

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE**

Committee on Educational Policy  
(Final;Action)

EP.11.31 Proposed Guidelines for Degree Completion

**Abstract**

The integrity of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign degree programs should be maintained by adherence to the standards set by the campus governance structure, guidelines, and procedures regardless of degree delivery format: campus based, on-line, or blended option.

It is not expected that the UIUC campus needs to add any new items to its programs to make them “degree completion programs” because in fact all of our approved programs are defined as such.

On the UIUC campus our codes and regulations prescribe the academic rigor, course requirements, admissions standards, and, for the most part, the implementation concepts for any degree program. A program presented as “degree completion” is not any different than any other degree program in these requirements.

If a sponsoring unit wants to establish a degree program where the rules, regulations, policies differ from what is codified for campus based programs, the proposed program has to both document the differences and justify them.

This set of guidelines is proposed for usage when considering new program development on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. It applies to degree programs proposed in campus-based, on-line, or blended formats.

**Definition of “Degree”**

A University of Illinois “degree” is any program that falls under the definition provided below by the Illinois Board of Higher Education:

“Degree” means any designation, appellation, series of letters or words, or other symbol which signifies or purports to signify that the recipient has satisfactorily completed an organized program of study of at least one year beyond the secondary school level. It shall include, but not be limited to the following: certificate, associate, bachelor, post-baccalaureate certificate, master, post-master certificate, doctorate—professional practice (degree required for entry into specific profession such as law or medicine), and doctorate—research and scholarship.” (BHE, 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050, Subtitle A, Section 1050.20 Definitions)

See also IPEDS (Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System) definitions of degrees in Appendix I ([www.provost.illinois.edu/programs/cps/degreedef.html](http://www.provost.illinois.edu/programs/cps/degreedef.html))

**Definition of “degree completion”**

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign considers all of its “degree” programs to be “degree completion” programs.

All degrees whether offered in the traditional on-campus setting, off-campus site-based setting, on-line format, or blended models must meet the standards set by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign faculty as approved by the campus governance structure. (See information on program creation and change [www.senate.illinois.edu/ep/proposals.htm](http://www.senate.illinois.edu/ep/proposals.htm) which outlines information necessary to propose a new program or modify an existing one. This site also provides information on what levels of approval are necessary for such proposals.)

A degree program may be offered on-line or off-campus only. It does not require an on-campus counterpart.

For undergraduate degree programs, on-line and blended programs will need to demonstrate that a student can access and complete 60 hours of UIUC courses and 21 advanced hours of UIUC courses to meet the undergraduate academic residency requirement. Proposals should consider whether the academic residential component is to be offered on-line or in a model mixed with campus-

based courses. A student may transfer courses for the remainder of the degree requirements. However, in addition, UIUC degree components must be completed such as language, general education, advanced writing, cultural studies and quantitative reasoning at the undergraduate level.

For graduate degree programs, the credit and academic residency requirements in the *Graduate College Handbook* chapter V section A for master's students and chapter VI section A for doctoral students, must be satisfied.

All students must meet the requirements for graduation outlined in the *Student Code*, Section 3-801 and in the *Graduate College Handbook*. Any variations from the *Student Code* or the *Graduate College Handbook* must be documented and justified by the sponsoring unit in the degree proposal.

In situations where there is an extant campus based degree program, the degree requirements must be the same—the mode of delivery of course content may vary but technology development should not differentiate degree requirements. Any deviations from the *Student Code*, the *Graduate College Handbook* or the existing program must be documented and justified by the sponsoring unit in the degree proposal.

Programs need to assure that courses will be available for students to make timely progress towards the degree.

### **Academic Residency**

Academic residency for degree programs is determined by the degree of oversight provided by the UIUC campus. A UIUC degree program that has been approved by the UIUC governance process can be offered off-site or on-line. Any course offered for UIUC credit taught by UIUC faculty and instructors at any UIUC approved site, whether virtual or real, will count towards academic residency.

### **Admission to a degree program\***

Admission to a degree program must be through one of the UIUC colleges. Admissions guidelines should be clearly stated for:

- Qualifications for admission to the program  
Graduate College admission requirements are found at [www.grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply](http://www.grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply), and include minimum GPA, Bachelor's equivalency, and English proficiency; programs may set higher standards.
- Consistency of admissions standards across programs with different delivery modes; explanations and justification for deviations from campus approved standards
- Process for selecting applicants
- Treatment and consideration of transfer and test-based credit
- Whether a student will be permitted to register in courses in campus-based alternative degree models
- Management issues and authentication and authorization for services

### **Continuation in the Program\***

Standards and expectations must be set by the sponsoring unit in the degree proposal for continuation in degree programs with respect to grade point averages, honesty and integrity, good academic standing, and disciplinary processes. Campus based programs must follow the *Student Code* and *Graduate College Handbook*.

Explanation and justification for deviation of these campus approved standards must be provided in the degree proposal. Other or non-campus based programs must follow the definitions in the *Student Code* and *Graduate College Handbook* unless the program proposal and the program web site detail exceptions in the following areas:

- satisfactory grade point averages
- successful completion of all program requirements
- academic progress
- time-to-degree limitations, if applicable
- academic integrity (on-line courses must follow HEOA regulations for on-line course delivery and examination.)
- rules, regulations and policies that will apply to students and faculty

**Matriculation Issues\***

Degree programs offered outside of campus-based models must document and justify:

- how and where students register for courses
- how tuition and fees are paid by students
- how transfer credit is assessed and processed
- how the diploma will read
- how financial aid will be addressed
- what campus amenities will be available to students
- how student grievances and discipline will be addressed
- student privacy (FERPA and HEOA)

**Evaluation of Programs\***

All degree programs must follow the UIUC and IBHE established guidelines for evaluation and assessment of program and program content, faculty, and delivery methods. Off-campus or on-line graduate programs are reviewed systematically every five years by the Committee on Extended Education and External Degrees.

\*Guidelines established for multi-institutional degree programs should be considered for any non-campus based degree program. These guidelines are already established and documented for any campus-based program.

Prepared by the Senate Educational Policy Committee *ad hoc* Degree Completion Committee, chaired by LAS Assistant Dean Lucy Rich. Other members include Adam Fein, Phil Geil, Jennifer Hamer, Jimmy Hsia, Christine Hurt, Natasha Jankowski, Michael Krassa, Kristi Kuntz, Faye Lesht, Carol Livingstone, Carol Malmgren, David Olsen

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

Abbas Aminmansour, Chair

## IPEDS Degree Definitions

### **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (less than 1 academic year)**

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in less than 1 academic year (2 semesters or 3 quarters), or designed for completion in less than 30 semester or trimester credit hours, or in less than 45 quarter credit hours, or in less than 900 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.

### **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 1 but less than 2 academic years)**

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 1 but less than 2 full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 30 but less than 60 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 45 but less than 90 quarter credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.

### **Associate's degree**

An award that normally requires at least 2 but less than 4 years of full-time equivalent college work.

### **Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 2 but less than 4 academic years)**

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 2 but less than 4 full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 90 but less than 180 quarter credit hours, or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.

### **Bachelor's degree**

An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least 4 but not more than 5 years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes all bachelor's degrees conferred in a 5-year cooperative (work-study) program. A cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their college studies. Also includes bachelor's degrees in which the normal 4 years of work are completed in 3 years.

### **Postbaccalaureate certificate**

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study equivalent to 18 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's. It is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree, but does not meet the requirements of a master's degree.

### **Master's degree**

An award that requires the successful completion of a program of study of at least the full-time equivalent of 1 but not more than 2 academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Some of these degrees, such as those in Theology (M.Div., M.H.L./Rav) that were formerly classified as "first-professional", may require more than two full-time equivalent academic years of work.

### **Post-master's certificate**

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study equivalent to 24 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree, but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level.

### **First-professional degree**

An award that requires completion of a program that meets all of the following criteria: (1) completion of the academic requirements to begin practice in the profession; (2) at least 2 years of college work prior to entering the program; and (3) a total of at least 6 academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including prior required college work plus the length of the professional program itself. First-professional degrees may be awarded in the following 10 fields:

- Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.)
- Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.)
- Law (L.L.B., J.D.)
- Medicine (M.D.)
- Optometry (O.D.)
- Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)
- Pharmacy (Pharm.D.)
- Podiatry (D.P.M., D.P., or Pod.D.)
- Theology (M.Div., M.H.L., B.D., or Ordination)
- Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.)

**First-professional certificate (post-degree)**

An award that requires completion of an organized program of study designed for persons who have completed the first-professional degree. Examples could be refresher courses or additional units of study in a specialty or subspecialty.

**Doctor's degree - research/scholarship**

A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of degree may include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M., and others, as designated by the awarding institution.

**Doctor's degree - professional practice**

A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as "first-professional" and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); Law (L.L.B. or J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine (D.O); Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P.); or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.

**Doctor's degree – other**

A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.

**Illinois Board of Higher Education:** Pat Quinn, Governor; Carrie J. Hightman, Chairwoman; Judy Erwin, Executive Director

Information for Institutions of Higher Education: How to Obtain Operating or Degree-Granting Authority  
<[www.ibhe.org](http://www.ibhe.org)>

**ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES ON UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION  
(Adopted September 1990)**

**Transfer and Articulation (Amended September 1994, May 1997, and May 2006)**

Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are equal partners in providing the first two years of baccalaureate degree programs in Illinois. While each institution is ultimately responsible for the quality of the programs it provides, both associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions are expected to work together to assure that their lower-division baccalaureate programs are comparable in scope, quality, and intellectual rigor.

Any student admitted in transfer to an Illinois baccalaureate degree-granting institution should be granted standing comparable to current students who have completed the same number of baccalaureate-level credit hours and should be able to progress toward baccalaureate degree completion at a rate comparable to that of students who entered the baccalaureate institution as first-time freshmen. To assure students of comparable treatment, it is expected that:

1. Students admitted in transfer who have earned an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science degree from a regionally accredited Illinois community or junior college whose general education requirement for the degree incorporates the Illinois General Education Core Curriculum will have met the receiving institution's all-campus, lower-division general education requirement for the baccalaureate degree (or for a second associate degree). A receiving institution may, however, require admitted transfer students to complete an institution-wide and/or mission-related graduation requirement that is beyond the scope of the Illinois General Education Core Curriculum.
2. Students admitted in transfer who have satisfactorily completed the Illinois General Education Core Curriculum at any regionally accredited Illinois college or university prior to transfer should be granted credit in lieu of the receiving institution's all-campus, lower-division general education requirement for an associate or baccalaureate degree. A receiving institution may, however, require admitted transfer students to complete an institution-wide and/or mission-related graduation requirement that is beyond the scope of the Illinois General Education Core Curriculum.
3. Under the following circumstances, public institutions and all other participating institutions will offer transfer students the option of satisfying lower-division general education requirements by completing a GECC curriculum while enrolled in the receiving institution.
  - a. When the transfer student has completed a statewide articulated associate degree such as the AFA, AES, AAT; or
  - b. When the transfer student has been granted 30 semester hours of transfer credit by the receiving institution without having completed the GECC. (Although not specified, the nature of lower-division curricula indicates that 30 semester hours of *transfer credit* from an IAI institution will likely incorporate GECC credits.)
4. Students admitted in transfer who have met program entry requirements and have satisfactorily completed courses described in an Illinois Articulation Initiative Baccalaureate Major Curriculum Recommendation at a regionally accredited Illinois college or university should be granted credit towards fulfilling the receiving institution's comparable lower-division requirements for that specific major. Where admission is competitive, completion of a Baccalaureate Major Recommendation does not guarantee admission.

Presidents and chief academic officers of associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions should provide leadership in implementing state policies on transfer and articulation and in resolving issues of mutual concern. To this end, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Illinois Community College Board, will regularly convene the presidents of baccalaureate and associate degree-granting institutions and system academic leadership to assess the status of state policies on transfer and articulation and to resolve any issues that arise.

Program faculties from both associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions should take primary responsibility for developing and maintaining course and program articulation agreements and for promoting compatibility between associate and baccalaureate curricula.

Associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions should work together to expand opportunities for students to complete baccalaureate degrees. Through formal partnerships, associate

and baccalaureate institutions should jointly encourage baccalaureate degree completion and provide information on the transfer process, guidance in program and course selection, and orientation to the academic environment to prospective transfer students. Dual admission, "2+2," and similar articulation and transfer agreements should be developed to facilitate the transfer of students.

Colleges and universities should assure that transfer students have the same opportunities as other students to participate in the social, cultural, and academic support services necessary for their integration into the campus community.

A statewide system for monitoring the academic progress of cohorts of community and junior college students who transfer to baccalaureate degree-granting institutions shall be established by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in cooperation with the Illinois Community College Board and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. This information should serve as the basis for the regular review and improvement of the undergraduate curricula, support services, and articulation and transfer agreements of associate and baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. The Illinois Board of Higher Education, in consultation with the Illinois Community College Board, will examine institutional and statewide trends in student transfer and degree completion and will use these analyses to make necessary modifications to policies on articulation and transfer.