

Resubmitted without revisions, August 2026

Approved by Administration, 8/19/2026

(original senate action attached)



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

SENATE ACTION FORM

Senate Action Number: 1280

Subject: Proposal to change the minimum required number of doctoral credits

Reference to Senate Minutes Dated: 4/20/26

Senate Action

MOTION: Approve the proposal to change the minimum required number of doctoral credits.

VOTE: Motion approved with one abstention

Response Requested:

- ☒ Approval for placement in University Catalog, Undergraduate and Graduate
- ☐ Approval for placement in University Regulations
- ☐ Recommendation to Board for placement in Board Policy Manual
- ☐ None (sent as information item)
- ☐ Other action requested/comments: _____

Harmony Newman

Digitally signed by Harmony
Newman
Date: 2026.08.13 13:47:16 -06'00'

8/13/26

Faculty Senate Chair

Date

Administrative Review of Senate Action (unnecessary for information items):

- ☒ Reviewed by VPAA/Provost. Check ☐ if comments are attached.
- ☒ Reviewed by General Counsel. Check ☐ if comments are attached.

I approve. *NMM*
TZ

Presidential Action:

- ☒ Approve
- ☐ Reject
- ☐ Return to Senate for discussion/modification (comments attached)

President/Designated Administrative Officer

8/19/2026

Date

Date of Board approval (if applicable): _____

**PLEASE RETURN SIGNED ORIGINAL AND ATTACHMENT TO THE FACULTY SENATE OFFICE:
CARTER HALL 2004, CAMPUS BOX 75.**

Faculty.Senate@unco.edu



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Harmony Newman Digitally signed by Harmony Newman
Date: 2026.04.27 16:13:33 -06'00'

04/27/2026

Faculty Senate Chair

Date

Administrative Review of Senate Action (unnecessary for information items):

- ☒ Reviewed by VPAA/Provost. Check ☐ if comments are attached.
- ☒ Reviewed by General Counsel. Check ☐ if comments are attached.

Presidential Action:

- ☐ Approve
- ☐ Reject
- ☒ **Return to Senate for discussion/modification** (comments attached)



President/Designated Administrative Officer

07/08/2026

Date

Date of Board approval (if applicable): n/a

**PLEASE RETURN SIGNED ORIGINAL AND ATTACHMENT TO THE FACULTY SENATE OFFICE:
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FACULTY SENATE POLICY PROPOSAL/MOTION

Subject: Proposal to change the minimum required number of doctoral credits

Originator/Date: Graduate School, 3/2/26

Placement(s): Graduate Catalog - Doctoral Degree Requirements

Approved by the Academic Policies Committee on 3/2/26

Motion: Approve the proposal to change the minimum required number of doctoral credits.

Purpose/Rationale:

- In conversations with Graduate Deans and Associate Deans in the Colorado Council of Graduate Schools and research into the minimum credits required by other Colorado universities, the Graduate School leadership discovered that UNC's minimum credit requirement for a doctoral degree is at least 30 credits more than other state research universities. Although UNC doctoral programs tend to be in applied fields, like Math Education, Biological Education, and Educational Leadership, to name a few, and not solely research-focused, a look at institutions with similar programs shows that our credit requirements are excessive.
- The learning outcomes and quality of UNC degree programs are of the utmost importance. Course credits do not necessarily equate to rigor, and programs do not always need a specific course to meet a professional standard or program outcome.
- The affordability of graduate education and time-to-degree are increasingly important in our educational environment. We need to be mindful that students cannot afford to spend 6 to 8 years completing a doctoral degree.
- Funding for graduate education is declining at the federal level. New federal financial aid rules beginning July 1, 2026, will restrict annual graduate student borrowing to \$20,500, the lifetime loan limit for graduate school to \$100,000, and the combined undergraduate and graduate lifetime limit to \$257,500.

The feds are also eliminating the Graduate Plus Loan, which allowed students to borrow up to the amount of their graduate degree. 37% of UNC's degree-seeking graduate students rely on federal loans, and approximately 17% currently rely on the Grad Plus Loan.

- Given the current budget environment, graduate assistantship and scholarship funding will be reduced to bring them in line with institutions of similar size and research profile. The extent of reductions will be significant, and both the Grad School and programs will need to restrict and monitor the number of years a student can receive assistantship funding.
- Students in Master's en route programs, or who completed their MA or MS degrees in the same program at UNC, often must find courses outside their discipline, take several XXX 622 Directed Study, or complete more than the required number of credits in internships to reach the minimum threshold for their doctoral degree.

Please note that this is a proposal to change the MINIMUM requirements noted in the catalog.

- It does not *require* programs to change their number of program credits.
- Faculty members determine how many credits a student must complete to meet the learning outcomes of a specific degree. In some programs, students need to complete 100+ credits to fulfill the professional practice requirements for that discipline.
- Programs could allow students with a master's degree in the discipline to transfer some credits into the program. The higher-credit programs already waive credits in the doctoral plan of study that students completed during their master's program.

Proposed Language

Credit Hours

A student ~~entering in a doctoral program who possesses a master's degree must earn a minimum of 64 semester hours of graduate credits beyond the master's degree~~ must complete a minimum of 60 credits of graduate-level coursework. This includes a minimum of ~~48 semester hours~~ 44 credits of graduate-level discipline content courses and ~~10 to 16 semester hours~~ of research credit.

Students entering a doctoral program with a master's degree or an Educational Specialist degree in the same or a relevant discipline may, with faculty approval, transfer graduate-level courses into the doctoral program in accordance with the university's graduate transfer credit policy.

~~A student who possesses only a baccalaureate degree must earn a minimum of 94 semester hours of graduate credit beyond the baccalaureate degree (required total semester hours can vary depending on the degree program). This includes a minimum of 78 semester hours of graduate-level discipline content courses and 16 semester hours of research credit.~~

~~A student who possesses a master's degree but who is attempting to obtain a second master's degree en route to a doctoral degree must meet the same credit hour requirements as the baccalaureate-only student.~~

~~A student who possesses a specialist degree may count a maximum of 21 semester hours of specialist work in the related doctoral program with the approval of the Graduate School and program advisor. Schools may have requirements that exceed the minimums established by the University.~~

Credit Hours

A student in a doctoral program must complete a minimum of 60 credits of graduate-level coursework. This includes a minimum of 44 credits of graduate-level discipline content courses and 10 to 16 semester hours of research credit.

Students entering a doctoral program with a master's degree or an Educational Specialist degree in the same or a relevant discipline may, with faculty approval, transfer graduate-level courses into the doctoral program in accordance with the university's graduate transfer credit policy.

Senate Action 1280: Proposal to Change the Minimum Required Number of Doctoral Credits (Graduate Catalog)

Return to Faculty Senate for further discussion/modification

Administration Response:

This action should be referred to the Graduate Council/Faculty Senate for modification.

Associate Dean of the Graduate School, Cindy Wesley, has offered to work with the Graduate Council regarding defining the requirements.

As currently written, the proposal changes the minimum number of credit hours for a doctorate - after attaining a bachelor's degree - from 94 to 60. It is accurate to say that some doctorates only require 60 hours post bachelors - often these are applied doctorates. Don't know if this is the case for Ph.Ds., but suspect the minimum is typically higher. There should be a discussion about articulating minimums for different types of doctorates, otherwise the policy suggests that a Ph.D. could be attained with only 60 hours post-bachelors, and not sure if that is the intent. If it is the intent, a rationale would need to be provided.