



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Tammy D. Barry, Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tammy D. Barry'.

DATE: January 28, 2026

RE: Proposed Revision to Doctoral Degree Credit Requirements

In consultation with the [Graduate Education Council](#), the Graduate School requests Faculty Senate consideration of a proposed revision to reduce **minimum** doctoral credit requirements from 72 to 60 total semester hours. Additionally, the minimum required Ed.D. graded credits will be brought into alignment with the Ph.D. at a minimum of 15 graded credits. Required research credits remain unchanged for both degrees.

**Rationale**

**Faculty Autonomy and Expertise**

- Advisory committees, rather than accumulated credit hours, determine doctoral readiness
- Academic programs are empowered to set disciplinary-appropriate standards

**Academic Quality and Rigor**

- Shifts the focus from seat time to demonstrated competency and research contribution
- Protects core quality: 35 mandated credits (15 graded + 20 research) within a 60-credit doctoral program
- Allows programs to maintain higher requirements where disciplinary standards demand it, consistent with existing policy practice

**Program Flexibility**

- Allows programs to design optimal curricula and respond to disciplinary changes without approval processes

### **Student Access and Program Sustainability**

- Enables students who have completed coursework to transition to employment while writing dissertations, without incurring unnecessary credit-hour costs
- Supports programs with limited student funding by reducing credit barriers for students beyond funded cohorts
- Facilitates diverse pathways to completion including working professionals and self-funded students, while maintaining quality through advisory committee oversight

We welcome your questions and respectfully request Faculty Senate approval of this revision.

### **Proposed Policy Changes**

#### **Current Policy (Redline):**

Beyond the core requirements, the Program of Study must include research and additional coursework totaling at least ~~72~~ **60** hours, including a minimum of 20 hours of 800-level credit.

#### **Program of Study for Ph.D.**

- ~~72~~ 60 hours minimum total credits
- 15 hours minimum from graded (A-F) graduate-level (500-level) courses
- 20 hours minimum 800-level research credits\*
- 9 hours maximum of undergraduate 300- or 400-level graded courses

#### **Program of Study for Ed.D.**

- ~~72~~ 60 hours minimum total credits
- ~~42~~ 15 hours minimum from graded (A-F) graduate-level (500-level) courses
- 20 hours minimum 800-level research credits\*
- 9 hours maximum of undergraduate 300- or 400-level graded courses

\*All full-time doctoral degree students must register for at least one research credit of 800 each semester (excluding summers) to track faculty advisor efforts. Two research credits of 800 are required during a semester with a preliminary or final exam.