

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

EP.22.147 Establishing Minimum Hours for Joint Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs

BACKGROUND

A joint degree program is a campus-approved program in which a student concurrently pursues two specifically identified degrees that are conferred simultaneously. Integrated programs of study that allow students to pursue bachelor's and master's degrees simultaneously have become increasingly popular, especially among students who can complete their undergraduate degree in fewer than four years. Before finishing the bachelor's component of a joint degree program and officially becoming a graduate student, students have been allowed to enroll in some graduate-level courses for graduate credit and thus reducing overall minimum credit hours when compared to earning each degree separately. This has been an approved policy of the Graduate College for many years.

In examining many such programs in recent years, the Senate Committee on Educational Policy has become aware of varying rationales by which the reduction in total credit hours is obtained. Absent any campus policy to the contrary, the Committee sets to provide guidelines for future curricula guidance.

Campus baccalaureate programs require a minimum of 120 hours and campus graduate programs require a minimum of 32 hours. The total number of hours when combining these two degrees totals 152 hours. The Graduate College has been approving joint programs of bachelor's and master's degrees for many years and according to their policies outlined in the Graduate College Handbook, "the total time for the two degrees can be decreased by a predetermined maximum [number of hours] through the acceptance of required courses in one program as electives in the other, if so approved," and providing students complete the minimum requirements for each degree.

The Graduate College policy has allowed up to 12 hours of undergraduate credit in 400-level courses to be counted not just toward fulfilling graduate requirements, but also toward the total number of hours required for a master's degree.

RECOMMENDATION

In its statutory role of establishing general standards for all campus degrees, and supporting current Graduate College policies for joint degree programs, the Senate should adopt the following policy for all joint degree programs combining a bachelor's degree and master's degree:

The minimum number of hours required for students in a joint degree program pursuing both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree will be 140 discrete credit hours. This assumes the minimum hours for the bachelor's degree is 120 hours and the minimum hours for the graduate degree is 32 hours, with 12 hours shared by both degrees at the advanced level (400- or 500-level courses).

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