



## SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS

### New Certificate

Use this form to propose a certificate program at either the undergraduate or graduate level. A certificate program is a sequence, pattern, or group of academic credit courses that focus upon an area of specialized knowledge or information and develop a specific skill set. Certificate programs typically are a subset of the curriculum offered in degree programs, include previously approved courses, and involve 9-12 credit hours including prerequisites. In some cases, standards for licensure will state explicit requirements leading to certificate programs requiring more than 12 credit hours (in such cases, exceptions to course or credit requirements must be justified and approved). The Board of Regents, Executive Director, and/or their designees may request additional information about the proposal. After the university President approves the proposal, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the system Chief Academic Officer. Only post the New Certificate Form to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>UNIVERSITY:</b>                      | NSU   |
| <b>TITLE OF PROPOSED CERTIFICATE:</b>   | <b>Visual Impairments</b>                   |
| <b>INTENDED DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:</b> | <b>Fall 2026</b>                            |
| <b>PROPOSED CIP CODE:</b>               | <b>13.1009</b>                              |
| <b>UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT:</b>           | <b>Teacher Education</b>                    |
| <b>BANNER DEPARTMENT CODE:</b>          | <b>NTE</b>                                  |
| <b>UNIVERSITY DIVISION:</b>             | <b>Millicent Atkins School of Education</b> |
| <b>BANNER DIVISION CODE:</b>            | <b>5E</b>                                   |

☒ **Please check this box to confirm that:**

- The individual preparing this request has read [AAC Guideline 2.3.2.2.C](#), which pertains to new certificate requests, and that this request meets the requirements outlined in the guidelines.
- This request will not be posted to the university website for review of the Academic Affairs Committee until it is approved by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

#### University Approval

*To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this proposal, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.*

*Michael Wanous*

Institutional Approval Signature  
*President or Chief Academic Officer of the University*

9/11/2025

Date

Note: In the responses below, references to external sources, including data sources, should be documented with a footnote (including web addresses where applicable).

1. Is this a graduate-level certificate or undergraduate-level certificate (place an “X” in the appropriate box)?

Undergraduate Certificate ☐

Graduate Certificate ☒

2. What is the nature/ purpose of the proposed certificate? Please include a brief (1-2 sentence) description of the academic field in this certificate.

The proposed graduate certificate in Visual Impairments prepares licensed, in-service teachers to meet South Dakota DOE endorsement requirements for teaching students who are blind or visually impaired. Coursework covers instructional foundations, access technology, eye anatomy, Braille and Nemeth codes, orientation and mobility, and includes a supervised practicum.

3. If you do not have a major in this field, explain how the proposed certificate relates to your university mission and strategic plan, and to the current Board of Regents Strategic Plan 2014-2020.

*Links to the applicable State statute, Board Policy, and the Board of Regents Strategic Plan are listed below for each campus.*

BHSU: [SDCL § 13-59](#) [BOR Policy 1.2.1](#)

DSU: [SDCL § 13-59](#) [BOR Policy 1.2.2](#)

NSU: [SDCL § 13-59](#) [BOR Policy 1.2.3](#)

SDSMT: [SDCL § 13-60](#) [BOR Policy 1.2.4](#)

SDSU: [SDCL § 13-58](#) [BOR Policy 1.2.5](#)

USD: [SDCL § 13-57](#) [BOR Policy 1.2.6](#)

[Board of Regents Strategic Plan](#)

Northern currently offers a specialization within the MEd in Special Education.

4. Provide a justification for the certificate program, including the potential benefits to students and potential workforce demand for those who graduate with the credential. For workforce related information, please provide data and examples. Data may include, but are not limited to the South Dakota Department of Labor, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Regental system dashboards, etc. Please cite any sources in a footnote.

The proposed certificate addresses a persistent and well-documented shortage of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) across the nation and in South Dakota. This shortage is particularly critical in rural states, where geographic isolation compounds the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified professionals.

In South Dakota, the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has reported difficulty filling open positions, and a number of current specialists. With only a small pool of trained professionals in the state, unfilled positions can lead to increased caseloads for existing staff and reduced service availability for students. Northern State University is the only institution in South Dakota that offers the specialized coursework required for the Blind or Visually Impaired endorsement. While NSU currently offers this training as part of a master’s degree specialization, the new graduate certificate creates a more accessible pathway for licensed, in-service teachers to complete the endorsement requirements, either as a stand-alone credential or as a direct bridge into the full master’s program.

This certificate program is designed to build a sustainable pipeline of qualified educators by providing targeted coursework in the foundations of visual impairment education, instructional methods and access technology, the anatomy and function of the eye, Braille and Nemeth codes, and principles of orientation and mobility, along with a supervised practicum. Completion of the program fulfills the South Dakota Department of Education's requirements for the Blind/Visually Impaired endorsement, positioning graduates to immediately fill TVI roles in districts, cooperatives, and specialized state programs.

For educators, the credential offers significant professional advancement, opening opportunities for itinerant and campus-based TVI positions that are in consistent demand. For students with visual impairments, it ensures access to teachers who can provide evidence-based, individualized instruction; support for braille literacy and technology use; and the compensatory and independent living skills needed for success in school, work, and daily life. By aligning program outcomes with both state endorsement requirements and national professional standards, and by being the sole provider of this coursework in South Dakota, Northern State University will meet a documented workforce need while directly improving educational equity and outcomes for a population of students who require highly specialized support.

**5. Who is the intended audience for the certificate program (including but not limited to the majors/degree programs from which students are expected)?**

The intended audience for the graduate certificate in Visual Impairments is licensed, in-service teachers seeking to obtain the South Dakota Department of Education Blind or Visually Impaired endorsement. This includes educators currently working in general education, special education, or related service roles who wish to expand their expertise to serve students who are blind or have low vision. While the certificate is open to teachers from any content area or grade level, it will be of particular interest to those with backgrounds in elementary education, secondary education, special education, or related fields such as early childhood special education.

In addition, the program is designed for professionals who may have completed or are currently pursuing a master's degree in education, particularly in special education, but who have not yet specialized in visual impairments. Because the certificate can be completed as a stand-alone credential or as a direct pathway into Northern State University's MEd in Special Education with a specialization in Visual Impairments, it is also well suited for teachers who wish to pursue advanced study while meeting immediate workforce needs.

**6. Certificate Design**

**A. Is the certificate designed as a stand-alone education credential option for students not seeking additional credentials (i.e., a bachelor's or master's degree)? If so, what areas of high workforce demand or specialized body of knowledge will be addressed through this certificate?**

Yes. The graduate certificate in Visual Impairment is designed as a stand-alone credential for licensed, in-service teachers who are not seeking an additional degree but wish to add the South Dakota Department of Education Blind or Visually Impaired endorsement to their current teaching license. The program addresses a specialized body of knowledge in the instruction and support of students who are blind or have low vision, including braille literacy, access technology, principles of orientation and mobility, instructional methods, and the anatomy and function of the eye.

**B. Is the certificate a value added credential that supplements a student’s major field of study? If so, list the majors/programs from which students would most benefit from adding the certificate.**

Yes. The certificate is a value-added credential that supplements a student’s major field of study by providing specialized training to serve students who are blind or visually impaired. Educators from a variety of backgrounds will benefit from adding this endorsement to their professional credentials, particularly those in elementary education, secondary education across various content areas, special education, early childhood special education, school counseling, school psychology, and related service fields such as orientation and mobility or educational rehabilitation. By pairing their primary teaching or education degree with this certificate, graduates will expand their employability, address a critical workforce shortage, and enhance their ability to meet diverse learner needs in both inclusive and specialized educational settings. The certificate also provides a direct bridge to Northern State University’s MEd in Special Education with a specialization in Visual Impairments for those who wish to pursue further graduate study.

**C. Is the certificate a stackable credential with credits that apply to a higher level credential (i.e., associate, bachelor’s, or master’s degree)? If so, indicate the program(s) to which the certificate stacks and the number of credits from the certificate that can be applied to the program.**

Yes. The graduate certificate in Visual Impairments is a fully stackable credential, with all credits applying toward Northern State University’s MEd in Special Education with a specialization in Visual Impairments. The certificate requires 18 graduate credits, and all 18 credits can be applied directly to the MEd program, allowing students to seamlessly transition from the stand-alone certificate into the master’s degree if they choose to pursue advanced graduate study. This structure provides maximum flexibility, enabling educators to meet immediate workforce needs by earning the South Dakota Department of Education Blind or Visually Impaired endorsement while also keeping the option open to complete a full graduate degree without loss of time or credits.

- 7. List the courses required for completion of the certificate in the table below (if any new courses are proposed for the certificate, please attach the new course requests to this form).** *Certificate programs by design are limited in the number of credit hours required for completion. Certificate programs consist of nine (9) to twelve (12) credit hours, including prerequisite courses. In addition, certificates typically involve existing courses. If the curriculum consists of more than twelve (12) credit hours (including prerequisites) or includes new courses, please provide explanation and justification below.*

| <b>Prefix</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Course Title</b><br><i>(add or delete rows as needed)</i>     | <b>Prerequisites for Course</b><br><i>Include credits for prerequisites in subtotal below.</i> | <b>Credit Hours</b> | <b>New (yes, no)</b> |
|---------------|---------------|--|--|---------------------|----------------------|
| SPED          | 521           | Principles of Orientation and Mobility for the Classroom Teacher |  | 3                   | No                   |
| SPED          | 523           | Foundations of Teaching Students who have Visual Impairments     |  | 2                   | No                   |

|          |     |  |  |    |    |
|----------|-----|--|--|----|----|
| SPED     | 524 | Educational Methods, Materials, and Access Technology for Students who have Visual Impairments |  | 2  | No |
| SPED     | 525 | Educational Implications of the Anatomy and Function of the Eye                                |  | 3  | No |
| SPED     | 534 | Introduction to the Literary UEB Braille Code  |  | 2  | No |
| SPED     | 536 | Introduction to the Nemeth Code/Teaching Reading to the Blind and Visually Impaired            |  | 2  | No |
| SPED     | 795 | Practicum  |  | 4  | No |
| Subtotal |     |  |  | 18 |    |

## 8. Student Outcome and Demonstration of Individual Achievement.

*Board Policy 2:23 requires certificate programs to “have specifically defined student learning outcomes.*

**A. What specific knowledge and competencies, including technology competencies, will all students demonstrate before graduation?** *The knowledge and competencies should be specific to the program and not routinely expected of all university graduates.*

Upon completion of the Graduate Certificate in Visual Impairments, students will be able to:

- Analyze the impact of visual impairments on student learning, development, and access to the general curriculum, and apply foundational principles of visual impairment education to instructional planning.
- Design and implement specialized instructional strategies, materials, and modifications that promote access to learning for students who are blind or visually impaired.
- Select, integrate, and evaluate assistive technologies, such as screen readers, magnification tools, refreshable braille displays, and other access technologies, to meet individual student needs.
- Interpret and apply knowledge of the anatomy and function of the eye, as well as common causes of visual impairments, to inform instructional decisions and student supports.
- Read and write Unified English Braille (UEB) and Nemeth Code at a level sufficient to support instruction in literacy, mathematics, and science.
- Incorporate principles of orientation and mobility into instructional planning in collaboration with certified orientation and mobility specialists to promote student independence and safety.
- Demonstrate mastery of program competencies in a supervised practicum by delivering effective, evidence-based instruction to students with visual impairments in authentic educational settings.

**B. Complete the table below to list specific learning outcomes – knowledge and competencies – for courses in the proposed program in each row. Label each column heading with a course prefix and number. Indicate required courses with an asterisk (\*). Indicate with an X in the corresponding table cell for any student outcomes that will be met by the courses included. All students should acquire the program knowledge and competencies regardless of the electives selected. Modify the table as necessary to provide the requested information for the proposed program.**

| <b>Individual Student Outcome</b><br>(Same as in the text of the proposal)   | Program Courses that Address the Outcomes |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|  | SPED 521                                  | SPED 523 | SPED 524 | SPED 525 | SPED 534 | SPED 536 | SPED 795 |
| Analyze the impact of visual impairments on student learning, development, and access to the general curriculum, and apply foundational principles of visual impairment education to instructional planning. |   | X        |          |          |          |          |          |
| Design and implement specialized instructional strategies, materials, and modifications that promote access to learning for students who are blind or visually impaired.                                     |   |          | X        |          |          |          |          |
| Select, integrate, and evaluate assistive technologies, such as screen readers, magnification tools, refreshable braille displays, and other access technologies, to meet individual student needs.          |   |          | X        |          |          |          |          |
| Interpret and apply knowledge of the anatomy and function of the eye, as well as common causes of visual impairments, to inform instructional decisions and student supports.                                |   |          |          | X        |          |          |          |
| Read and write Unified English Braille (UEB) and Nemeth Code at a level sufficient to support instruction in literacy, mathematics, and science.   |   |          |          |          | X        | X        |          |
| Incorporate principles of orientation and mobility into instructional planning in collaboration with certified orientation and mobility specialists to promote student independence and safety.              | X   |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Demonstrate mastery of program competencies in a supervised practicum by delivering effective, evidence-based instruction to students with visual impairments in authentic educational settings.             |   |          |          |          |          |          | X        |

*Modify the table as necessary to include all student outcomes. Outcomes in this table are to be the same ones identified in the text.*

## 9. Delivery Location.

*Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.*

- A. Complete the following charts to indicate if the university seeks authorization to deliver the entire program on campus, at any off campus location (e.g., USD Community College for Sioux Falls, Black Hills State University-Rapid City, Capital City Campus, etc.) or deliver the entire program through distance technology (e.g., as an on-line program)?**

|           | Yes/No | Intended Start Date |
|-----------|--------|---------------------|
| On campus | Yes    | Fall 2026           |

|            | Yes/No | If Yes, list location(s) | Intended Start Date             |
|------------|--------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Off campus | No     |                          | Choose an item. Choose an item. |

|  | Yes/No | If Yes, identify delivery methods<br><i>Delivery methods are defined in AAC Guideline <a href="#">2.4.3.B</a>.</i> | Intended Start Date |
|--|--------|--|---------------------|
| Distance Delivery (online/other distance delivery methods)                           | Yes    | X02 HyFlex, X15 Online Asynchronous  | Fall 2026           |
| Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online? | No     | If yes, identify institutions:   |                     |

- B. Complete the following chart to indicate if the university seeks authorization to deliver more than 50% but less than 100% of the certificate through distance learning (e.g., as an on-line program)? This question responds to HLC definitions for distance delivery.**

|  | Yes/No | If Yes, identify delivery methods   | Intended Start Date |
|--|--------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Distance Delivery (online/other distance delivery methods) | Yes    | X02 HyFlex, X15 Online Asynchronous | Fall 2026           |

- 10. Additional Information:** *Additional information is optional. Use this space to provide pertinent information not requested above. Limit the number and length of additional attachments. Identify all attachments with capital letters. Letters of support are not necessary and are rarely included with Board materials. The University may include responses to questions from the Board or the Executive Director as appendices to the original proposal where applicable. Delete this item if not used.*