

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

EP.05.21

Graduate College
204 Coble Hall
801 South Wright Street
Champaign, IL 61820-6210



April 13, 2005

Abbas Aminmansour, Chair
Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Office of the Senate
228 English Building, MC-461

Dear Abbas:

Enclosed is a proposal to establish *Guidelines on Graduate Concentrations*, which was approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee at its meeting of October 19, 2004, and discussed last week in the Senate Committee on Educational Policy. As you know, the purpose of this proposal was twofold: 1) to reserve the use of the term "concentration" to refer to a formally approved program that is acknowledged on the student's official University transcript, and 2) to standardize the approval process for all graduate concentrations.

The *Guidelines* define a graduate concentration as a coherent program of study requiring considerable depth of knowledge. A concentration may refer to a subfield within a discipline or to an interdepartmental and/or interdisciplinary area of knowledge. All approved graduate concentrations will be listed on the graduate transcript. For this reason, all concentrations must:

- Represent a major part of the graduate program (24-32 hours);
- Include a rationale that explains why transcript recognition is sought;
- Be approved by the disciplinary college(s), the Graduate College, and the Board of Trustees.

According to its *Bylaws*, the Graduate College has jurisdiction of all approved programs leading to graduate degrees. In the past, the establishment of new subfields (whether they were called specializations, options, or concentrations) within existing graduate programs did not require approval beyond the Graduate College. Because graduate concentrations will be recorded on the student's official University transcript, we believe that all graduate concentrations should be approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees, and reported to the Senate on an annual basis. We believe it should go to the Senate as an information item. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Carney
Associate Dean

Enclosure

c: R. Damrau
K. Marshall
A. Poehls
R. Wheeler

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE CONCENTRATIONS

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee
October 19, 2004

Brief Description

The purpose of this proposal is to establish guidelines under which units offering graduate degrees may seek formal approval of graduate concentrations to be acknowledged on the student's official University transcript.

Background

With the implementation of Banner, the University of Illinois graduate transcript lists *degrees, majors, concentrations, and minors*. At the graduate level, *degree, major, and minor*¹ all have defined requirements and approval routes, but *concentration* has been used much more loosely, and often interchangeably with "specialization," "option," and "track."

A formal graduate concentration may be defined as an elaboration or an extension of a graduate major. A concentration may reflect either content specialization within a particular discipline (for example, a taxation concentration in accountancy), or an interdisciplinary program (for example, an interdisciplinary concentration in cultural studies and interpretive research). In all cases, however, a graduate concentration requires review by the Graduate College Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees, and is noted on the student's transcript.

This proposal seeks to define only those concentrations at the graduate level that would be listed in the *Programs of Study* and recorded on the University of Illinois transcript. Although most graduate programs require students to specialize in one form or another, not all of these specializations need to be formal concentrations (i.e., represented on the student's transcript). Graduate education nearly always involves some form of specialization or interdisciplinary work, yet the need for transcript recognition varies in importance across the disciplines. Indeed, transcript recognition should be sought only when there is a clear benefit to the student and/or to the department—for example, when transcript notation is required by specialized accrediting bodies, or in response to job market demands.

Guidelines

A graduate concentration should constitute a coherent program of study requiring considerable depth of knowledge. A concentration may refer to a subfield within a discipline, or to an interdepartmental and/or interdisciplinary area of knowledge.

1. A graduate concentration should consist of at least 24 and usually not more than 32 graduate hours of relevant course work at the 400- and 500-level and/or thesis credit in the sponsoring department(s). For master's degrees, which require a minimum of 32 graduate hours, this would represent the majority, if not the entirety, of the degree. For certificates of advanced study (CAS), which typically require 32 graduate hours beyond the master's degree, the concentration would typically represent roughly half of the degree. For doctoral degrees, which require a minimum of 96 graduate hours, this would represent $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total minimum graduate hours required.

¹ See www.provost.uiuc.edu/departments/cps/programs/log.htm. Last year, a proposal for establishing policies and procedures to govern graduate minors was developed by the Graduate College Executive Committee, and approved by the Senate (EP.04.12).

2. A student who completes a graduate concentration in a program that requires completion of a thesis would normally have at least one faculty member in the area of specialization serve on the student's thesis committee. In the case of interdepartmental concentrations, the thesis committee would comprise faculty members from more than one department or area of knowledge.
3. The department or unit sponsoring the concentration may set additional prerequisites for eligibility for the concentration (e.g., minimum GPA). Additionally, the sponsoring department or unit may set other requirements for completion, such as a qualifying examination, practicum, etc.
4. An academic department or unit (or a combination of departments or units, in the case of interdisciplinary programs) intending to propose a concentration should prepare a proposal in accordance with these guidelines, including a rationale that indicates why transcript recognition of the concentration is important, and obtain approval(s) from the disciplinary college(s) before sending to the Graduate College. Proposals should be prepared using the standard Senate format for proposals at <http://www2.uiuc.edu/unit/senate/epformat.html>. Proposals should be sent to the Graduate College for review and approval by the Program Subcommittee and the Executive Committee. The Graduate College will send approved proposals to the Office of the Provost for forwarding to the Board of Trustees, and will report annually to the Senate on all approved graduate concentrations.
5. Departments already sponsoring an approved graduate concentration will be contacted by the Graduate College to ensure that the existing concentration is in accordance with these guidelines, and to confirm that the graduate concentration should be listed on the transcript.

Process

1. All graduate concentrations must receive disciplinary college, Graduate College, Senate, and Board of Trustees approval. All approved concentrations will be officially recognized by the campus and listed on the transcript. Departments may establish tracks, specializations, and options with college and Graduate College approval, but these will not result in transcript recognition.
2. Any academic department or unit with the approval of the disciplinary college(s) may initiate a proposal for a graduate concentration. Concentrations approved by the Graduate College will be forwarded to the Office of the Provost for further approval. The proposal should comply with the guidelines above and follow the attached format for proposals.
3. The Banner system displays degree, major, concentration, and minor designations, and the University of Illinois academic transcript reflects completion of all approved graduate degrees, majors, concentrations, and minors earned by the student. When a student indicates an intention to graduate with a concentration, the department(s) will confirm whether the requisite course of study has been completed.
4. Students must contact the sponsoring department or unit offering the concentration for information about the concentration. It is up to the sponsoring department or unit to establish criteria and timelines for completion of the concentration, and to certify its successful completion. The sponsoring department or unit must make available information and consultation to inform students about requirements for the concentration.

A student's intent to pursue a graduate concentration must be approved by the student's adviser and graduate program director. As in the case of graduate minors, the student's major department will determine how many graduate hours (units) of a concentration may count toward the degree requirements in the student's program, or toward completing other graduate concentrations.

**PROPOSAL TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

Proposal for a Graduate Concentration in _____

TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL:

(Please include the full title of the proposed concentration)

SPONSORING DEPARTMENT(S):

(Please include the name, campus address, and phone number of a faculty member knowledgeable about the proposal)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Please provide the following:

- A brief description of the concentration. A concentration should constitute a coherent program of study requiring considerable depth of knowledge, and may refer to a subfield within a discipline, or to an interdepartmental and/or interdisciplinary area of knowledge. Please indicate whether this is a master's, CAS, or doctoral concentration.
- A list of the credit and course requirements for the proposed concentration. A graduate concentration should consist of 24-32 graduate hours of relevant course work at the 400- and 500-level and/or thesis credit in the sponsoring unit(s).
- Expected enrollment in the concentration.
- Additional prerequisites for eligibility for the concentration (e.g., minimum GPA).

JUSTIFICATION:

All approved concentrations will be officially recognized by the campus and listed on the student's transcript. Please explain why transcript recognition is important in terms of benefit to the student and/or to the department—e.g., transcript notation is required by an accrediting body, or meets job market demands.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS:

- a. Additional staff and dollars needed
- b. Internal reallocations (e.g., change in class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratio, etc.)
- c. Effect on course enrollment in other departments and explanations of duplication with other programs and/or concentrations, and discussions with representatives of those departments
- d. Impact on library, computer use, laboratory use, equipment, etc.

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures [sponsor, department head, dean] and dates of approval)*

Department

Date

College

Date

Graduate College

Date

STATEMENT FOR THE PROGRAMS OF STUDY (Please limit to one page or less):

EFFECTIVE DATE: