

### 3.6.3

#### **Educational Programs: Graduate/Post-Baccalaureate:Institutional credits for a graduate degree**

At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (See Commission policy "Collaborative Academic Arrangements".)

#### **Judgment**

Compliance    Partial Compliance    Non-Compliance    Not Applicable

#### **Narrative**

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) ensures that at least one-third of credits toward a graduate or postgraduate degree are earned through instruction offered at the University. TTU does this by limiting the course credit transfers from other universities and through approving, monitoring, and verifying all graduate student programs of study. Course credit transfer policies are defined at the University level and enforced through the central oversight of the College of Graduate Studies. In addition, each college has the authority to define transfer credit requirements further in the event the college desires to limit transfer credit above the one third University requirement. The overall University graduate policy limits transfer credit to 6-12 credit hours dependent upon the individual graduate program.

#### **Transfer Credit Policies**

All policies concerning graduate course credit earned at TTU and transfer credits are available in TTU Policy 271 [1a]. Examples from the Graduate Catalog are provided [1b]. Policies in the Graduate Catalog are governed and developed by the Graduate Studies Executive Committee, a committee with specific membership to represent faculty, administrators, colleges, and the graduate student body. TTU, through its College of Graduate Studies, accepts courses earned at other institutions toward fulfillment of requirement in its graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, but the majority of credits toward all such degrees must be earned at TTU. The Tennessee Board of Regents' (TBR) Policy 2:01:00:00 General Education Requirements and Degree Requirements section VI.B.1 allows that "transfer credit provisions are set by the institution in keeping with best practice guidelines . . . transfer of graduate credit is limited in a number of areas" [2]. It is at the discretion of the individual institutions to determine the number of hours that may be transferred, course equivalencies, and time limitations. Enforcement of Graduate Catalog policies is the responsibility of the College of Graduate Studies, and such enforcement ensures compliance of the one-third credits earned requirement to adhere to TTU Policy 271.

#### **Master's Degree Requirements**

As published in TTU Policy 271, a candidate for a master's degree in the College of Arts and Sciences, Interdisciplinary Studies, Education, Engineering, and the School of Nursing must complete at least 30 semester hours of credit in a program requiring a thesis and, generally, at least 33 semester hours in a non-thesis program. The Master of Business Administration (MBA) requires 30 credit hours, which includes a capstone project instead of a thesis option. The University stipulates that no more than nine semester hours of graduate credit in acceptable areas of study may be transferred from other approved institutions to a master's program (12 credit hours will be accepted in the RODP Master of Education program). Therefore, for a Master of Science or MBA program that has a 30 credit-hour requirement, graduate students will complete a minimum of 70 percent of the credit hours through

courses taken from TTU. The Master of Arts in Education program also requires 30 credit-hours for completion; thus, if a student transfers 12 hours into the TTU program, the student will complete a minimum of 60 percent of the credit hours through courses taken from TTU. Finally, Master's non-thesis options that require 33 credit hours will result in more than 70 percent of credit hours earned from TTU courses, thus fulfilling the one-third requirement [3]. TTU provides instruction for all courses required for each Master's degree that can be earned from the University.

### **Specialist Degree Requirements**

For the Specialist in Education degree, at least 80 percent of the student credit hours in the program of study must be courses taught at TTU, and no more than 20 percent of a student's credit hours may be transferred from outside the institution. The program of study leading to the EdS will be designed so that each student achieves a proper balance between the experiences required for training as a specialist and those required for development as a professional educator working with other educators. A minimum of 30 semester hours beyond the master's degree in approved upper-level courses will be required in the EdS program. At least 15 semester hours must be taken in courses numbered at the 7000 level; no courses below the 6000 level shall be counted for credit unless written approval is obtained from the student's advisory committee, the chairperson of the department in which the student is majoring, and the Associate Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. A maximum of six credit hours, or 20 percent of the total credit hours required, may be transferred from another institution [4]. TTU provides instruction for all courses required for each Specialist degree that can be earned from the University.

### **Doctoral Degree Requirements**

For a doctoral degree, TTU Policy 271 states, "doctoral requirements are defined at the department level." The minimum number of credit hours varies by program – 72 credit hours for the PhD in Engineering, 61 credit hours for the PhD in Environmental Sciences, and 78/79 credit hours in the PhD in Exceptional Learning. Percentage of courses required to be taken at TTU also varies by program. TTU provides instruction for all courses required for each doctoral degree that can be earned from the University.

The PhD in Exceptional Learning requires at least 65 percent of graduate student course credits to be taken through TTU and no more than 35 percent are to be transfer credits (27 hours maximum). Students entering the doctoral degree program in Exceptional Learning will choose an area of concentration: Applied Behavior Analysis, Literacy, Program Planning and Evaluation, or STEM Education. The general requirements for the PhD in Exceptional Learning are a minimum of 78/79 semester hours of course work, including 36 semester hours in the research component and dissertation requirements. Graduate course credit transferred from other accredited institutions must be approved by the student's advisory committee prior to an assignment of transfer credit in the student's formal program of study [5].

The PhD in Engineering follows the University-wide transfer credit policy found in TTU Policy 271. The PhD in Engineering requires at least 80 percent of graduate student coursework must be taken at TTU, and no more than 20 percent (nine credit hours) of student coursework be transferred to the students' program of study from an accredited and approved institution. The student's advisory committee will have final approval on the determination of acceptable transfer credit. Students entering the doctoral degree program in Engineering will choose an area of specialization in one of five academic departments: Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering, or Mechanical Engineering. The general requirements for a PhD in Engineering are the same for all departments and include a minimum of 48 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree, and include both course work (24 credit hours) and doctoral research and dissertation (24 credit hours). A total of 72 semester credit hours is required beyond the baccalaureate degree. A minimum of 24 semester credit hours, excluding research and thesis, can be transferred from the student's master's degree program at an approved institution [6].

The PhD in Environmental Sciences requires that at least 70 percent of graduate student course credit must be from TTU coursework and no more than 30 percent (18 hours) of transfer credit may be

accepted from an approved accredited institution. Students entering the doctoral program in Environmental Sciences will work with the advisory committee to choose an area of concentration, either Biology or Chemistry and develop a plan of study and a research project leading to a doctoral dissertation that makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the discipline. A minimum of 61 semester credits of course work and doctoral research and a dissertation are required. Additionally, a maximum of 18 credit hours from a student's Master of Science course program may be used toward doctoral course work, subject to advisory committee approval [7].

## Transfer Credit Oversight

The College of Graduate Studies monitors the amount of credits earned at TTU and the amount of transfer credit. Proposed Programs of Study submitted to the College of Graduate Studies will be approved only if the courses and transfer courses, if any, meet the following criteria:

- Appropriate ratio of TTU course credit vs transfer credit
- Appropriate levels of courses
- Appropriate age of the courses (date of course completion)
- Appropriate courses required for degree completion
- Transfer credit is indicated on student transcripts by the listing of the granting institution, the course number, course title, number of credits, and the grade received for the course transferred. If the granting institution does not use a 4.0 scale for grades or credits not on a semester term, grades and credit term will be converted to a 4.0 scale and semester based credits.
- At this time, TTU does not offer any collaborative graduate degrees.







## Compliance Assurance








Redacted transcripts are provided on students that graduated from each degree program from Spring and Fall 2014 terms to demonstrate compliance in Standard 3.6.3. The TTU transcript provides a summary at the end of each student transcript that lists "Transcript Totals" and within that list, "Total Transfer" earned hours, GPA hours, Points, and GPA are listed. By reviewing the end of each student transcript, reviewers will be able to verify that TTU is following credit hour and transfer credit hour policies [8a] [8b] [8c] [8d] [8e].

## Conclusion

TTU ensures that graduate students obtain at least one-third of their credits through instruction offered at the university through clear policies that require careful review of transfer credits and institutional degree monitoring and certification. The College of Graduate Studies monitors and oversees the implementation of transfer credit policies to ensure compliance with TTU Policy 271 guidelines. TTU provides instruction for all courses required for each master's, specialist, and doctoral degree that can be earned from the University. Through these procedures and practices, the university is in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.6.3.

## Sources

-  [01a] TTU Policy 271
-  [01b] Graduate Catalog Examples
-  [2] TBR Policy
-  [3] Transfer Credit
-  [4] Specialist Transfer Credit
-  [5] Doctoral Transfer Credit

-  [6] Doctoral Engineering
-  [7] Doctoral Environmental Science
-  [8a] Redacted Transcript 1
-  [8b] Redacted Transcript 2
-  [8c] Redacted Transcript 3
-  [8d] Redacted Transcript 4
-  [8e] Redacted Transcript 5