February 28, 2014

TO: University Curriculum Committee

FROM: Wendy Crone
Associate Dean of Graduate Education

RE: Request for Creation of Official Graduate Course Work Attribute

CC: Kelly Haslam, Assistant Dean, Graduate School
    Michelle Young, Academic Planner, Academic Planning and Institutional Research

A series of new Graduate School policies were approved by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) on October 11, 2013 and the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) on October 24, 2013. Although prompted by the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) institutional accreditation criteria, these policy changes are one of the many ways in which our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and the quality of the student experience.

One of the approved policy items was the Minimum Graduate Course Work (50%) Requirement. This requirement states that at least 50% of credits applied toward the program’s graduate degree credit requirement must be with courses designed for graduate work. The Graduate School would like the University Curriculum Committee to consider creating a formal graduate course attribute. Such an attribute would be consistent with the newly-approved Minimum Graduate Course Work (50%) Requirement policy, which would uphold a HLC accreditation requirement, further legitimize the importance of this policy, and create a direct relationship with courses through the recognized functions and processes of the University Curriculum Committee. In addition, the creation of such an attribute would allow programs and students alike to more readily identify the courses eligible to meet this requirement (not only with courses in one’s unit, but with any course on campus). Finally, the creation of this attribute has the potential to facilitate the advising of enrolled students as well as degree audits at the time of graduation.

Consistent with Graduate School policy, the graduate course work can include UW-Madison courses (including but not limited to online, thesis/research, independent study, and practicum/internship

Graduate School

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credits) that satisfy one of the following guidelines:

- numbered 700 and above
- numbered 300-699 that are specifically designed for graduate students in a graduate program
- numbered 300-699 that assess graduate students separately from undergraduate students

The GFEC approved the above fundamental guidelines to determine what qualifies as graduate course work. The graduate course work attribute will become a part of the course entry in the course catalog and will be one of the criteria that can be selected on the course approval form. To assist subject owners and course proposers in requesting the addition of this attribute properly, the GFEC HLC subcommittee is proposing more the specific parameters below to the University Curriculum Committee for its consideration. These have been developed to better guide the campus in determining what qualifies as graduate course work. All courses numbered 700 and above would need to align with these criteria (and by definition would receive the graduate course work attribute) and any course work numbered 300-699 seeking a graduate course work attribute would also need to align with these criteria.

**Proposed Graduate Course Work Attribute Guidelines**

To develop and safeguard standards of graduate course work, below is a checklist of criteria for designation of a graduate course work attribute. The checklist is minimal and not intended to be exhaustive. The diversity of programs and courses may necessitate judgments outside of listed criteria due to the unique standards of a specific discipline. However, course proposers are encouraged to offer explanations where their courses deviate from general criteria.

**Graduate Course Work Rigor**

- Graduate course work content should be intellectually challenging to graduate students. Graduate course work content should generally require students to demonstrate advanced methodology/application of new skills and information to significant tasks or issues in the discipline as well as increased depth of knowledge and higher-order synthesis and analysis.
- Graduate course work content should generally build on knowledge or experience previously gained and is mindful of program admission prerequisites. For example, graduate course content should be commensurate with the expectation that students in the class already possess knowledge of the discipline equal to that of a typical bachelor degree holder. Course prerequisites will also be evaluated as an indicator of course content and rigor.
- Graduate course work content should generally have a strong emphasis on the literature of the discipline and/or draw actively from the latest research and scholarly activity of the discipline.

**Graduate Course Work Instructors**

- Graduate course work instructors must possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established.
• Graduate course work instructors teaching at the doctoral level must have a record of recognized scholarship, creative endeavor, or achievement in practice commensurate with doctoral expectations.

Graduate Course Work Requirements and Assessment
• Graduate course work numbered 300-699 may satisfy the above criteria by assessing graduate students differently than undergraduate students. The different assessment of graduate students should represent more advanced work, be of a concrete nature, included in the final grade, and differentiated explicitly in the syllabus. Generally, the additional graduate student work will occur outside the common class time.

We propose that the attribute be implemented starting with the Fall 2015 schedule of classes and proceed as quickly as practical after that. Implementation will be coordinated among the Graduate School, the Registrar’s Office, and Academic Planning and Institutional Research.

We look forward to discussing this proposal with you at an upcoming University Curriculum Committee meeting. Thank you for your consideration of this request.