

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
Policy 301.11 – Undergraduate Degree Requirements
Effective: November 17, 2006; Issued: November 27, 2006

1. Board Policy:

A. Requirements for baccalaureate degrees offered by units of the Montana university system (MUS) are limited to a maximum of 120 semester hours of credit. 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 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. A minimum of 60 credits in the AAS degree credited toward the BAS degree.
2. Completion of a general education program that satisfies the requirements of board policy 301.10.
3. The remainder of the 120 credits required for the degree 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.

II. Procedure:

A. Campuses seeking exceptions to the 120-maximum 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

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).