

Guidelines for Developing Five-Year Undergraduate-Master's Degree Programs

at

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Students are increasingly requesting flexibility in earning more than one degree from the University, including an interest in combining undergraduate work and master's degree work. Students would ideally like to earn both degrees in five years. While this scenario is possible for some students – in particular those who arrive with numerous AP credits – there are guidelines to be met when considering such programs.

For proposals involving new degree programs, the campus and University System guidelines for program development will be in effect. The Graduate School's information on developing new graduate degrees can be found here: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/policies/newdegree.html>

For proposals involving changes to existing degree programs, this document should provide guidance for achieving proper approvals.

Program Requirements

All policies and guidelines governing both the graduate and undergraduate degree programs must still be met in a five-year program, including admissions standards, credit hour requirements, course credit transfer policies, residency, registration and enrollment restrictions, and graduation requirements. Individual school and external accreditation requirements must also be met.

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is the accrediting body for the University. SACS requires the following:

- 120 semester credit hours at minimum at the baccalaureate level
- 30 semester credit hours at minimum at the post-baccalaureate/graduate level
- The institution's master's, professional, and doctoral degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs

In a practical sense, this core requirement means the undergraduate degree and master's degree must be met with at minimum 150 hours total (120 + 30 that cannot overlap or "double-count").

While SACS does not mandate the timing of coursework, several campus units have restrictions in place concerning time spent in residence to earn a degree and the amount of course credit that can be transferred into or out of their programs. Most critical is the Graduate School's 20% rule, which allows transfer of a maximum 20% of the hours required to earn the master's degree (i.e., only 6 credit hours toward a 30-hour Master's degree may be transferred into the Carolina graduate degree program).

The Administrative Board of the Graduate School has given its approval to increase the 20% course credit transfer limit to no more than 30% for UNC-Chapel Hill approved dual degree programs at the master's level. It is therefore possible to treat a dual undergraduate-master's degree program similarly. This means that 9 credit hours toward a 30-hour Master's degree may be transferred from the Carolina undergraduate degree to count toward the Carolina graduate degree program.

Students must fulfill all other requirements for both degrees, including applying to the undergraduate major when appropriate, an official application and admittance to the master's program, core coursework, program credit hour requirements above the SACS minimums, special projects and seminars, and a thesis or approved substitute. Below are several examples to illustrate possible five-year program tracks.

Example 1: An advanced undergraduate student is in a program that requires 120 hours for the undergraduate degree and 30 hours for the master's degree. The student may take up to 9.0 hours (up to 30% of the master's hours) of graduate level coursework in their fourth/senior year; however, this must be in addition to the 120 hours required for the bachelor's degree. The student may earn up to 129 hours by the end of their fourth year, and upon official application and admittance to the master's program, must then earn at least 21 hours while enrolled as a master's student.

Example 2: An advanced undergraduate student is in a program that requires 122 hours for the undergraduate degree and 30 hours for the master's degree. The student may take up to 9.0 hours (up to 30% of the master's hours) of graduate level coursework in their fourth/senior year; however, this must be in addition to the 122 hours required for the bachelor's degree. The student may earn up to 131 hours by the end of their fourth year, and upon official application and admittance to the master's program, must then earn at least 21 hours while enrolled as a master's student.

Example 3: An advanced undergraduate student is in a program that requires 122 hours for the undergraduate degree and 36 hours for the master's degree. The student may take up to 10.0 hours (up to 30% of the master's hours) of graduate level coursework in their fourth/senior year; however, this must be in addition to the 122 hours required for the bachelor's degree. The student may earn up to 132 hours by the end of their fourth year, and upon official application and admittance to the master's program, must then earn at least 26 hours while enrolled as a master's student.

Program Approval and Implementation

All five-year programs will follow normal campus guidelines for review and approval of new academic proposals. The home academic school may have administrative approval processes to follow, and the Graduate School will also route the proposal through its Administrative Board before a program can be established and offered to students. The home school or unit for the undergraduate degree should be consulted simultaneously with the Graduate School.

Sponsoring programs should consult with appropriate staff as early as possible to ensure program development is accounting for all guidelines and policies in effect. Staff in both units can assist with reviewing the proposal and confirming how all policies will apply.

Programs should be reviewed periodically and will be considered part of the Office of the Provost's Program Review process occurring every eight years.