Programs, Courses & Credits

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**Official Program Designations**

In alignment with Series 11, while offering greater specificity, the following definitions are applicable to West Virginia University, Potomac State College and West Virginia University Institute of Technology.

**DEGREE PROGRAM**

A degree program is an area of study approved as such by the institution and the Commission and listed on the official Commission inventory of degree programs, e.g. English, Social Work, Physical Education. The degree, which is an award signifying a rank or level of educational attainment and which is conferred on students who have successfully completed a degree program, is represented by the official degree designation, e.g. B.A. - Bachelor of Arts, B.S. - Bachelor of Science, A.S. - Associate of Science, etc. The degree program completed would be listed on the student’s diploma. A student pursuing a second bachelor's degree must complete a minimum of thirty credits after admission to the degree program.

**MAJOR**

A disciplinary major is a field of study within an approved degree program, having its own curriculum. Typically, an undergraduate baccalaureate major requires a minimum number of thirty (30) credit hours with the majority of credits at the upper division level. A degree program may have more than one major, however normally no more than twelve (12) credits may be shared across majors. An institution may elect to include the major(s) on the student’s diploma.

An interdisciplinary major offers a unique curriculum integrating coursework offered by collaborating programs that may be in different departments, divisions, colleges, schools, et. al. Completion of an interdisciplinary major requires a minimum of twenty (20) hours that are not counted toward completion of another major or minor. An institution may elect to include the major(s) on the student’s diploma.

**AREA OF EMPHASIS**

An Area of Emphasis is a specific subject area within an approved major of a degree program. Areas of Emphasis add an optional specialization within a major area of study. Areas of Emphasis are noted on the transcript, however are not printed on the diploma.

Normally, a minimum of twelve (12) and no more than eighteen (18) hours are expected for an Area of Emphasis associated with a major within a baccalaureate degree. Nine of the credit hours must be upper division.

A minimum of six (6) and no more than twelve (12) credit hours are expected for an area of emphasis associated with a graduate major. A maximum of 3 credit hours may be shared with another Area of Emphasis.

**MINOR**

A baccalaureate minor is earned in a specific subject area of study and must be composed of at least fifteen (15) credit hours of course work nine (9) of which must be upper-division (300- and 400-level). A student may not earn a disciplinary minor in a subject area in which he/she is earning a baccalaureate major. Completion of a minor requires a minimum of nine (9) hours that are not counted toward completion of another minor or Area of Emphasis. Minors are not available at the graduate level.

**CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**

A certificate program (as distinguished from the one-year Certificate Degree Program offered by the community and technical colleges) is a coherent, specialized curriculum designed for students in search of a specific body of knowledge for personal/career development. The certificate program is not attached to a degree program, although credit hours earned in a certificate program may be applied to a degree according to the credit sharing
limitations described below. The awarding of a certificate upon completion is not contingent upon completion of a degree program. The certificate appears on the student’s transcript and an institution may issue an official certificate of completion.

Normally, a minimum of six (6) total and no more than nine (9) credit hours would constitute a certificate program at the associate level, and a minimum of twelve (12) and no more than twenty-four (24) would constitute a certificate program at the baccalaureate or graduate level.

Certificate programs may require admission to the certificate program prior to enrollment in specified certificate courses. Students must be admitted to the certificate program in order to be awarded the certificate.

Credit sharing limitations:

• No more than 6 credits earned from a different institution or applied to both a certificate and a degree can be used to meet certificate requirements, with the exception noted below. Applicability of credits earned from a different institution to certificate requirements is the decision of the program offering the certificate.

• If a student first completes a certificate and then is admitted to a degree program for which more than 6 credits of the previously completed certificate courses are explicit requirements, up to 12 credits of previously completed courses may be applied to the degree. Applicability of credits earned as part of a certificate to degree requirements in this case is the decision of the program offering the degree.

Note: A minor, Area of Emphasis, or Certificate that has not enrolled any students for five years will be deactivated. Where extenuating circumstances exist, the program may petition for a two-year extension from the Associate Provosts for Undergraduate Education or Graduate Education and Life.

Graduate Certificate Programs

For a complete list of certificates and information on WVU's graduate certificates, please see our Graduate Certificates Page (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduatecertificates).

Multiple Graduate Degrees

University policy permits students to obtain more than one WVU graduate degree either simultaneously or sequentially. See the section on Course Credit Limitations for limits on the use of credits for more than one program.

Approved Dual Degree Programs

West Virginia University offers several approved dual degree programs. Approved dual degree programs are programs in which certain courses or credits are accepted for credit by each program. Students in such programs must also successfully complete any specific program requirements. Students in approved dual degree programs must graduate from both programs simultaneously (or the limits in the section on Degree Programs Credit Limitations (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/#Limitations) apply). Students should contact the individual units regarding admission and academic requirements and regulations for these approved dual degree programs.

Approved Dual Degree Programs:

• Doctor of Dental Surgery/Master of Public Health
• Doctor of Dental Surgery/Master of Business Administration
• Doctor of Jurisprudence/Master of Business Administration
• Doctor of Jurisprudence/Master of Public Administration
• Doctor of Medicine/Master of Public Health
• Doctor of Medicine/Master of Business Administration
• Doctor of Medicine/Doctor of Philosophy
• Doctor of Pharmacy/Master of Business Administration
• Master of Public Administration/Master of Social Work
• Master of Business Administration/Master of Science in Finance
• Master of Business Administration/Master of Science in Industrial Relations
• Master of Business Administration/Master of Science in Nursing
• Master of Business Administration/Master of Science in Sports Management
• Master of Public Health/Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology
• Master of Public Health/Master of Business Administration

Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Programs

Students in ABM programs complete all requirements for both degrees. Students are conferred both degrees simultaneously following completion of the requirements for both degrees.
Students accepted to an ABM program will be dually enrolled in the bachelor's and master's degree programs after completion of at least 60 undergraduate credits and admission to the master's degree program. Students must complete a separate application for admission to the master's degree program.

Students enrolled in a master's degree program as part of an ABM program may enroll in graduate-level courses approved for their program without completing a Senior Petition.

Unless given specific permission by the relevant dean, students admitted to an ABM program must maintain full-time continuous enrollment during fall and spring terms. Enrollment requirements in summer term are determined by individual programs.

Students who are admitted to an ABM program may not pursue a dual degree, double major, or certificate. They may pursue minors and areas of emphasis, as approved by their advisor. However, students admitted to an ABM program will not be approved for course overloads (more than 17 credits in any term that includes more than one graduate-level course, more than 20 credits in any term that does not include graduate-level courses).

**APPROVED ABM PROGRAMS:**
- Bachelor of Science/Master of Science in Applied and Environmental Microbiology
- Bachelor of Science/Master of Science in Physical Education Teacher Education

**Credit Hour Definition**
West Virginia University courses offered for credit are based on semester hours. Semesters are fifteen weeks long plus one week for final exams. A single credit hour is equivalent to fifty minutes of guided instruction within the classroom. An hour of preparation, or related activity outside of the classroom, is equivalent to sixty minutes.

**FACE-TO-FACE CLASSROOM LEARNING**
One credit hour is equivalent to one hour of guided instruction (fifty minute class) and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time such as during the summer academic term, when courses may vary in duration. One credit hour in other academic activities, as established by the institution, such as laboratory work, internships, practicums, studio work, study abroad, experiential learning opportunities, and online learning, must include an equivalent amount of required work.

**ONLINE LEARNING**
One credit hour of online learning is equivalent to fifteen hours of direct instruction and thirty hours of student work. Direct instruction can occur via computer-assisted (modules), multi-media interaction, discussions, and/or completion of exams/quizzes/assessments as documented in the course syllabus and approved to meet best practices in online learning. Student work includes activities like readings and supplemental home work. Students must fulfill these hours to complete the course requirements as set forth by the course instructor. Online courses developed from existing face-to-face instruction adhere to the defined learning outcomes and assessments of the original face-to-face format for the course. All WVU online programs are reviewed for nationally accepted standards for online learning.

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**
In experiential learning, including opportunities representing laboratory/lecture courses, undergraduate research (with or without laboratory), professional development internships, and service learning, a total of three hours of classroom and preparation time per week over a period of fifteen weeks for one
credit hour or the equivalent amount of work over a shorter period of time is required. Courses must incorporate adequate opportunities to document student progress and student completion of the stated learning objectives for each experience.

**STUDY ABROAD**

One credit hour is equivalent to fifteen hours of guided instruction and thirty hours of cultural, linguistic or other types of engagements as described by the syllabus and approved by the faculty, department Chair, Dean, and Associate Provost. Exceptions to this general rule would need to be justified and approved on an individual basis.

**STUDIO/ENSEMBLE WORK**

In studio courses representing the arts, design, and theatre, one credit hour is equivalent to one and a half hours of guided instruction and three hours for studio class practice or projects each week for fifteen weeks as defined by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). In accordance with the National Association of Schools of Music standards, one credit hour of ensemble work in the music field represents three hours of practice each week, on average, for a period of fifteen weeks plus the necessary individual instruction as defined by the major subject.

**VARIABLE CREDIT OFFERINGS**

Variable credit courses often represent student experiences that range in credit hours based on the focus and discipline of the experience. Practicums (teaching and research), field experience, undergraduate and graduate research and laboratory rotations and credit, and independent studies offer a range of contact. One credit hour is equivalent to fifteen contact hours of guided instruction (e.g., student progress meetings, mentoring) and thirty hours of student work to complete the requirements set forth by the advisor or course instructor (e.g., team meetings, review sessions, thesis/dissertation preparation) over a fifteen week period. Instructors/mentors and students should discuss the appropriate number of total credit hours for a given course based on the time needed to attain outcomes of the particular endeavor.