



# Policy on Graduate Academic Definitions

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**Effective Date: September 1, 2016**

**Responsible University Officials: Provost**

**Endorsed by GAAC: May 20, 2016**

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

This policy establishes/updates definitions of graduate-level academic programs and their curricular components, and replaces previously-adopted policies and definitions. This policy satisfies multiple institutional planning and documentation requirements of both the Higher Learning Commission and the U.S. Department of Education.

*Note: When needed, these definitions will be amended and additional definitions will be added to this policy (if, for example, there is a need to expand them so as to include new graduate programs).*

## 2.0 UNIVERSITY-WIDE DEFINITIONS

### Academic Program

An academic program is a formal, coherent and finite program of study which may be composed of credit and/or non-credit bearing courses and non-course requirements. Academic programs are designed to enable students to achieve comprehensive educational outcomes through dedicated faculty guidance and within a holistic educational context.

The University recognizes the following types of academic programs on official SLU transcripts: *degrees, majors (UG and GR/PR), minors, concentrations and certificates.*

*NOTE: Academic programs that draw upon the disciplinary content, pedagogies and research methods of more than one academic discipline for the purpose of intentionally educating students in the context of the integrated nature of knowledge, scholarship, and professional work may be described as "interdisciplinary" programs. However, the extent to which a program is interdisciplinary or solely disciplinary is not a factor in any formal designation of the program (i.e. a major might be interdisciplinary, but would not be classified formally as a separate kind of major that was somehow organizationally/administratively distinct from a disciplinary major; in other words, a major is a major).*

### Degree

*Note: Although in everyday University parlance we often refer to SLU's individual colleges, schools and centers as having the authority to "grant" and/or "confer" degrees and certificates (as in the phrase, "degree-granting college/school/center"), per our charter with the State of Missouri and per Board of Trustees bylaws, it is only Saint Louis University "as a whole," or as a corporate entity (i.e. the Board of Trustees), that is legally empowered to grant or confer degrees and certificates.*

A degree is a formal academic award (as defined by the U.S. Department of Education) conferred by the University upon the completion of all requirements of a degree. SLU offers the following degrees at the following academic levels:

Baccalaureate Level	Post- Baccalaureate Level
Associate's Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Associate of Arts</li> <li>▪ Associate of Science</li> </ul>	Master's Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Master of Arts</li> <li>▪ Master of Science</li> <li>▪ Other Master's Degrees (e.g., M.B.A., M.S.W., M.Ed., or other designations that mirror nationally-recognized norms)</li> </ul> Specialist Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Specialist in Education (Ed.S.)</li> </ul>
Bachelor's Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bachelor of Arts</li> <li>▪ Bachelor of Science</li> </ul>	Doctoral Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Doctor of Philosophy</li> <li>▪ Other Doctoral Degrees (e.g., M.D., J.D., Ed.D., D.N.P., D.P.T., or other designations that mirror nationally-recognized norms)</li> </ul>

For academic units at SLU the master's and the PhD degrees are distinguished as follows:

- Students completing the master-level degree should execute a program of research, or advanced coursework, as outlined and guided by their mentor, or faculty (as appropriate).
- Students completing a PhD degree should create original research that produces publishable results at the current standard of excellence in their field.

### Dual Degree Program

A dual degree program is an integrated program of study designed to result in students earning two distinct degrees (not one modified or hybrid or joint degree) by completing the requirements of two full degree programs, typically over a period of time shorter than would otherwise be required to complete both programs sequentially. It requires the completion of all requirements for each degree, but may allow students to count designated credits earned in one degree program to fulfill the requirements for both degrees (similar to a pre-defined transfer credit articulation agreement). A post-baccalaureate-level dual degree program could be the result of collaboration between a) multiple departments in a SLU college/school; 2) two or more SLU colleges/schools/centers at SLU; or 3) SLU and another college/university (domestic or international). In the case of partnerships with institutions from countries with degree requirements different from those in the U.S., appropriate arrangements consistent with this definition may be made. This also requires a signed pre-authorized agreement between SLU and the other institution.

### External Joint Degree ("Jointly-Conferred" Degree)

An external joint degree is a single academic award jointly conferred by Saint Louis University and at least one other accredited institution of higher education (domestic or international) with which SLU has collaborated to teach and/or administer the degree jointly. Students are required to take at least 50% of their courses from Saint Louis University. Diplomas for external jointly conferred degrees feature the official seals of all partner institutions, and may be issued by each partner institutions; transcripts for joint degrees may be issued by each partner institutions. In the case of partnerships with institutions from countries with varied traditions/requirements for diplomas and degrees, appropriate arrangements consistent with this definition may be made. This also requires a signed pre-authorized agreement between SLU and the other institution.

### Internal Joint Degree ("Jointly-Conferred" Degree)

An internal joint degree is a single academic award conferred by Saint Louis University that is comprised of courses from two post-baccalaureate programs at Saint Louis University. Students are required to take at least 40% of their courses from each of the two programs. Diplomas for internal jointly conferred degrees feature both Colleges/Schools/Centers.

## **Certificate**

A certificate is a formal academic award (as defined by the U.S. Department of Education) conferred by the University upon the successful completion of all requirements of a certificate program at either the baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate level. There are two types of certificate programs: Embedded and Independent.

### **Embedded Certificate Programs**

Embedded certificate programs are formal, coherent academic programs composed of a minimum of 12 semester hours of credit. They are earned concurrently with an established post-baccalaureate degree program. Embedded Certificate Programs are:

- 1) part of an established post-baccalaureate degree program
- 2) only available to SLU students as part of post-baccalaureate degree program
- 3) designed by a department, college, school, center or other unit authorized to offer degree and certificate programs
- 4) composed primarily of courses but may also include non-course curricular requirements (such as completion of portfolios, engagement in academic assessment or testing, etc.)

### **Independent Certificate Programs**

Credit certificate programs are formal, coherent and finite academic programs typically composed of a minimum of 16 semester hours of credit for baccalaureate programs and 8 semester hours of credit for post-baccalaureate programs. They are designed for short-term, in-depth, study of an academic discipline, profession or interdisciplinary intellectual theme.

Independent certificate programs:

- 1) are Title IV funding-eligible
- 2) are, per U.S. Department of Education requirements, intended to "prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation" as designated by one or more U.S. Dept. of Labor Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes. (Rates of student attainment of employment in SOC-designated occupations may be used by the U.S. Department of Education to determine the quality of the certificate program and its continued eligibility for Title IV funding – i.e. eligibility for federal grants and loans to be awarded to students in the program.)
- 3) are designed by a department, college, school, center or other unit authorized to offer degree and certificate programs
- 4) are composed primarily of courses but also include non-course curricular requirements (such as completion of portfolios, engagement in academic assessment or testing, etc.)
- 5) are independent curricular entities, and may be taken both by degree-seeking students at SLU and non-degree-seeking students (in other words, all independent certificates must be able to be taken as "stand-alone" programs)
- 6) can be earned by degree-seeking students if no more than 25% of the credits required for the certificate can be applied to the completion of any degree program at SLU in which the student is enrolled at the time of completion of the certificate program
- 7) are identified on a student's transcript as independent academic programs

*Note: Students who have earned bachelor's degrees (from SLU or elsewhere) and who subsequently enroll in SLU undergraduate certificate programs may be referred to as "post-baccalaureate certificate students" to describe the status of the students; however, the programs in which such students enroll will officially be approved, recorded and reported as undergraduate certificate programs, and such students will officially be recorded and reported as students enrolled in undergraduate certificate programs.*

## Course Numbering

Courses are typically numbered according to the level of academic experience and maturity required for success:

Pre-Baccalaureate Level	
0000 – 0999	Developmental courses
Baccalaureate Level	
1000 – 1999	Introductory courses
2000 – 2999	Introductory/Intermediate courses
3000 – 3999	Intermediate/advanced courses
4000 - 4999	Advanced courses
Post-Baccalaureate Level	
0000 - 0999	School of Medicine courses
5000 – 5999	Post-Baccalaureate courses
6000 - 6999	Post-Baccalaureate courses
7000 - 9999	School of Law

## Semester Hour of Credit

In full accordance with federal regulations as defined under 34 CFR 600.2, Saint Louis University defines a semester hour (typically referred to as a “credit hour”) as the unit of academic credit awarded for the attainment of intended learning outcomes verified by evidence of student achievement, and as represented on official University academic records by the successful completion of an amount of student work as detailed below.

*For classroom and/or direct faculty instruction (regardless of delivery mode):*

One semester hour of credit is awarded for the attainment of intended learning outcomes resulting from **both**:

- 1) Student engagement in a reasonable equivalent of one clock hour (typically 50 minutes) of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week for approximately 15 weeks (or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time, which may be a requirement of certain external accrediting bodies)
- 2) Student completion of a reasonable equivalent of a minimum of two clock hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks (or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time, which may be a requirement of certain external accrediting bodies).

*For experiential learning (laboratory work, studio work, internships, practica, and related educational experiences/environments):*

One semester hour of credit is awarded for the attainment of intended learning outcomes resulting from student engagement in a reasonable equivalent of three hours of educational activity/experience each week (typically 2.5 clock hours) for approximately 15 weeks (or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time, which may be a requirement of certain external accrediting bodies).

*Note: Pedagogical and other methodological distinctions among academic disciplines may result in requirements for amounts of student work that exceed – but may not fall short of – the minimums established in this definition.*

This definition governs both credit awarded at SLU as well as transfer credit equivalency evaluations. Each SLU semester hour is the equivalent of 1.5 quarter hours of credit (as traditionally defined).

## Diploma

An official University document issued only by the Office of the University Registrar that formally documents the University's conferral of a degree or certificate. Particular student and program-associated information included on each diploma is limited to the following:

Student Name (e.g., John J. Doe)

Name of the SLU College/School/Center in which the student was enrolled ("College of Arts and Sciences," "John Cook School of Business," "Center for Sustainability")

Degree Title (e.g., "Bachelor of Science")

Formal Name of Graduate/Undergraduate Academic Program Major (e.g., "English," "Medicine," "Psychology")

Formal Name of Graduate Academic Program Concentration (e.g., "Clinical," "Modern European")

## 3.0 GRADUATE

### Post-Baccalaureate Credit

Post-baccalaureate credit is awarded for the successful completion of credit-bearing courses numbered 5000-9999 (excluding the School of Medicine), which are offered at a level of academic rigor and sophistication requiring, at a minimum, the intellectual aptitude and maturity typically evident in those who have earned a bachelors diploma and who otherwise meet applicable University admission requirements for post-baccalaureate-level study.

### Baccalaureate Credit

The University will permit some 4000-level undergraduate courses to be included in the degree program. However, the maximum allowable total credits of such coursework are ten. Also, at least half of the work in the major field (again, exclusive of Thesis Research) must be strictly post-baccalaureate (5000-9999) level. Non-research degree programs may be planned with somewhat greater flexibility. A minimum of 30% of the credits must be in the major field and half of the total program must be directly related to the major field. Again, no more than ten credits in total may be taken at the 4000-level. Ordinarily, no Master's degree program may include more than six credits in Research Topics (5970) or Graduate Reading (5980), or a combination thereof. Master's degree students may not enroll in tutorials carrying the course-numbers 4970 or 4980.

### Graduate Degree

A graduate degree is a formal academic award, conferred upon completion of all of the following program requirements for the degree:

- 1) Completion of all requirements of a degree program established by a College/School/Center in which the degree program is administratively housed and
- 2) Completion of a minimum of 30 semester hours of total post-baccalaureate academic credit (note: unless otherwise approved by the governing dean, a maximum of 10 baccalaureate credit hours may be applied to that total)

### Multidisciplinary Masters and Doctoral Options

The multidisciplinary option allows student to pursue a master's or doctoral degree that is distinctly different from the departments and major fields of study at Saint Louis University.

### Minor (Post-baccalaureate)

A minor is a formal, coherent and finite curricular component of a post-baccalaureate degree program comprised of at least 9 semester hours of credit. Minors are focused on in-depth, graduate-level study of an academic discipline or interdisciplinary intellectual theme in an area outside that of a student's primary degree program. A minor:

- 1) is comprised primarily of courses but may also include non-course curricular requirements (such as completion of portfolios, engagement in academic assessment or testing, etc.);

- 2) is an independent curricular entity taken only by post-baccalaureate, degree-seeking students;
- 3) need not be related to/subordinate to a degree program; any minor may exist without the existence or any intention of establishing a corresponding degree program;
- 4) is distinguished from a concentration/emphasis or area/track in that those are all sub-components and requirements of a program, not distinct curricular entities/academic programs themselves; and
- 5) is identified on a student's transcript as a completed academic program

Students may, should they have adequate "space" in their curricula, declare more than one minor. For administrative purposes, one minor must be designated by the student as the "first" minor, another as the "second" minor, and so on. However, there are no academic or educational differences or hierarchies between or among "first" minors, "second" minors, etc. – the only difference is the order in which they are listed on academic records per student choice.

**Concentration (Post-baccalaureate)**

A concentration is a focused collection of courses offered as either a required or elective subcomponent of a degree program. Unlike minors, concentrations are part of degree programs and must be taken as subcomponents thereof. Concentrations require at least 9 semester hours of credit, and are identified on student transcripts.