are included within a program.

## HISTORY:

- a) Effective date of current version: unknown
- b) Date first adopted: unknown
- c) Revision history: unknown
- d) Proposed date of next review: as needed

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**CURRENT POLICY MODIFICATION** (additions in bold and deletions with strikethrough): listing of the sections that are being changed.

## Academic Policies/Graduation/Degree-Level Graduation Requirements/Doctoral Degree

### Doctoral Degree

The doctoral degree is awarded by Western Michigan University on the basis of evidence that the candidate has achieved a high level of proficiency in research and scholarship, a mastery of a special field of learning, and the professional competence to work independently in that special field. The degree is not conferred merely upon fulfillment of minimum, technical requirements nor merely by accumulating course credits.

All doctoral programs at WMU have special and particular requirements for the degree, and the student will be governed by these, which are described in department handbooks and in the Graduate College Catalog.

In addition to the minimum University requirements for graduation listed below, each doctoral degree program requires students to complete specific courses, examinations, research, and/or experiences. For more complete information about the requirements for each doctoral program, read the program requirements section of the relevant program's listing in this catalog or contact the program's graduate advisor or the department office.

1. Minimum Credit Hours: **Completion of a minimum of 60 hours of accepted graduate credit in an approved program of study.** After admission to the doctoral program, completion of a minimum of thirty hours, excluding the dissertation, at WMU in an approved program of study. Hours in addition to thirty may well be required by a specific program; consult the program advisor for complete information. The thirty hours, excluding the dissertation, may not include any credit earned at another institution. Credit earned at another institution in addition to the thirty hours and dissertation earned at WMU after admission to the doctoral program, however, may be approved by the doctoral program advisor and included in the student's program of study.
  - Each student's program will be planned by a committee selected in consultation between the student and the graduate advisor of the program in which the student wishes to study. The exact distribution of courses, seminars, and research will depend upon the program and may vary from one student to another. Each program, however, will contain a significant amount of research, and each student will be required to complete a dissertation [except in those programs where a dissertation is not a program requirement]. In addition to the appointment of a doctoral dissertation committee, approval of the dissertation proposal must be made by the committee.
  - At least one-half of the credits earned for the doctoral degree must be in courses numbered 6000 or above.
  - A doctoral level Graduate Student Permanent Program of Study may include a maximum of four hours of credit in 5980 (Readings).
2. Research Tools: Demonstration of proficiency in two appropriate research tools, as determined by the department and approved by the University. Normally, the research tools are selected from among

foreign language, statistics, research methodology, and computer programming; however, other tools have been approved for some programs.

3. Residency Requirement: There is no general residency requirement for doctoral students. Each doctoral program or degree-granting unit (e.g. college) may, however, with approval of the University through the curriculum review process, establish its own residency requirement. Students must meet any such residency requirement prior to approval for candidacy. Students should consult with their advisor regarding the residency requirement for the specific program of interest.
4. Comprehensive Examinations: Passing the required comprehensive examination(s) that cover(s) the principal subject matter areas included in the student's program of study.
5. Grade Point Average: A degree program grade point average of at least 3.0 (or 3.25 in some programs) is required for all work taken for the doctoral degree at WMU.
  - Credit toward the doctoral degree is granted only for graduate courses in which a grade of "C" or better is earned. Courses with lower grades will not count toward graduation.
6. Transfer Credit: Credits may be transferred from one doctoral program at WMU to another as long as all requirements of the new program are met. Often doctoral students attend WMU after earning a master's or other graduate degree elsewhere, and their subsequent course work is then usually elected at WMU. However, graduate credit earned at another institution after admission to the doctoral program is eligible for transfer provided:
  - The credit is earned at an institution accredited for graduate study and is of "B" grade (3.0) or better. Moreover, the student's overall grade point average for all graduate work taken at the other institution must also be "B" (3.0) or better. [Honor points and grades earned in courses at another institution do not transfer to WMU. Transfer credit will be recorded on the WMU transcript as "Credit" (CR) only and will not be calculated into the honor points earned and the grade point average at WMU. A graduate degree earned elsewhere that comprises part of the student's doctoral program of study at WMU will be posted on the student's transcript, but the degree's courses, grades, and honor points will not be transferred nor posted on the transcript.]
  - The credit is earned within a seven-year period prior to graduation from WMU, is represented on an official transcript of the other institution, and is identified on that transcript as graduate credit, **unless such credits are encased within a completed graduate degree, and if so, they can be from outside this time period.**
  - The student's program advisor verifies that the transfer credits contribute to the student's degree program and includes them in the student's Graduate Student Permanent Program of Study.
7. Time Limit: After admission, all requirements for the degree must be completed within seven years preceding the date on which the degree is conferred. Students whose degrees are taken primarily through part-time study have the option of requesting an extension from the graduate dean. Extensions beyond the seven years may also be granted for other students by the dean of the Graduate College for such legitimate reasons as illness, injury, or hardship. In such situations, the student and department must demonstrate how the student will bring up to date the content knowledge from courses taken more than seven years before the projected date of graduation.

## **Academic Policies/Graduation/Degree-Level Graduation Requirements/Specialist Degree**

### **Specialist Degree**

In addition to the minimum University requirements for graduation listed below, each specialist degree program requires students to complete specific courses, examinations, research, and/or experiences. For more complete information about the requirements for a specialist program, read the program requirements section of the relevant program's listing in this catalog or contact the program's graduate advisor or the department office.

1. Minimum Credit Hours: Completion of a minimum of 54 hours of accepted graduate credit in an approved program of study. Additional hours may be required by a specific program; consult the program advisor for complete information.
  - After admission to the specialist program, completion of a minimum of 24 hours, including six credits of 7200 Special Project credits or at least three capstone credits (involving field experiences, a field-based project, and/or other culminating work), at Western Michigan University, is required.

- At least one-half of the credits earned for the specialist degree must be in courses numbered 6000 or above.
  - A specialist level Graduate Student Permanent Program of Study may include a maximum of four hours of credit in 5980 (Readings).
2. Residency Requirement: A residency requirement is established by each specialist program and approved by the University's curriculum review process and must be met prior to graduation. Unless otherwise approved by the University for an individual academic unit, the general residency requirement for specialist students is one academic semester of full-time study on campus or enrollment in two sessions in consecutive years and the intervening semesters. Consult the program advisor for complete information.
  3. Grade Point Average: A degree program grade point average of at least 3.0 is required for all work taken for the specialist degree at Western Michigan University.
    - Credit toward the specialist degree is granted only for graduate courses in which a grade of "C" or better is earned. Courses with lower grades will not count toward graduation.
  4. Transfer Credit: A student with a master's degree from another institution who completes the remaining credits for a specialist degree at WMU may transfer up to 30 semester hours of approved graduate credit. A student without a master's degree who completes a specialist degree at WMU may transfer up to twelve semester hours of approved graduate credit. Graduate credit earned at another institution is eligible for transfer to a WMU specialist program provided:
    - The credit is earned at an institution accredited for graduate study and is of "B" grade (3.0) or better. Moreover, the student's overall grade point average for all graduate work taken at the other institution must also be "B" (3.0) or better. [Honor points and grades earned at another institution do not transfer to WMU. Transfer credit will be recorded on the WMU transcript as "Credit" (CR) only and will not be calculated into the honor points earned and the grade point average at WMU.]
    - The credit is earned within a six-year period prior to graduation from WMU, is represented on an official transcript of the other institution, and is identified on that transcript as graduate credit, **unless such credits are encased within a completed graduate degree, and if so, they can be from outside this time period.**
    - The student's program advisor verifies that the transfer credits contribute to the student's degree program and includes them in the student's Graduate Student Permanent Program of Study.

**Appendix (see next page)**

**Table of Total Minimum Credits Required for Doctoral Degrees (based on what could be found online via their graduate catalogs/policy)**

	Total Minimum Credits Required for Doctoral Degree	# Can Transfer	Min. Required After Admission to Doc Program
<b>WMU</b>	60 beyond bachelors (in practice)	18	30 plus dissertation (min 12 diss cr)
<b>Peers</b>			
Ball State Univ	90 beyond bachelors	42	40 plus dissertation (min 10)
East Carolina Univ	76 beyond bachelors; 58 beyond masters		
Kent State Univ	90 beyond bachelors; 60 beyond masters		
Northern Illinois Univ	72 beyond bachelors		
Ohio Univ	70 beyond bachelors		36 beyond prof masters
Univ Nevada-Las Vegas	42 post masters		
Univ North Dakota	90 beyond bachelors	30	
<b>MAC</b>			
Central Michigan Univ	60 beyond bachelors		
Kent State Univ	90 beyond bachelors; 60 beyond masters		
Northern Illinois Univ	72 beyond bachelors		
Ohio Univ	70 beyond bachelors; 42 post masters		
University of Toledo	90 beyond bachelors; 60 beyond masters		
Eastern Michigan Univ	90 beyond bachelors		
Ball State Univ	90 beyond bachelors	42	40 plus dissertation (min 10)
Miami Univ (Ohio)	60 beyond bachelors		
Bowling Green State Univ	90 beyond bachelors; 60 beyond masters		
<b>Other Michigan</b>			
Eastern Michigan Univ	90 beyond bachelors		
Grand Valley State Univ	90 beyond bachelors; 45 beyond masters		
Oakland Univ	80 post bachelors		not used in other degree
University of Michigan-Dearborn	36 after masters; 36 cr plus 24 diss after bachelors		
Wayne State Univ	90 beyond bachelors		
Northern Michigan Univ	72 beyond bachelors; 33 beyond masters		
Michigan Tech Univ	60 beyond bachelors		1/3 of non-research cr can transfer