



**Office of Provost and Vice President  
For Academic Affairs**

**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY**

**ACADEMIC OPERATING POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

MEMORANDUM TO: All Holders of Mississippi State University  
Academic Operating Policy and Procedure  
Manual

DATE: April 28, 2009

SUBJECT: AOP 12.08 – Requirements for Degrees,  
Academic Minors, and Certificate Programs

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Academic Operating Policy (AOP) is to establish requirements for different degrees and to provide the basis for establishing and maintaining academic minors and certificate programs which both recognize successful completion of course work area(s) other than a student's academic major.

**REVIEW**

This AOP will be reviewed every four years or whenever circumstances require an earlier review by the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs (APAA) with recommendations for revision to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

**1. Degree Programs.** Mississippi State University (MSU) offers baccalaureate, master's, educational specialist, doctor of philosophy, doctor of education, and doctor of veterinary medicine degrees. All courses and curricula are subject to the review and approval of the University Committee on Courses and Curricula, and the Graduate Council when appropriate. Faculty members representing all of the MSU colleges serve on these committees. All courses and curricula are also subject to review and approval by the Academic Deans Council.

Undergraduate degrees. All baccalaureate degrees offered by MSU must comply with the guidelines established by the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. All undergraduate degree programs must have a minimum of 120 semester hours and typically no more than 124 hours. Exceptions for exceeding the 124 can be requested based on discipline-

specific accreditation and licensing standards and other standards in certain disciplines. All baccalaureate programs must meet or exceed the university's general education requirements.

Graduate Degrees. Our five graduate degrees have length requirements as follows:

- All master's degrees at MSU must have a minimum of 30 semester hours. The master's degree with a thesis option requires 24 hours of graduate course work and 6 hours of earned research/thesis hours. Any non-thesis master's option must contain a minimum of 30 hours of graduate course work.
- Educational specialist degree requires 30 semester hours of graduate credit above the master's degree. The educational specialist degree with a thesis option requires 24 hours of graduate course work and 6 hours of earned research/thesis hours. Any non-thesis educational specialist option must contain a minimum of 30 hours of graduate course work.
- The doctor of philosophy degree requires at least three academic years beyond the bachelor's degree to meet the course requirements. Also required for the doctorate of philosophy are a dissertation and a minimum of 20 semester hours of research for the dissertation.
- The doctor of education degree requires at least three academic years beyond the bachelor's degree or a minimum of 90 semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree to meet the course requirements. Also required for the doctorate of education are a dissertation and a minimum of 20 semester hours of research for the dissertation.
- The doctor of veterinary medicine degree is a professional degree, and it requires a minimum of the equivalent four academic years, including two academic years of hands-on clinical education.

**2. Minors.** An academic minor is a designation of a group of courses in an approved academic area in which a student can gain recognition for the completion of a required number of credit hours. Minors are optional at the undergraduate level but may be required in certain graduate degree programs. Minors can only be granted concurrently and in conjunction with the granting of a degree from Mississippi State University.

The following conditions apply to minors:

- A minimum of 15 credit hours is required for an undergraduate minor and a minimum of 9 credit hours is required for a minor at the Master's level and 12 credit hours at the doctoral level.
- At least one half of the hours in the undergraduate minor and two thirds of the hours in a graduate minor must be taken at MSU.
- A minimum grade point average of 2.0 is required in all courses taken as part of an undergraduate minor, while a minimum 3.0 is required in all courses taken as part of a graduate minor.
- A department or academic unit granting a minor may specify majors for which students can not earn that minor. Otherwise, students are free to pursue any approved minor.
- Academic units can establish additional requirements that go beyond those specified in this policy.
- The establishment of all undergraduate minors must be approved by the University Committee on Courses and Curricula and by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

- A student must declare intent to complete requirements for a minor prior to the declaration to graduate.
- Completion of a minor will be noted on a student's academic transcript.

**3. Certificate Programs.** An academic certificate program is a thematic grouping of courses in which students can attain recognition for the completion of a required number of credit hours. It is distinct from a minor in that it is not necessary for the granting of a certificate to be tied to the granting of a degree although individual certificate programs may make that requirement. Unlike minors which tend to be in areas where there are majors, certificate programs can be interdisciplinary and are often in areas in which the university offers no major.

The following conditions apply to certificates:

- A minimum of 12 credit hours in a program are required for a certificate.
- At least 50% of the hours earned in a certificate program must be taken at MSU.
- A minimum grade point average of 2.0 is required in all courses taken as part of an undergraduate certificate program, while a minimum 3.0 is required in all courses taken as part of a graduate certificate program.
- Certificate programs can be established with additional requirements that go beyond those specified in this policy.
- A committee or oversight body must be established that administers the certificate program.
- The establishment of all certificate programs must be approved by the University Committee on Courses and Curricula, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and by the Assistant Commissioner of the Institutions of Higher Learning for Academics and Student Affairs.
- A certificate may be granted independent of a degree or in conjunction with a degree if so specified by the certificate program.
- Completion of a certificate program will be noted on a student's academic transcript.

Responsibilities

<u>Position</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Year</u>
Associate Provost for Academic Affairs	Review	2013

Reviewed By:

/s/ Jerome Gilbert 03-09-09  
Associate Provost for Academic Affairs Date

/s/ Peter Rabideau 03-09-09  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Date

/s/ David Nagel \_\_\_\_\_  
President, Robert Holland Faculty Senate Date

/s/ Don Zant 04-14-09  
Director, Office of Internal Audit Date

/s/ Charles Guest 04-20-09  
General Counsel Date

Approved:

/s/ Mark E. Keenum 04-28-09  
President Date