

Course Program of Study

Northwestern State University is required to follow U.S. Department of Education regulations related to the disbursement of federal financial aid. Federal regulations require that student financial aid (federal pell grants, federal loans, and federal work-study) can only be used to pay for courses that count toward your program of study (formally declared major, concentration and/or minor).

Full-time, **undergraduate** students must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours (part-time, minimum 6 credit hours) of required coursework for the program of study each semester to remain eligible for and receive the full financial aid package. If students enroll in courses that are not required in the declared program of study, financial aid may be prorated and/or cancelled as required by federal regulations.

Full-time, **graduate** students must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 credit hours (part-time, minimum 5 credit hours) of required coursework for the program of study each semester to remain eligible for and receive the full financial aid package. If students enroll in courses that are not required in the declared program of study, financial aid may be prorated and/or cancelled as required by federal regulations.

FAQ's

What is program of study?

Your program of study includes the courses required to complete your degree as listed on your DegreeWorks audit. This includes required coursework of the declared major, minor, concentration as outlined in the academic catalog.

What is Course Program of Study?

Course Program of Study (CPoS) is a process used to determine, each term, which courses in a student's schedule are required for their program of study. Federal student financial aid can only be paid on courses within a student's program of study. These aid programs include federal grants, federal student loans, and federal work-study.

Why is CPoS important?

In addition to ensuring that federal student financial aid regulations are being met, CPoS is designed to help you stay on track and finish your degree in a timely manner. Enrolling in only courses that count toward your program of study helps to minimize your education expenses and debt.

What type of financial aid does CPoS impact?

CPoS only applies to Federal Financial Aid (Pell Grant, SEOG Grant, Stafford Loans, PLUS loans). It does not impact eligibility for institutional or outside aid.

What if I don't receive federal financial aid (grants, loans, federal work study)?

If you do not receive federal financial aid, CPoS will not impact you.

Where can I look to see if my courses count for my program of study?

View your DegreeWorks audit to see if the courses you are taking count for your program of study. Here you can see the listing of required courses that you have taken, are currently enrolled in, and still need to take.

In DegreeWorks, courses that **do not** count for federal financial aid will be listed in the '**Fall Through**' section at the bottom of the audit worksheet.

Will I be notified if I am taking courses that are not eligible for financial aid?

You should monitor your University email account regularly, but you may also access your degree evaluation at any time to review course listed as 'Fall Through' (not counted towards financial aid eligibility).

Do electives count towards CPoS?

Possibly. Electives must satisfy a requirement of your declared major/minor. If you have been notified that an elective is not counting towards your Federal Financial Aid eligibility, contact your advisor. If an advisor determines that the elective is satisfying a requirement and will count towards your declared major/minor, they will submit an override request.

Can I enroll in a course outside of my course program of study if I have 12 credit hours that count towards my degree?

For **undergraduate students**, twelve credits of degree-applicable courses are required for federal financial aid to disburse at the full-time rate. Credit hours 13 and above do not necessarily have to be degree applicable.

For **graduate students**, nine credits of degree-applicable courses are required for federal financial aid to disburse at the full-time rate. Credit hours 10 and above do not necessarily have to be degree applicable.

Can I appeal a determination that a course does not apply toward my program of study?

No. There is no appeal process for courses that do not satisfy a requirement of your program of study. However, if a course has been approved as a substitution, your academic College should complete a substitution to reflect in your degree audit. Course substitution must be completed prior to the seventh class day.

What happens if I make changes to my class schedule?

If you make a change prior to the semester drop/add deadline, you will want to check your DegreeWorks audit to ensure that the course counts toward your program of study. You will also want to make sure that you are enrolled in at least 12 credit hours that counts toward your program of study.

Your DegreeWorks audit will be updated the day after changes are made.

Making changes to your course enrollment after the drop/add deadline and receiving a grade of W will not impact CPoS for that semester.

When is the last day that I can change my course enrollment to meet financial aid requirements?

The last day to drop/add courses for each semester.

I am working on a major and a minor. Will I qualify for financial aid?

You may qualify for federal financial aid until you have met all degree requirements for your major program of study. Once you have completed all degree requirements for your major, you won't qualify for federal financial aid even if you haven't completed your minor.

How will this affect study abroad?

Study abroad courses may count for federal financial aid if they apply towards outstanding coursework in your officially declared program of study.

What are common reasons for course ineligibility?

- Registered for courses that are not included in the declared degree program
- Course is a substitution, but the official substitution process is not complete.
- Courses are not required in the catalog year and are not appropriate for the program of study major or minor.
- Course is considered an elective and all elective options have been fulfilled.

How does repeating a course impact CPoS?

A course may be part of a student's program of study, but not count toward federal student financial aid eligibility if it exceeds the number of repeat attempts allowed. If a student receives an 'F' grade in a course, they are permitted to retake the course as many times as they need until they make a 'D' or higher. Once they have made a 'D' or higher, they are only permitted to retake the course **one additional** time after that.

While a 'D' may not be successfully passing to advance a student's academic program, for federal student financial aid purposes, the 'D' is considered a passing grade.

Can I take a course that isn't required for my program of study?

Yes, you may take courses that are not required. However, those courses cannot be covered by federal student financial aid. For undergraduate students, twelve credits of degree-applicable courses are required for federal financial aid to disburse at the full-time rate. Credits hours 13 and beyond do not necessarily have to be degree applicable.

Are my scholarships (University and outside) impacted by CPoS?

Scholarships, from any source, are not affected by CPoS.

Is TOPS (Taylor Opportunity for Students) impacted by CPoS?

TOPS is not affected by CPoS.

If I am receiving VA benefits, will this affect me?

VA benefits are subject to their own rules and do not fall under CPoS.

How will CPoS affect federal Satisfactory Academic Progress?

CPoS does not change Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards.

Can the Financial Aid Office tell me if I'm in the right courses?

The Financial Aid Office cannot advise you about your course schedule.