

Shared Governance Proposal

2020FA01: Simultaneous and Sequential Graduate Degrees

I. Date: August 31, 2020

II. Sponsoring Constituents:

The Graduate School, Graduate Council, Graduate Council Policy Group, and Office of Academic Affairs and Research

III. Statement of the Issue:

Replace the Second Master's Degree policy language in the Graduate Bulletin (pg.25) with new policy language ("Multiple Graduate Degrees" policy) to accomplish the following:

- 1) Allow up to nine credits earned from prior graduate work to be applied to an additional graduate degree;
- 2) Clarify that credit hour limits on such graduate work do not apply to en route, embedded, or dual degrees; and,
- 3) Prevent students from being admitted to pursue multiple graduate degrees simultaneously.

IV. Rationale for Proposal: (Please include if this is new or a modification of an existing policy or procedure)

In September 2017, the Graduate Council formed a subcommittee, the Graduate Policy Group (GPG), to discuss policies regarding University graduate programs. For 2019-20, members of the GPG included Joan Henley (College of Education and Behavioral Science), Elizabeth Hood (College of Agriculture), Karen Wheeler (Academic Affairs and Research), Shawn Drake (College of Nursing and Health Professions), Gil Fowler (College of Liberal Arts and Communication), John Mello (College of Business), Karen McDaniel (College of Business), Amanda Wheeler (College of Education and Behavioral Science), Thomas Risch (College of Sciences and Mathematics) and Tanja McKay (College of Sciences and Mathematics).

Sequential and simultaneous graduate degrees were raised as an issue to be addressed by the GPG for the following reasons:

- 1) **Arkansas State's policy on credits earned from prior graduate work that can be applied to an additional graduate degree is an outlier among policies at peer institutions** – A review of policies at peer institutions revealed that Arkansas State's policy is an outlier and no other institution allows as much as 50% of previously earned graduate credit to be applied to a subsequent master's degree. The most common number of credits peer institutions allow to be applied to a second master's degree is 9 hours.
- 2) **Disparate treatment of graduate credits earned outside of Arkansas State** - Current policy treats graduate credits earned at Arkansas State differently than those earned at other institutions; up to 50% of the hours from a previously earned master's degree from Arkansas State may be applied to a subsequent master's degree, while only 9 graduate hours earned from an outside institution may be applied. A review of policies at peer institutions revealed that peer institutions do not have similar policies with regard to credits completed in-house.
- 3) **Policy needed to provide for exceptions to credit hour limits for en route master's degrees, embedded graduate degrees, and dual graduate degrees** - En route master's degrees, embedded graduate degrees, and dual graduate degrees are special situations where credit hour limits on prior earned credits do not apply. There is currently no written policy explaining these exceptions and one is needed.
- 4) **Policy needed regarding pursuit of multiple graduate degrees simultaneously** - Currently there is no policy that speaks to whether students may be admitted to or pursue multiple graduate degrees simultaneously, and the lack of policy has caused confusion for students and administrators. Arkansas State's Graduate curriculum is too rigorous to allow for a student to pursue two different graduate degrees simultaneously except in rare cases, and policy is needed to communicate this.

After extensive discussion and deliberation, the GPG settled on the proposed modifications summarized above and reflected in the attached language.

In May 2020, Graduate Council voted to send the attached modifications to SGOC for review.

- V. Type of review (i.e., expedited, full, or extended): Full

Proposed Changes

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SECOND MASTER'S DEGREE POLICY

~~In individual cases, when permitted by the program and upon the recommendation of the advisor, credits earned at A State for one master's degree may, if appropriate to another degree plan, be applied toward the requirements for a second master's degree. At the discretion of the second program, up to one-half of the total hours for a second degree may be used from a previous master's degree.~~

Multiple Graduate Degrees

Students cannot be admitted to or pursue multiple graduate degrees simultaneously at Arkansas State University. Any exceptions must be approved by the respective academic deans and the Graduate School Dean.

If a student completes a graduate degree and pursues an additional graduate degree, a maximum of 9 credits earned from any prior graduate work can be applied to an additional graduate degree. Any hours applied to a graduate degree must be approved by the program chair.

Special exceptions to credit hour limits apply to en route master's degrees, embedded graduate degrees, and dual graduate degrees.

En Route Master's Degrees

An en route master's degree is one in which a student who is accepted into a doctoral program has the option to be awarded the master's degree while pursuing a doctoral degree.

Embedded Graduate Degrees

The sharing of credit between graduate certificates, master's and specialist's degrees embedded within a higher degree is at the discretion of the program offering the higher degree.

Dual Degrees

A dual degree can be earned when a student studies two different fields at the same time in order to earn two separate degrees. Usually, the different fields are based in two different departments and the degrees are of different types, e.g., an MBA and an MA. Dual degree programs require students to apply and be accepted into both degree programs. Students must meet all requirements for each degree.

[Silent with regard to master's to doctoral in different disciplines.]