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MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

Administrative Regulation No. 19/2018

Regime of Credit System in Higher Education

The Chief Executive after consulting with the Executive Council, decrees pursuant to sub-paragraph 5) of Article 50 of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region and to Article 63 of the Law No. 10/2017 (Higher Education Regime), that the following shall have the legal effect of complementary administrative regulation:

CHAPTER I

General provisions

Article 1

Object

This administrative regulation establishes the regime of credit system in higher education.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this administrative regulation, the following definitions shall apply:

- 1) “Credit” - unit of measurement of student work in all of its forms, especially, classroom learning, collective teaching sessions, tutorial-type tutoring sessions, internships, projects, practical fieldwork, laboratory or experimental work, attendance at seminars or conferences, study or evaluation;

- 2) “Curricular unit” - a teaching unit with its own training objectives which is subject to administrative enrolment and for which evaluation is translated into a final grade;
- 3) “Credits for a curricular unit” - the numerical value that expresses the work to be carried out by a student to complete a curricular unit;
- 4) “Study plan of a program” - an organized set of curricular units which a student shall accomplish with fulfilment of the academic requirements for the purpose of obtaining a particular degree or completing a non-degree program;
- 5) “Normal duration of a program” - the time period set in the number of years, semesters or academic quarters for the completion of a higher education program by the full-time student of attendance-requiring system with reference to the number of credits required for the program completion;
- 6) “Curricular year”, “curricular semester” and “curricular quarter” - the periods of time or parts of a study plan within which curricular units are distributed, in the duration of one year, one semester and one academic quarter, respectively.

Article 3

Scope

The provisions of this administrative regulation apply to programs structured and organized under the credit system administered by the public and private higher education institutions of the Macao Special Administrative Region, hereinafter referred to as “the Macao SAR”.

CHAPTER II

Higher education credit system

SECTION I

General applicability

Article 4

Mandatory regime of credit system

The credit system provided for in this administrative regulation must be mandatorily applied to:

- 1) The programs conferring a bachelor's or master's degree when the respective study plans, in whole or in part, foresee the awarding of credits for the completion of the curricular units;
- 2) The dual bachelor's degree programs;
- 3) The bachelor's degree programs consisting of two core parts, designated as major, of two bachelor's degree programs in the same scientific area;
- 4) The bachelor's degree programs that include a major or minor training component;
- 5) Associate's diploma programs.

Article 5

Optional credit system regime

1. The credit system provided for in this administrative regulation may be adopted for the structuring of programs not covered by the preceding Article or for the organization of training programs or their educational components, regardless of its teaching or learning type.
2. Doctoral degree programs which, in exceptional cases, partially integrate into their study plan the completion of curricular units in a credit system, and which are justified in their respective program study plan, may be structured in accordance with the requirements defined in the present administrative regulation.
3. The programs taught in the Macao SAR by higher education institutions based outside of the Macao SAR when organized in a credit system identical to those already taught at the place where they have their headquarters, may, according to the specific case and to the extent possible, be adapted to the credit system provided for in this administrative regulation.

Article 6

Structural requirements of the credit system

1. For curricular organization purposes of a program in credit system and determination of its normal period of duration, the study plan of a program may be divisible into academic years and, in turn, into semesters and quarters, corresponding respectively to the curricular year, the curricular semester and the curricular quarter.

2. Each of the curricular periods referred to in the preceding paragraph is divided into curricular units, especially subjects, modules, seminars or internships, in which each unit shall have a coherent and explicit set of:

- 1) Learning results;
- 2) Appropriate evaluation criteria;
- 3) Definition of the number of estimated work hours;
- 4) Specification of the number of credits.

3. The credit system programs are organized in curricular units and convey in credits the work that must be carried out by the student in order to complete each curricular unit.

4. The curricular structures of the credit system programs indicate the scientific area which each curricular unit integrates and conveys in credits the work to be carried out by the student in each scientific area.

5. Regardless of the criteria for allocation of credits, the number of credits to be awarded for each curricular unit is determined in accordance with the following requirements:

- 1) The work is measured in estimated work hours for the student;
- 2) The number of hours of student work to be considered includes all types of work planned, especially contact hours or hours dedicated to classroom learning, collective teaching sessions, tutorial-type tutoring sessions, internships, projects, fieldwork or practical, laboratory or experimental work, attendance of seminars or conferences, study or evaluation;
- 3) The estimated work hours of work for a student to reach the level of learning required to complete a curricular unit covers as many types of work as possible from what constitutes the students' workload, avoiding being made up of only one work type;
- 4) Each credit completed in a full-time program comprises, on average, a minimum of 15 hours of classroom learning;
- 5) The work of a full-time academic year is between 1,050 and 1,350 hours and corresponds to a period of 36 to 40 weeks;
- 6) The number of credits corresponding to the work of a full-time curricular year is 30;

- 7) For curricular periods less than one year, the number of credits is awarded proportionate to the curricular year;
- 8) The number of credits corresponding to a full-time program work is equal to the product of 30 by the number of academic years of normal duration of the program or fraction thereof;
- 9) The credits awarded for each curricular unit are expressed in multiples of half credits;
- 10) The curricular unit that is part of the study plan of more than one program of the same higher education institution must be awarded the same number of credits, regardless of the program.

SECTION II

Programs and academic degrees

Article 7

Structure of the bachelor's degree programs in the credit system

1. The study plan of a credit system program leading to the attainment of the bachelor's degree is composed of an organized set of curricular units and the corresponding credits.
2. The bachelor's degree program referred to in the preceding paragraph is generally composed of 120 to 180 credits, and its normal duration corresponds to eight to twelve curricular semesters of work for students.
3. When setting the number of credits for the different bachelor's degree programs in the various training areas, each higher education institution must preferably adopt the same values as those included in the Program Credit Reference Framework, annexed to this administrative regulation and of which it is an integral part, in order to guarantee students conditions of mobility, training and professional integration similar in duration and content to those of the other higher education institutions of the Macao SAR.
4. Without prejudice to the provisions of the preceding paragraphs, the study plan of a bachelor's degree program may be comprised of the attendance of programs, plan or other attendance-requiring actions of a complementary nature, especially programs for learning the language of the bachelor's degree program, seminars, conferences or any others, as long as these do not require any minimum academic performance or depend on the completion of a curricular unit foreseen in the study plan and in obtaining of the respective credits.

5. The structuring of the bachelor's degree program in a credit system may exceptionally provide for the possibility of obtaining the respective credits in a period of time less than the normal duration of the program, with a minimum limit of three academic years for programs of normal duration of four academic years and in equal proportion to those of superior duration.

Article 8

Structure of the dual bachelor's degree programs

1. The study plan of a program organized in a credit system leading to the attainment of a dual bachelor's degree is composed of an organized set of curricular units and the corresponding credits.
2. The dual bachelor's degree program referred to in the preceding paragraph is composed of a minimum of 180 credits, and its normal duration is of twelve curricular semesters of student's work.
3. When setting the number of credits for the different dual bachelor's degree programs in the various training areas, each higher education institution must preferably adopt the same values as those included in the Program Credit Reference Framework, annexed to this administrative regulation and of which it is an integral part, in order to guarantee students conditions of mobility, training and professional integration similar in duration and content to those of the other higher education institutions of the Macao SAR.
4. Without prejudice to the provisions of the preceding paragraphs, the study plan of a dual bachelor's degree program may be comprised of the attendance of programs, plan or other attendance-requiring actions of a complementary nature, especially courses for learning the language of the bachelor's degree program, seminars, conferences or any others, as long as these do not require any minimum academic performance or depend on the completion of a curricular unit foreseen in the study plan and in obtaining of the respective credits.

Article 9

Structure of the master's degree programs in the credit system

1. The study plan of a credit system program leading to the attainment of a master's degree is composed of an organized set of curricular units and a part related to the preparation of the original dissertation, of the original project report or the presentation of the final report after the professional internship and the corresponding credits.

2. The master's degree program referred to in the preceding paragraph is normally composed of a minimum of 30 credits, regardless of its allocation, in whole or in part, to the curricular part, and has the minimum duration of three curricular semesters.
3. Without prejudice to the provisions of paragraphs 4, 5 and 7 of Article 20 of Law No. 10/2017 (Higher Education Regime), for the purpose of allocating credits and calculating the number of estimated work hours, the study plan of a credit system master's degree program may establish requirements different from those foreseen in sub-paragraphs 4) to 8) of paragraph 5 of Article 6, for the composition, duration and deadlines of the master's degree programs.
4. The study plan of a master's degree program organized in a credit system may be comprised of the attendance of programs, plan or other attendance-requiring actions of a complementary nature, especially courses for learning the language of the master's degree program, seminars, conferences or any others, as long as they do not require any minimum academic performance or do not depend on the completion of a curricular unit foreseen in the study plan and in the obtaining of the respective credits.
5. When setting the number of credits for the different master's degree programs, each higher education institution must preferably adopt same values as those included in the Program Credit Reference Framework, annexed to this administrative regulation, in order to guarantee students' conditions of mobility, training and professional integration similar in duration and content to those of the other higher education institutions of the Macao SAR.

Article 10

Structure of other non-degree awarding programs

1. The study plan of a program in a non-degree awarding credit system is composed of an organized set of curricular units and the corresponding credits which cannot exceed a maximum of 90 credits and a maximum duration of six curricular semesters of students' work.
2. When setting the number of credits for the different non-degree awarding programs, in particular associate's diploma and minor programs, each higher education institution must preferably adopt the same values as those included in the Program Credit Reference Framework, annexed to this administrative regulation, in order to guarantee students' conditions of mobility, training and professional integration similar in duration and content to those of the other higher education institutions of the Macao SAR.

Article 11

Composition and conditions of the major and minor components

1. The major component of a program consists of the set of curricular units that characterize the essential core of the respective program.
2. The sum of the credits of the curricular units that compose the major component of a program must be comprised of a minimum of 40 credits.
3. It is possible to combine two majors and two study plans of bachelor's degree programs of the same scientific area to result in a new study plan for a program with two majors, and they must preferably adopt values identical to those of the Program Credit Reference Framework attached to this administrative regulation.
4. The sum of the credits of the curricular units that compose the minor program must be comprised of a minimum of 30 credits and a maximum of 35 credits.
5. The minor program intended to be taught as additional course to a bachelor's degree program may exceptionally be taught independently or in combination with each other, subject to compliance with the average workload reference values and the ratio of learning hours to obtain the credits in question, according to the values of the Program Credit Reference Framework annexed to this administrative regulation.
6. The simultaneous attendance of a bachelor's degree program and its minor program is possible, as long as its distribution through the respective curricular period respects the natural limits resulting from the total workload and the ratio of hours of learning for the obtention of the credits in question, according to the values of the Program Credit Reference Framework annexed to this administrative regulation.

Article 12

Obtaining of credits

Obtaining the credits established for each curricular unit of a study plan of a program in credit system depends on approval in the respective curricular unit.

Article 13

Conferring of bachelor's degree

Under the terms and for the purposes of paragraph 1 of Article 18, and paragraph 3 of Article 19 of **Law No. 10/2017**, the bachelor's degree is conferred on those who, fulfilling the academic requirements in all curricular units in the study plan of a degree program taught in a credit system, have obtained the number of credits set.

Article 14

Conferring of master's degree

Under the terms and for the purposes of paragraph 1 of Article 20 of **Law No. 10/2017**, the master's degree is conferred on those who, fulfilling the academic requirements in all curricular units and approval in the public oral defense, project work or internship report, which are part of the study plan of the masters' degree program taught in a credit system, have obtained the number of credits set.

Article 15

Final grades of bachelor's and master's degrees

1. A final grade is awarded to the bachelor's and master's degrees obtained through programs in the credit system.
2. The rules governing the calculation of the final grade, including methods of calculation and rounding, as well as weighting criteria and methods in the case of weighted averages, are listed in the study plans for bachelor's and master's degrees programs and in the respective regulations approved by the competent bodies of higher education institutions.

Article 16

Attainment of degrees and diplomas in joint programs

1. Higher education institutions in the Macao SAR may associate with each other or with other higher education institutions based outside of the Macao SAR to operate programs leading to the conferring of degrees, diplomas or other courses and programs organized under a credit system, through celebration of academic cooperation agreements.
2. For joint programs taught in association with higher education institutions based outside of the Macao SAR, the higher education institutions shall ensure that the training provided by the associated higher education institution may be accredited in accordance with the provisions of this administrative regulation.

3. Where higher education institutions associated in accordance with paragraph 1 are also competent to award degrees or diplomas in the subject area under this administrative regulation, the degree or diploma may be awarded:

1) Solely by one of the institutions;

2) By each of the institutions, separately, in which case the degree or diploma is titled through a document issued by each of the institutions;

3) By all or some of the institutions together, in which case the degree or diploma is titled through a single document certified by the legal and statutory bodies of the respective institutions.

4. In the cases provided for in sub-paragraphs 1) and 3) of the previous paragraph, the degree or diploma is mandatorily awarded by a Macao SAR institution.

5. In the case of joint programs, it is not admissible that the part of the program study plan to be taught by the Macao SAR institutions solely consists of internships, courses, seminars, conferences, studies, short-term programs or other types of complementary training.

Article 17

Operating regulations and regulatory standards

1. The functioning of the programs in the credit system is governed by the provisions of this administrative regulation, by the rules contained in the study plans of the respective programs and by the regulations for admission, attendance, completion and operation of the programs approved by the institutions providing those programs.

2. Without prejudice to what is stipulated in each study plan of a bachelor's degree program organized under a credit system, the competent legal and statutory body of each higher education institution approves the general or specific rules related to the following matters:

1) Specific admission conditions;

2) Operating conditions;

3) Curricular structure, study plans and credits;

4) Knowledge assessment system;

- 5) Precedence system;
 - 6) Prescription system;
 - 7) Rules and procedures for the calculation of the grade in each curricular unit and for the final grade and eventual weighting coefficients;
 - 8) Deadlines for the issuance of attestations, certificates, diplomas and other degree or program documents;
 - 9) Follow-up process by the academic-pedagogical bodies of the institution.
3. Without prejudice to what is stipulated in each study plan of a master's degree program organized under a credit system, the competent legal and statutory body of each higher education institution approves, in addition to the rules on the matters set forth in the preceding paragraph, the regulatory standards, general or specific, relating to the following matters:
- 1) Rules on the admission to program conferring the master's degree, especially the academic and curricular conditions, the application rules, the selection and ranking criteria, and the process of establishing and publicizing the vacancies and the application deadlines;
 - 2) Implementation of the component, if any, related to the thesis, project work, internships or reports referred to in the second part of paragraph 1 of Article 9;
 - 3) Procedure for the appointment of the supervisor(s), conditions under which co-supervision is allowed and the rules to be observed in the supervision;
 - 4) Rules on the presentation and delivery of the dissertation, the project work or the internship report, on their assessment and the maximum deadlines for the performance of the public oral defense of the dissertation, project work or the internship report;
 - 5) Rules on the composition, appointment and operation of the jury;
 - 6) Process of awarding the final grade.

CHAPTER III

Prescription

Article 18

Prescription system

1. The right to registration and enrolment prescribes in relation to a higher education program structured in a credit system administered in higher education institutions, when at the end of a curricular year it is verified that the student is unable to obtain the number of missing credits within the normal period of the program plus 75%.
2. In the case of a prescription provided for in the preceding paragraph, the student is prevented from enrolling to attend that program for a minimum period defined by the respective higher education institution's regulation, after which they may re-enrol providing it meets the requirements and conditions to access the respective program at the time of the new enrolment.
3. The new enrolment does not imply damage to the student in relation to the number of credits obtained up to the enrolment prescription, with the exception of the credits related to curricular units in which programmatic content has been altered by changes to the study plan of the program, so that it is impossible to accredit the respective training in the new study plan in accordance with the provisions of this administrative regulation.
4. The prescription system provided for in paragraph 1 shall not apply to students enrolled in master's and doctoral programs, and the prescription system for these programs shall be defined by the respective regulations of higher education institutions.

Article 19

Special prescription system

1. Students who are in one of the following situations shall enjoy a special prescription system:
 - 1) Part-time student;
 - 2) Bearers of physical or sensory incapacity, temporary or permanent;
 - 3) Maternity, serious illness that requires long-term recovery, transmissible or infectious illness proven by the competent health department or by a hospital as impeditive to continuing the studies.
2. For the purposes of determining the prescription period for registration and enrolment provided for in paragraph 1 of the preceding Article, the special prescription system shall consist of a 150% increase to the normal program duration applied in proportion to the period of

time of any of the situations indicated in the preceding paragraph occur, rounded up to the upper unit.

3. For the purposes of benefiting from the special prescription system, a request is only required to be submitted to the higher education institution where the student is enrolled, with proof of any of the situations indicated in paragraph 1.

CHAPTER IV

Program Accreditation

Article 20

Mobility guarantee

The mobility of students between the higher education institutions of the Macao SAR as well as between the higher education institutions of the Macao SAR and higher education institutions based outside of the Macao SAR is ensured through the accreditation of credits under the credit system provided for in this administrative regulation, based on the principle of mutual recognition of the value of training and skills acquired.

Article 21

Accreditation

1. In order to pursue studies towards the obtention of a degree or to complete a program, the higher education institutions can:

- 1) Accredite in the study plans of their programs the training carried out in other higher education programs in higher education institutions of the Macao SAR;
- 2) Recognize, through the allocation of credits, the academic training and periods of studies carried out in higher education institutions of Macao SAR or higher education institutions based outside of the Macao SAR;
- 3) Recognize, through the allocation of credits, professional experience and training.

2. The accreditation takes into consideration the level of the credits and the scientific area in which these were obtained.

Article 22

Limits to the accreditation

1. Parts of curricular units cannot be accredited.
2. The accreditation for the academic training, periods of study or curricular units indicated in sub-paragraphs 1) and 2) of paragraph 1 of the preceding article cannot exceed one third of the credits of the program or curricula in which they are accredited and are only admissible when obtained in an officially-recognized higher education institution and programs related are officially approved and which operation has been officially authorized under the legal terms.
3. The awarding of credits resulting from the recognition of professional experience and training provided for in sub-paragraph 3) of paragraph 1 of the preceding Article cannot exceed 20% of the credits of the program or curricula in which they are accredited.
4. The total sum of credits accredited according to the provisions of the preceding article shall have a maximum limit corresponding to one-third of the total number of credits of the program study plan in which the accrediting is carried out, rounding up to the nearest unit.
5. The limits provided for in paragraphs 2 and 4 shall not apply to the accreditation of academic training, periods of study or curricular units indicated in sub-paragraphs 1) and 2) of paragraph 1 of the preceding Article, in the following situations:
 - 1) When carried out by the associated higher education institution in the scope of joint programs provided for in Article 16 and in accordance with the respective study plan;
 - 2) When carried out in the scope of the associate's diploma programs and for the purpose of pursuing studies in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 3 of Article 22 of Law No. 10/2017.
6. The accreditation carried out by higher education institutions only has an effect on the higher education programs offered by these and does not confer the holder with a degree, equivalent qualification or recognition of the program or that period of studies.

Article 23

Accreditation process

1. The process and procedures to be adopted for accrediting are set out in a specific regulation approved by the competent legal and statutory bodies of the higher education institutions, considering the applicable legal rules, which must contain provisions on:

- 1) The documents that annexed with the applications;
- 2) The right of reply to the requests and the consequent duty of decision;
- 3) The competent bodies for assessment and decision;
- 4) The publishing of decisions;
- 5) The competent organs or entities to decide on complaints or appeals;
- 6) The applicable deadlines.

2. The investigation of proceedings and the decision of accreditation involves the obligatory intervention of the higher education institution bodies with scientific and pedagogical competence or of specially-designated commissions or juries for this purpose.

Article 24

Enrolment in curricular units of subsequent study plans

1. Students enrolled in a program can be allowed to enrol in curricular units of subsequent study plans.
2. The curricular units referred to in the preceding paragraph are:
 - 1) Subject to certification;
 - 2) Accredited in case of student enrolment in the respective program of the subsequent study plan.

CHAPTER V

Transitional and final provisions

Article 25

Temporal application

1. Higher education programs provided by higher education institutions of the Macao SAR at the date of entry into force of this administrative regulation and organized in a credit system, regardless of the model adopted, shall be adapted to the credit system provided for in this administrative regulation, in the following terms:

1) Programs covered by Article 4, with the exception of programs conferring master's degrees, shall be adapted within a maximum period of five years from the date of entry into force of this administrative regulation, without prejudice to them having been subject to any amendments, in which case they must be adjusted on that date;

2) Programs conferring master's degrees shall be adapted when subject to modifications.

2. Without prejudice to the provisions relating to the process of adapting higher education programs to the credit system established by this administrative regulation, the scientific and pedagogical bodies of the higher education institution shall approve regulatory norms of transition to the new curricular organization that ensure:

1) Respect for students' legitimate expectations;

2) The necessary accreditation schemes in the new studies organization, reflect the training obtained in the previous study organization;

3) Its application does not result an increase of the taught time provided for in the previous studies organization.

3. The coexistence between the new studies organization and the previous one, if provided for in the transitional rules, shall not exceed one academic year, and may, exceptionally and justifiably, after a favourable opinion from the Tertiary Education Services Office, be extended for more than one academic year.

4. For the purposes of verifying, monitoring and controlling the suitability of higher education programs under the credit system established by this administrative regulation, higher education institutions shall notify the Tertiary Education Services Office with a list identifying programs and curricula organized under the credit system existent at the date of entry into force of this administrative regulation.

Article 26

Entry into force

Without prejudice to the provisions in paragraphs 1 and 3 of the preceding Article, this administrative regulation shall enter into force on 8 August, 2018.

Approved on 27 July, 2018.

Hereby published.

The Chief Executive, *Chui Sai On*.

ANNEX

Program Credit Reference Framework

Program/Curricula	Minimum number of credits	Total number of hours¹	Minimum hours of classroom learning in full-time programs²
Minor program	30	1350	450
Associate's diploma program	60	2700	900
Bachelor's degree program	120	5400	1800
Bachelor's degree program with a double major	160	7200	2400
Dual bachelor's degree programs	180	8100	2700
Master's programs	30	2025 ³	— ⁴

¹ The programs operating under the credit system shall have a ratio of 35 to 45 learning hours per credit.

² Each full-time program credit must comprise, on average, at least 15 hours of classroom learning.

³ Reference value for the number of estimated hours of work for the minimum duration of a master's program.

⁴ The number of classroom learning hours in master's degree programs will depend on the teaching method of the program.