

**GRADUATION**

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**POLICY**

Upon successful completion of program requirements, a student will be eligible to receive an Associate of Arts degree, an Associate of Science degree, an Associate of Applied Science degree, a diploma, or a certificate as listed for each major. Total credit requirements will vary by program and have been determined based upon curriculum requirements, advisory committee recommendations and Program Development Staff at the Office of the Chancellor. Ridgewater College adheres to the definitions included in [Minnesota State Board Policy 3.36](#) and [Minnesota State System Procedure 3.36.1](#) – Academic Programs.

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*History:*

*01.27.03 Adopted*

*05.12.06 Revised*

*03.25.10 Revised*

*12.21.20 Proposed; Reviewed for Equity Compliance*

*05.18.21 Revised*

*05.05.22 Reviewed for Equity Compliance*

*08.12.22 Revised*

**GRADUATION**

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**PROCEDURES****Requirements**

To be considered eligible for graduation with an Associate Degree, Diploma or Certificate (9 credit minimum, as defined by Minnesota State) each student must meet the following requirements:

1. Complete all courses and achieve a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 or better on a 4.00 grading scale. In addition, diplomas and degrees may require minimum passing grades for specific courses.
2. Fulfill all financial obligations to the college.
3. Residence: To be eligible for graduation, a student must have earned at least 1/3 of the total award credits at Ridgewater College. Petitions/transcripts will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for residency or to ensure compliance with current graduation standards.
4. Credit for Prior Learning: For associate degrees and diplomas requiring 60 credits or more, a maximum of 20 credits may be earned through credit for prior learning-external assessments to be used towards graduation requirements. For other certificates and diplomas, one-third (1/3) of the required course load may be earned through credit for prior learning-external assessments to be used towards graduation requirements. There is no credit limit for internal assessments.
5. No more than one-third (1/3) of the total program credits of pass/no credit courses shall be counted toward graduation.
6. Participation: All students are encouraged to participate in the graduation ceremonies.
7. Time Limit: Students may graduate under the requirements as published in the college catalog that are in effect at the time the degree, diploma, or certificate is certified; or under the requirements in effect for any of the previous four academic years, provided they were enrolled in at least one course from the program during the academic year they are following requirements for. Students graduating more than four years after the date of first enrollment must meet the requirements stated in the catalog in effect for the year in which graduation occurs.
8. Students will graduate at the end of the term in which they complete all course requirements. However, a student may be allowed to participate in commencement if they desire to walk with their cohort but has outstanding graduation requirements of 12 credits or less and the courses are offered the following semester (excluding summer). The student will not receive an award until successfully completing outstanding program requirements. If more than 12 credits are left to be completed, the student will be allowed to participate in commencement following the term all program requirements are completed. Transfer of acceptable credits must occur within a reasonable amount of time after the student transferred from Ridgewater College. The petition form, which is available online at [www.ridgewater.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/student\\_petition.pdf](http://www.ridgewater.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/student_petition.pdf) or from Student Services, must be submitted in the year in which the degree is to be awarded.

**GRADUATION**

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9. Students must apply to graduate regardless of their plans to attend the commencement ceremony. Students must submit a separate application for each award. Students must check their Degree Audit Report (DARS) in their eServices before applying. The audit must be for the major indicated on the application and it must read "ALL REQUIREMENTS COMPLETED – IN PROGRESS COURSES USED" or "ALL REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED BELOW HAVE BEEN MET."

10. The College reserves the right to automatically post certificate, diploma and degree completion to the student academic record upon the verification that all requirements have been satisfied.

11. Students have the right to petition degree requirements except for the total graduation credit requirement.

**Attire**

All faculty, administration, and students wearing caps and gowns will wear only official graduation attire. This would include official graduation caps, tassels and gowns, as well as honors cords, medallions and veteran's cords issued by Ridgewater College. No other items are allowed on the gown or to be worn to the ceremony.

**Ceremony**

Once each academic year, a formal commencement ceremony is held at the end of finals week during spring semester (typically mid-May). A ceremony will be held on each campus for its graduates. Eligible applicants will receive commencement information regarding specific dates, times, location, gown ordering and pick-up, etc. via mail. Participation in the ceremony does not signify completion of all degree requirements. Children attending the graduation ceremony must be under the supervision of an adult at all times other than the graduate. Children will not be allowed to accompany the graduate in the procession or sit with a graduate during the ceremony.

**Honors**

For those who qualify, the graduation program will note, with a †, individuals who are members in good standing of the national honor society of two-year colleges (PTK). In addition, these individuals will wear PTK cords, and their tassel will be gold. Individuals who have achieved a cumulative GPA of at least 3.50 will be noted with one \* and their diploma will be embossed with the honor student seal. Two \*\* will indicate a cumulative GPA of at least 3.75. In addition to the honors seal on the diploma, these students will receive gold cords to be worn at the ceremony. Three \*\*\* will indicate a 4.00 GPA. In addition to the honors seal and gold cords, these students will also be given a medallion to be worn at the ceremony.

To be eligible for honors, at least two-thirds (2/3) of all credits earned at Ridgewater College must have a grade point value letter grade assigned (i.e., A – F).

**Process**

Awards are not handed out at the ceremony. Each student attending the ceremony receives a degree jacket when they walk across the stage. Final approval is not determined until final grades are submitted and posted to the student's record. Awards will be mailed four (4) to six (6) weeks after all requirements have been verified.

**GRADUATION**

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In order for awards to be mailed, there must be no holds on the student's account, such as Business Office, laptop, overdue library books, etc. If a hold exists, awards will not be mailed until the Registrar's Office has been notified that the obligation has been satisfied.

It is the student's responsibility to keep the Registrar's Office informed of address changes so that awards are mailed to the correct permanent address on file in the student information system.

The name printed on the certificate/diploma/degree will be the full first and last name on file in the Student Information System at the time of application for graduation. Any name changes require proof of authenticity. This includes a picture identification and at least one other form of documentation. This documentation may include any one or more of the following: Marriage decree, Divorce decree, Court order, Certificate of U.S. Citizenship, Social Security card, or other official documentation recognized by the college. Name changes must be made before degrees are ordered from the printer. After that time, there will be an additional \$25 charge for a corrected certificate/diploma/degree.

Transcripts and certificates/diplomas/degrees will reflect the semester term and year in which all graduation requirements have been met, including receiving official transcripts with final grades from transfer institutions, applications and fees, as well as clearing any holds.

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*History:*

*05.12.06 Adopted*

*01.28.08 Revised – For Implementation 07.01.08*

*03.25.10 Revised*

*11.15.11 Revised*

*07.06.12 Revised*

*02.06.14 Revised – Honors section.*

*02.13.17 Proposed; 03.13.17 Adopted*

*02.14.19 Proposed; 04.01.19 Revised*

*10.24.19 Proposed; Revised 01.31.2020*

*12.21.20 Proposed; Reviewed for Equity Compliance*

*05.18.21 Revised*

*05.05.22 Proposed; Reviewed and revised for Equity Compliance*

*08.12.22 Revised*

*08.12.24 Proposed; 03.21.25 Registrar Edits; 11.10.25 Revised*