

1. DEFINITION

- 1.01 The Department Academic Distinction Program is an individualized learning experience available to outstanding students at Sam Houston State University.
- 1.02 An Academic Distinction Program project provides qualified students with a comprehensive introduction to meaningful research under the guidance of a designated faculty advisor.
- 1.03 For the purpose of this policy, the term “department” represents an academic department or school.
- 1.04 For the purpose of this policy, the term “chair” represents a department chair or a school director.

2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE ACADEMIC DISTINCTION PROGRAM

To enroll for six semester hours of credit in an Academic Distinction Program project a student must have:

- a. Junior standing (60 semester credit hours or more) or written approval of the chair of the major department or the discipline in which academic distinction is sought.
- b. A Sam Houston State University grade point average of not less than 3.25.
- c. A grade point average of not less than 3.5 on all courses completed in the major field.
- d. The written approval of the department chair and academic dean.
- e. Exceptions (e.g., transfers/classification) may be made with the approval of both the department chair and the appropriate academic dean.

3. ENROLLMENT IN A DEPARTMENT ACADEMIC DISTINCTION PROGRAM

- 3.01 A qualified student should first contact a full-time faculty member who is willing to participate in the Department Academic Distinction Program and discuss the feasibility of accepting an Academic Distinction Program project.

- 3.02 If the professor agrees to direct the student's project, the professor will provide the student and the department chair with a letter to that effect.
- 3.03 The student, under supervision of the professor, will then prepare an outline of the proposed project including: objectives, research methods, resource materials, and description of the proposed final paper or project. When the outline is approved by the supervising professor, he/she will forward it through the department chair to the respective academic dean for approval.
- 3.04 Once approval is obtained from the chair and the dean, the student may register for six semester hours, but not more than three hours per individual semester, in Academic Distinction Program courses recommended by the supervising professor and approved by the appropriate department chair. If, however, the student fails to attain a grade of B or higher in the designated Academic Distinction Program course for the first semester, permission to enroll in a subsequent Academic Distinction Program course may be denied by the department chair.
- 3.05 The six hours of Academic Distinction Program course work are, as a general rule, to be completed in the student's major field. Interdisciplinary projects, however, may be undertaken with approval of the major department and the written agreement of any other department involved.
- 3.06 An Academic Distinction Program project shall consist of six semester credit hours of individual instruction designated by the department. The six semester credit hours of Academic Distinction Program course work cannot be taken concurrently. If approved by the supervising professor and the appropriate department chair, the course work need not be continuous.
- 3.07 The six semester credit hours of Academic Distinction Program course work must include (but are not limited to) the satisfactory completion of a paper or project acceptable to the supervising professor and the department chair. Any standard or presentation acceptable to and within a department and college may be deemed correct and proper.

4. GRADUATION WITH ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

- 4.01 In order to complete the six-hour program and graduate with academic distinction in a specified academic discipline, the student must maintain not less than a 3.25 Sam Houston State University grade point average and not less than a 3.5 grade point average in the major field or in the discipline in

which academic distinction is sought and must complete all other academic requirements which the individual department considers necessary. The six additional semester credit hours of Department Academic Distinction Program course work will be completed in addition to the standard requirements within the major field and may not be taken in lieu of any requirements in the major field.

- 4.02 Students who have successfully completed an academic distinction project will be recognized as follows:
- a. The student's official University transcript will carry a designation of "With Academic Distinction" in a field of specialization.
 - b. The student's diploma will designate that the degree has been conferred "With Academic Distinction" in a field of specialization.
 - c. Special recognition will be provided at commencement exercises.
 - (1) A gold honor cord will be awarded to and worn by the student.
 - (2) The official commencement program will identify the appropriate department academic distinction earned by the student.
 - (3) Recognition will be given to the student as his/her name is announced during commencement.

5. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

Department chairs are responsible for providing the Registrar's Office with a written confirmation of the name of each student approved for an academic distinction project, together with the designated courses to be taken by that student for the project.

APPROVED: < signed >
Dana G. Hoyt, President

DATE: 1/29/18

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

This academic policy statement (APS) has been approved by the reviewer(s) listed below and represents SHSU's Division of Academic Affairs' policy from the date of this document until superseded.

Original:	May 21, 1980	Review Cycle:	Five years*
Reviewer(s):	Council of Academic Deans Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Council	Review Date:	Fall 2022

Approved:	<u> < signed > </u>	Date:	<u> 1/29/18 </u>
	Richard Eglsaer Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs		

*Effective January 2018, Academic Policy Statements will be reviewed on a rotating 5-year schedule. To transition to a distributed review load, some policies may be reviewed prior to the 5-year timeframe, with subsequent reviews transitioning to the 5-year schedule.