



# Policy on Academic Definitions

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**Effective Date: January 1, 2012**

**Responsible University Officials: VP, Academic Affairs**

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

This policy establishes/updates definitions of undergraduate-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: As needed, these definitions will be amended and additional definitions will be added to this policy (for example, we need to expand to include 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, certificates, and the University Honors Program.*

*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 (each of which is defined elsewhere in this policy):

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>

### 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. At the baccalaureate-level, a dual degree program can only be the result of collaboration between SLU and another college/university. 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.

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

A joint degree is a single academic award jointly conferred by SLU 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. Diplomas for jointly-conferred degrees feature the official seals of all partner institutions, and are issued by all partner institutions; transcripts for joint degrees are issued by all 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.

### 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.

#### Credit 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.

Credit 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 may 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 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 Courses

### 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 UNDERGRADUATE**

### **Associate's Degree**

An associate's degree is a formal academic award, conferred upon completion of all University-wide requirements for the degree, as follows:

- 1) Completion of all requirements of an undergraduate core curriculum required by the College of Arts and Sciences
- 2) Completion of a minimum of 60 semester hours of total undergraduate academic credit
- 3) Completion of any University-required non-course academic requirements (e.g. minimum score on a proficiency exam, learning portfolio, participation in assessment activities, etc.).

***NOTE: At this time an Associate's Degree may be pursued and earned only by students in the "College in Prison" program administered by the College of Arts and Sciences in association with the defined cohort of students at the ERDCC in Bonne Terre, MO. No other student – regardless of courses taken or credit earned – may be enrolled as a student seeking this degree, nor may be awarded this degree.***

### **Baccalaureate Credit**

Baccalaureate credit is awarded for the successful completion of credit-bearing courses numbered 0000-4999 (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 secondary school diploma or GED certificate and who otherwise meet applicable University admission requirements for undergraduate-level study. Credit awarded for courses numbered 0000-0999 may not apply toward the completion of any degree requirement nor be calculated as part of any official grade point average.

### **Bachelor's Degree**

A bachelor's degree is a formal academic award, conferred upon completion of all of the following University-wide requirements for the degree:

- 1) Completion of all requirements of an undergraduate core curriculum required by a College/School/Center in which in which the "first major" (see formal definition below) is administratively housed;
- 2) Completion of all requirements of one academic major;
- 3) Completion of a minimum of 120 semester hours of total undergraduate academic credit (note: unless otherwise approved by the governing dean, a maximum of 6 graduate credit hours may be applied to that total); and
- 4) Completion of any University-required non-course academic requirements (e.g. minimum score on a proficiency exam, learning portfolio, participation in assessment activities, etc.).

SLU confers the Bachelor of Arts degree and the Bachelor of Science degree.

### **Major (UG)**

An undergraduate major is a formal, coherent and finite curricular component of every undergraduate degree program composed of a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit. Majors are focused on undergraduate-level mastery of an academic discipline, profession, or interdisciplinary intellectual theme in preparation for entry into a career, graduate and professional school, and a life of educated inquiry and service to humanity. A major:

- 1) is designed either individually or collaboratively by a department(s), college(s), school(s), center(s) or other unit(s) authorized to offer undergraduate degree programs;
- 2) 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.);
- 3) is strongly recommended to require at least 12 semester hours of credit at the 3000- and 4000-levels;
- 4) is intentionally sequenced in the context of core and, if applicable, University elective requirements of an undergraduate degree program to enhance learning throughout the undergraduate degree program; and
- 5) is identified on a student's transcript as a completed academic program

### **Contract Major**

A major classified as a "Contract Major" is unique to a particular student, established via a "contract" between the student and a small team (2-3) of faculty advisors who agree to assist in the development of the program requirements and monitoring of student progress toward completion thereof. Contract majors may be established only when an extant major (or combination of extant majors, or majors and minors) cannot meet the faculty-supported educational objectives of the student (as determined by the faculty advisors and the Dean of the college/school/center through which the major will be formally administered). Contract majors:

- 1) must be formally administered by the college/school from which the highest number of credits earned in the major are generated;
- 2) must be complemented by the core requirements (and any other requirements) of the college/school from which the highest number of credits earned in the major are generated;
- 3) must be well-supported by extant faculty, library, studio and related educational resources at SLU, as determined by the faculty advisors;

- 4) must include a 3 s.h. capstone independent study course – taught by one or more of the student’s major faculty advisors -- via which students synthesize and integrate the broad range of knowledge acquired via the major; and
- 5) must meet all other requirements of majors as defined above.

Students may, should they have adequate “space” in their curricula, declare more than one major. For administrative purposes, one major must be designated by the student as the “first” major, another as the “second” major, and so on. Students must complete the core requirements of the college/school in which the student-declared first major is housed. However, there are no academic or educational differences or hierarchies between or among “first” major, “second” major, etc. – the only difference is the order in which they are listed on academic records per student choice. Note that only first majors are printed on students’ undergraduate diplomas.

*NOTE: In the absence of a clear definition of the academic qualities and requirements of a major, SLU had previously approved two majors as “Secondary Majors”; the adoption of the definition above, however, fills that void and therefore precludes the approval of any new program as a “Secondary Major.” The existing secondary majors may continue to operate as such or their directors/administrative homes may seek via UAAC reclassification as, simply, “majors” per this policy.*

### **Minor (UG)**

A minor is a formal, coherent and finite curricular component of an undergraduate degree program comprised of at least 15 semester hours of credit. Minors are focused on in-depth, undergraduate-level study of an academic discipline or interdisciplinary intellectual theme in an area outside that of a student’s major. 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 strongly recommended to require at least 6 semester hours of credit at the 3000- and 4000-levels;
- 3) is an independent curricular entity taken only by undergraduate, degree-seeking students;
- 4) need not be related to/subordinate to a major; any minor may exist without the existence or any intention of establishing a corresponding major;
- 5) is not part of any major or core, but may be an additional requirement (i.e. a college/school could require the completion of a core, a major and a minor, although no *specific* minor can be required)
- 6) is distinguished from a concentration/emphasis area/track in that those are all sub-components and requirements of a major, not distinct curricular entities/academic programs themselves; and
- 7) is identified on a student’s transcript as a completed academic program

### **Contract Minor**

A minor classified as a “Contract Minor” is one that is unique to a particular student, established via a “contract” between the student and a small team (2-3) faculty advisors who agree to assist in the development of the program requirements and monitoring of student progress toward completion thereof. Contract minors may be established only when an extant minor (or combination of extant majors, or majors and minors) cannot meet the faculty-supported educational objectives of the student. Contract minors:

- 1) must draw upon courses from no fewer than two academic departments in one or more colleges/schools at SLU;
- 2) must be formally administered by the college/school from which the highest number of credits earned in the major are generated;
- 3) Must be well-supported by extant faculty, library, studio and related educational resources at SLU, as determined by the faculty advisors;
- 4) Must include a 3 semester hour capstone independent study course – taught by one or more of the student’s minor faculty advisors -- via which the student synthesizes and integrates the broad range of knowledge acquired via the minor; and
- 5) Must meet all other requirements of minors as defined above.

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 (UG)**

A concentration is a focused collection of courses offered as either a required or elective subcomponent of a major. Unlike minors, concentrations are part of majors and must be taken as subcomponents thereof. Concentrations require at least 12 semester hours of credit, and are identified on student transcripts.

### **Electives (University, Major, Minor or Certificate)**

Electives are courses taken at the student’s choice to fulfill the requirements for a degree or certificate. There are four types of electives:

- 1) **University Electives:** Courses chosen by students that fulfill credit hour requirements for a degree, but not for any other curricular component thereof (i.e., they are not required of any major, minor or core).
- 2) **Major Electives:** Courses chosen by students but as part of the requirements of a major.
- 3) **Minor Electives:** Courses chosen by students but as part of the requirements of a minor.
- 4) **Certificate Electives:** Courses chosen by students but as part of the requirements of a certificate program.