Higher Learning Commission
Assumed Practices

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Key Points

- What is the HLC
- Why important
- Assumed Practices that must be addressed
- GFEC-approved policies
- Next process steps
Higher Learning Commission
A commission of the North Central Association

- Is a federally recognized accrediting agency for degree-granting higher education organizations
- Is one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States
- Is responsible for North Central region: AR, AZ, CO, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, OK, NM, SD, WI, WV, WY

http://www.ncahlc.org/

Why important

- Compliance with accreditation standards ensures eligibility for federal financial aid
- Failure to comply is an automatic institutional sanction
- HLC “Assumed Practices” are considered minimum standards
- One of the many ways our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and quality of the student experience
HLC’s Assumed Practices: What We Need to Address

- Several HLC requirements impact our campus and graduate education. Two key issues are:

1) Requirement states: 30 credits beyond the bachelor’s for master’s degree
2) Related requirement states: at least 50% credits (including course work and research credit) applied to a graduate program must be in courses designed for graduate work

UW-Madison vs Peers

Minimum Credits Required for Masters Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC-Berkeley</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn State</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT-Austin</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-California</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data and UW Practices

- Several UW master’s graduate programs have credit minimum requirements less than 30 credits
- However, on average, most UW master’s graduate students graduate at or above 30 credits

⇒ Data show that most master’s students currently earn 30 or more credits during the master’s program regardless of current program credit requirements.

UW-Madison vs Peers

Minimum Credits Required for Doctoral Degrees

NOTE: Institutions without a bar signal no identified credit requirement.
Data and UW Practices

- Several UW MFA and doctoral graduate programs have credit minimum requirements less than 42 credits and 51 respectively.
- However, on average, most UW MFA and doctoral graduate students graduate at or above 42 and 51 credits.

⇒ Data show that most MFA students currently earn more than 42 credits and doctoral students earn more than 51 credits regardless of current program credit requirements.

Data and UW Practices

- Several UW graduate programs incorporate sufficient coursework and/or research course credits at or above 700 level.
- Some 300-699 courses are designed for graduate students or assessed separately for graduate students.

⇒ Most graduate programs should be able to demonstrate that at least 50% of courses counted toward the degree currently are “designed for graduate credit” without curriculum modification.
GFEC-Approved Policies

- HLC assumed practices required attention to
  - master’s degree requirements
  - graduate coursework at all levels
- In the process, other related policies were affected
  - credit policies for MFAs and doctoral degrees
  - prior course work policies
  - maximum credit loads

GFEC-Approved Policies: 5 Categories

- Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement
- Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement
- Minimum Graduate Course Work (50%) Requirement
- Prior Course Work
- Maximum Credits per Term
Graduate Residence & Degree Requirements

- **Graduate Residence Requirements**
  - Reinstates original intent vs allowing to serve as a degree minimum
  - 16 credits for master’s; 24 credits for MFA/specialist certs; and 32 credits for doctoral degrees
  - 300 or higher course credits taken as a graduate student at UW-Madison

- **Graduate Degree Requirements**
  - This relates to the program’s credit requirement for a degree
  - 30 credits for master’s; 42 credits for MFA/specialist certs; and 51 credits for doctoral degrees
  - More related details in prior course work policy

Minimum Graduate Course Work Requirement

- At least 50% of credits applied toward the graduate program’s degree credit requirement must be courses designed for graduate work
- Graduate course work can include UW-Madison courses:
  - 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; or
  - numbered 300-699 that have a graduate student enrollment >50% in any given semester.
Prior Course Work

- Graduate School does not articulate transfer credits (to be posted on transcript); clarification was needed on prior course work and how it interacts with HLC policy requirements
- Under certain conditions, approved policy allows programs to decide approval of prior course work from:
  - graduate-level course work taken at other institutions;
  - UW-Madison undergraduate career;
  - UW-Madison University Special student career
- Elimination of little known/used “Senior-Grad” category
- Summary chart on next slide

Prior Course Work and GS Minimums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement</th>
<th><strong>Prior Graduate Course Work from Other Institution(s)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Course Work from Undergraduate Career at UW-Madison</strong></th>
<th><strong>Transfer from University Special Student Career at UW-Madison</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 15 credits numbered 300 or above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement</td>
<td>*Allowed</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 7 credits numbered 300 or above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Graduate Course work (50%) Requirement</td>
<td>*Allowed</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 7 credits numbered 700 or above</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 15 credits numbered 700 or above if difference in tuition is paid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fulfillment of requirements is allowed in these instances only if approved by the student’s graduate program.

** Course work earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or course work earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.
Maximum Credits per Term

- Students are allowed to enroll for a maximum of 15 credits per term (instead of 12 credits)
- Unchanged Areas of Policy:
  - Dissertators must enroll in exactly 3 credits related to their dissertation.
  - The enrollment system counts all credits in determining overloads. Thus, even though pass/fail courses, audit courses, and 100- or 200-level courses are not considered graduate-level credits, they are counted in a total credit load which may require an overload request.

UW-Madison vs. Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Maximum Credit Enrollment Allowed per Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC Berkeley</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn State</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Iowa</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal State</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA State</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Institutions without a bar signal no identified credit requirement.
GFEC-Approved Effective Dates

- New or readmitted Fall 2014 students must adhere to new policies
- Current master's students can complete under prior requirements if they graduate before Fall 2016
- Current MFA and doctoral students can complete under prior requirements
- A student who chooses to discontinue for a semester or more would return under new policy requirements
- Appeals will be considered in exceptional cases

Steps for Programs and School/Colleges

- Program credit requirements and any other curricular changes will be approved by school/college APCs or curriculum committees
- Programs will pursue any course additions/changes in parallel with the curriculum approval process
- Programs will submit curriculum and course proposals to their respective governance processes by January 2014 (with March 2014 as an absolute deadline)
Steps for Programs and School/Colleges Cont.

- Graduate Catalog is in an update cycle and is the authoritative source for program requirements; program updates will be due in early summer.

Steps for GFEC

- School/College APCs or curriculum committees will send GFEC/GS summary reports and supporting documentation of compliance (can be in batches)
- School/College reports must be submitted by April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014
- GFEC agendas will include summary reports as info items
- Ongoing attention to these new requirements will occur through program review
Steps for Graduate School

- Communicate approved policy changes to campus and include a compliance template to facilitate process
- Ongoing consultation between Graduate School and schools/colleges/programs
- Ongoing follow-up to schools/colleges to solicit compliance updates for GFEC
- Coordinate process for Graduate Catalog
- Implement internal administrative changes required by new policies

Sources

HLC-Related Policy Change Process (February 2013-present)

GFEC Discussions

- Feb 8, 2013 presentation by Assistant Dean Kelly Haslam followed by discussion and proposal for subcommittee charge
- May 10, 2013 subcommittee update provided by Prof. Robert Howell followed by discussion
- September 2013 GFEC - recommendations for policy changes presented to GFEC by subcommittee
- October 11, 2013 GFEC - GFEC vote on policy changes
- October 24, 2013 UAPC - UAPC discussion of policy changes

GFEC subcommittee

- Subcommittee appointed on March 1, 2013 and charged on March 26, 2013 by Dean Martin Cadwallader

Consultative process with key campus stakeholders to hone policy recommendations

- Consultation meetings with Jocelyn Milner regarding HLC with Wendy Crone, Kelly Haslam and Jenni Martin on March 25, 2013; June 6, 2013; July 2, 2013; and various other phone and email consultations
- Phone meeting with Education staff (Rosenthal and Zulick) and Kelly Haslam on April 30, 2013
- Engineering APC presentation by Wendy Crone on May 8, 2013
- Vet Med APC presentation by Wendy Crone on May 13, 2013
- Education APC presentation by Robert Howell and Wendy Crone on May 15, 2013
- SMPH APC presentation by Robert Howell and Wendy Crone on June 19, 2013
- L&S Associate Deans Sue Zaeske, Nancy Westphal-Johnson, and Elaine Klein met with Wendy Crone and Kelly Haslam on July 1, 2013. Additional L&S meetings included Sue Zaeske on July 1, 2013; Eric Wilcots on July 8, 2013; and Maria Cancian on August 20, 2013. Additional email consultations with Elaine Klein
- Pharmacy APC presentation by Robert Howell and Wendy Crone on July 8, 2013
- Jocelyn Milner and Chris Olsen met with Wendy Crone, Kelly Haslam, Judy Bauman, and Jennifer Martin met regarding dual degree programs on July 26, 2013
- L&S Arts and Humanities department chairs presentation by Wendy Crone on September 16, 2013
- CALS APC presentation by Robert Howell and Kelly Haslam on September 17, 2013
- Consultation with CALS Associate Dean Sarah Pfatteicher on September 18, 2013
- Consultation with Tim Norris and Jocelyn Milner regarding tuition with Wendy Crone on September 23, 2013
- School of Business APC presentation by Wendy Crone on September 30, 2013
- Graduate Program Coordinators Meeting presentation by Kelly Haslam and Wendy Crone on October 10, 2013
- University Council for Academic Affairs and Assessment (UCAAA) presentation by Wendy Crone on October 17, 2013
- CALS department chairs presentation by Wendy Crone on October 21, 2013
- L&S Plenary chairs/directors/administrators presentation by Wendy Crone on October 21, 2013
- College of Engineering APCRC presentation by Wendy Crone on November 7, 2013
- Nelson, SoHE, and Nursing passed on presentation based on self-assessment that indicated few points of concern

Dissemination of Expected Changes to Campus

- Letter to all chairs, directors of graduate studies, graduate program coordinators, and school/college academic planners (via email) regarding expected changes sent on July 9, 2013 and updated on September 4, 2013
• Distribution included cover letter and draft FAQ document. Second communication also included GFEC vote items

Individual Consultations with Program Faculty and Staff via Phone, Email and In Person Meetings

• Agriculture and Applied Economics
• Biochemistry
• Biological Systems Engineering
• Biomedical Engineering
• Business
• Cancer Biology
• Creative Writing
• Chemistry
• Curriculum and Instruction
• Educational Psychology
• Engineering Mechanics
• Engineering Professional Development
• English
• Forestry
• Geography
• History
• Industrial and Systems Engineering
• Journalism and Mass Communications
• Latin American, Caribbean & Iberian Studies
• Library and Information Studies
• Linguistics
• Math
• Mechanical Engineering
• Nuclear Engineering and Engineering Physics
• Nursing/DNP
• Occupational Therapy
• Population Health
• Public Affairs
• Social Work
• Soil Science
• Wildlife Ecology

Key data collection items

• Master’s program credit requirements of peer institutions
• Published program credit requirements of campus master’s programs
• Average credits earned for students in campus master’s programs
• % of credits earned in grad-level only coursework (700 and above) in campus master’s programs
• Doctoral program credit requirements of peer institutions
• Average credits earned for students in campus doctoral/MFA programs
• % of credits earned in grad-level only coursework (700 and above) in campus doctoral/MFA programs
• Maximum credits per term at peer institutions
The policy drafts below represent the Graduate School’s baseline or standard requirements. Graduate programs always have the latitude to have more rigorous requirements.

1. Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement

The Graduate School's minimum graduate residence credit requirement for graduation can be satisfied only with graduate-level courses (300 and above) taken as a graduate student at UW-Madison (this includes but is not limited to online, thesis/research, independent study, and practicum/internship credits).

**Graduate Residence Credit Minimums**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Minimum Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree (except MFA)</td>
<td>16 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA/specialist certificate</td>
<td>24 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>32 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In rare circumstances, courses taken as a University Special student may be allowed to count toward the minimum graduate residence credit requirement. These credits generally are not allowed to count toward the 50% graduate course work minimum.

2. Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement

The Graduate School's minimum graduate degree credit requirement is a degree requirement instituted by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee to ensure that a graduate degree meets institutional accreditation standards (this includes but is not limited to online, thesis/research, independent study, and practicum/internship credits).

**Graduate Degree Credit Minimums**

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<tr>
<td>Master's degree (except MFA)</td>
<td>30 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA/specialist certificate</td>
<td>42 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degrees</td>
<td>51 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Doctorate degrees

(may include Master's degree credits taken at UW-Madison and credits taken while a dissertator)
3. Minimum Graduate Course Work Requirement

The Graduate School’s minimum graduate coursework requirement is a degree requirement instituted by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee to ensure that a graduate degree meets institutional accreditation standards.

The requirement states that at least 50% of credits applied toward the program’s graduate degree credit requirement must be courses designed for graduate work (this includes but is not limited to online, thesis/research, independent study, and practicum/internship credits).

Graduate course work can include UW-Madison courses:

- 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; or
- numbered 300-699 that have a graduate student enrollment >50% in any given semester.

Courses taken as a University Special student are not allowed to count toward the 50% graduate course work minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above.

4. Prior Course Work

A student's program may decide to accept coursework completed outside of the student’s graduate career at UW-Madison when those courses are rigorous and meet the expectations of graduate work for the degree. Course work earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or course work earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

Satisfying Requirements with Prior Graduate Course Work from Other Institution(s)

A student's program may decide to accept graduate course work completed at another institution toward fulfillment of minimum degree, minimum graduate course work, and minor credit requirements. This work will not appear on a UW-Madison transcript nor count towards the graduate career GPA. The Graduate School’s minimum graduate residence credit requirement can be satisfied only with courses taken as a graduate student at UW-Madison. The only exception is graduate-level course work taken as a CIC Traveling Scholar.

Satisfying Requirements with Course Work from Undergraduate Career at UW-Madison

For well-prepared advanced students, a student's program may decide to accept up to seven credits numbered 300 or above of required or elective courses from the undergraduate work completed at UW-Madison towards fulfillment of minimum degree and minor credit requirements. However, this work would not be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate course work minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. This work will not appear on the
graduate career portion of UW-Madison transcript nor count towards the graduate career GPA. The Graduate School's minimum graduate residence credit requirement can be satisfied only with courses taken as a graduate student at UW-Madison. (The previous senior-grad category is eliminated as of Fall 2014.)

Transfer from University Special Student Career at UW-Madison

After admission to a graduate program, the student's program may decide to accept up to fifteen University Special student credits as fulfillment of the minimum graduate residence, graduate degree, or minor credit requirements on occasion as an exception (on a case-by-case basis). In all these cases, the student would have to pay the difference in tuition for the terms in question. Those credits earned in a University Special student semester still appear in the transcript history as "University Special" student, but the Registrar's Office will add a statement in the beginning of the transcript "All credits taken in [term] as a University Special student have been accepted by the Graduate School toward a degree program" after the student has paid the difference in tuition. UW-Madison course work taken as a University Special student would not be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate course work minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. This work will not appear on the graduate career portion of UW-Madison transcript nor count towards the graduate career GPA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement</th>
<th><strong>Prior Graduate Course Work from Other Institution(s)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Course Work from Undergraduate Career at UW-Madison</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 15 credits numbered 300 or above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Allowed</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 7 credits numbered 300 or above</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 15 credits numbered 700 or above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Allowed</td>
<td>*Allowed up to 7 credits numbered 700 or above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fulfillment of requirements is allowed in these instances only if approved by the student’s graduate program.

** Course work earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or course work earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

5. Maximum Credits per Term

Non-dissertator students are allowed to enroll for a maximum of 15 credits. The enrollment system counts all credits in determining maximum credit loads. Even though pass/fail courses, audit courses, and 100- or 200-level courses are not considered graduate-level credits, they are counted in a total credit load.
6. Effective Dates

Any student entering or readmitted to a graduate program on or after Fall 2014 must adhere to the above minimums.

Currently enrolled master’s students have the option to complete their degree under the prior policy minimums if they can complete all degree requirements and graduate before Fall 2016.

Students currently enrolled in an M.F.A., specialist certificate, or doctoral degree prior to Fall 2014 have the option to complete their degree under the prior policy minimums.

A student who chooses to discontinue their degree program for a semester or more would return under the new policy minimums.

Appeals will be considered in exceptional cases.
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) concerning HLC’s New Assumed Practices and Related Impacts

A Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) subcommittee was appointed to review policies and practices related to the Higher Learning Commission’s criteria for campus accreditation. Two of the assumed practices under discussion were: 1) the expectation that there be “30 semester credits beyond the bachelor’s for master’s degree” and, 2) that the institution must “assure that at least 50% of courses applied to a graduate program are courses designed for graduate work, rather than undergraduate courses credited toward a graduate degree.” In the process, other related policies were also considered and modified (i.e. credit policies for MFAs and doctoral degrees; prior course work policies, and maximum credit loads).

Although prompted by the Higher Learning Commission’s criteria, these efforts are seen as one of the many ways in which our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and the quality of the student experience. When data on our current practices are considered, we find that the vast majority of students are completing their degrees well over the new degree credit requirements while enrolled in their graduate programs. In many instances, programs find that the new requirements are in alignment with their current practices and expectations of students.

The GFEC Subcommittee has engaged in discussions with schools, colleges and programs about potential policy and practice changes for several months. The GFEC ultimately approved various policy changes to be implemented by the programs by summer of 2014. To facilitate the implementation process, responses to the following “Frequently Asked Questions” have been developed. Please note that all questions have been updated since the 7/8/13 or 9/4/13 versions were released as a result of the GFEC votes that took place on 10/11/13; please review all the questions carefully for the most up-to-date information. In addition, please note that the Graduate School sets baseline or standard requirements; graduate programs have the latitude to have more rigorous requirements.

******************************************************************************
1. Higher Learning Commission FAQs

a. Why must our campus comply with the Higher Learning Commission’s “Criteria for Accreditation”?

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is the federally recognized accrediting agency for degree-granting higher education organizations for the North Central region of the U.S. Compliance with federal requirements by both institutions and the HLC is necessary to ensure that institutions accredited by the HLC are eligible for federal financial aid. The “Assumed Practices” within the “Criteria for Accreditation” are considered to be minimum standards to which all institutions are expected to comply (failure to comply with Assumed Practices is an automatic institutional sanction).

Although prompted by the Higher Learning Commission’s criteria, these efforts are seen as one of the many ways in which our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and the quality of the student experience. When data on our current practices are considered, we find that the vast majority of students are completing their degrees well over the new degree credit requirements while enrolled in their graduate programs. In many instances, programs find that the new requirements are in alignment with their current practices and expectations of students.

b. Some of these proposed policies do not seem to go far enough to ensure the quality and rigor for our graduate program. Can graduate programs have more rigorous requirements than those proposed in these new Graduate School policies?

Yes, graduate programs always have the latitude to have more rigorous requirements than the Graduate School’s baseline or standard requirements.

2. Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement FAQs

a. How does the graduate residence credit requirement differ from the minimum degree credit requirement?
It is believed that the current policy of 16 credits for a master's degree, 24 credits for the MFA, and 32 credits for a doctoral degree in the Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures may have originally implied that these were the minimum number of credits a student must earn at UW-Madison while enrolled in the graduate career (or in residence). There is now a set of explicit residency minima: 16 credits for a master's degree, 24 credits for the MFA, and 32 credits for a doctoral degree. Credits applied to the graduate residence minimum must be earned while a graduate student at UW-Madison within the new degree credit minimums (30 credits for a master's degree, 42 credits for the MFA, and 51 credits for a doctoral degree). This definition of residency would include any online courses, as well as any remote field experience, practicum, and research credits, taken as a graduate student at UW-Madison.

b. Will students need to satisfy the graduate residence credit requirement in order for a student to achieve dissertator status?

Yes, students must have completed all requirements for their doctoral degree except for the dissertation AND have satisfied the minimum graduate residence credit requirement in order to achieve dissertator status.

3. Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement FAQs

a. Why shouldn't our institution have a master's credit minimum lower than 30?

Our peer institutions overwhelmingly require a minimum of 30 credits for the master's degree. The current 16 credit minimum is an extreme outlier. Thus, we do not feel we have a good argument for having a minimum below 30. Furthermore, data on student outcomes shows that the current practice with most master's programs across campus is consistent with a 30 degree credit minimum.

b. Will Master of Fine Arts (MFA) and doctoral minimum degree credit requirements be changing as well?

Current policy requires a minimum of 16 credits for a master's degree, 24 credits for the MFA, and 32 credits for a doctoral degree. GFEC determined that requiring 30 credits for a master's degree and keeping the minimum MFA/specialist certificate and doctoral degree credit requirements unchanged was not reasonable. The body of work expected for an MFA or doctoral degree is substantially different from other master's degrees. Peer institutions have doctoral credit minimums that range from none to 96 credits at the doctoral level. Furthermore, data on student outcomes shows that the current practice with most MFA and doctoral programs across campus are consistent with higher degree credit minimums.

The GFEC subcommittee has approved a new graduate degree credit minimum of 42 credits for the MFA/specialist certificate and 51 credits for a doctoral degree, with residency requirements at 24 and 32 credits respectively. The credits used towards a master's degree and taken as a dissertator may count towards the related doctoral degree credit.

c. Will credits taken as a dissertator be allowed to count towards the doctoral degree credit requirement?

Yes, credits take as a dissertator can count towards the minimum doctoral degree credit requirement of 51 credits. All requirements for dissertator status remain the same including satisfying the minimum graduate residence credit requirement of 32 credits.

d. Can we consider providing credit for other required activities?

Yes, we would advise programs to examine the expectations they have of their students and work to formalize any informal or non-credited work as credits within the standards of UW-Madison curriculum policies. Examples include providing credit for practicum experiences such as internships and field work,
required research currently not bearing credit, and required seminar attendance. Additionally, if master's
credits are part of the total required for the associated doctoral degree, a program may consider moving
some of the doctoral credits into the master's requirement.

e. Will the Graduate School impose a maximum number of credits allowed for research/independent
study?

A new maximum on research/independent study credits is not anticipated. Currently, there are no
limitations on the number of research or independent study credits that a student can use towards a
master's degree except in the case of the minor (see below), although programs may choose to have
limitations. Current Graduate School policies and procedures detail minimum enrollment requirements ii,
but do not distinguish between classroom course credits and thesis/research credits.

Credit policy for doctoral minors: Doctoral minors require a minimum of nine credits. A maximum of
three credits can be independent study credits, and research and thesis credits may not be used to
satisfy the minor.iii

f. Can a degree be research-only, with no coursework?

The balance between coursework and research is not dictated as a general principle. At a broad
research university like University of Wisconsin—Madison, it is important to have the flexibility to
construct degree programs in ways that achieve the learning outcomes established by the program. At
the master's level, this may range from a course-work-only master's program to a research-based
master's program with minimal course work requirements. In some cases, programs may choose to
adjust the number of required courses based on an individual student's prior preparation.

g. Can courses taken from a professional program or career (VMED, MED, LAW, PHARM) be used
towards a graduate degree?

For students in a dual career or professional master's program who may need to take practice-oriented
courses, the program continues to have the latitude to determine which courses can be used toward the
graduate degree.

h. Will the GFEC/Graduate School decide on a maximum degree credit requirement for graduate
degrees?

Some peer institutions do provide a maximum in addition to a minimum (e.g. University of Michigan:
master's degrees must be between 24 and 72 credits; Minnesota: master's degrees must be between 30
and 48 credits). Although a maximum has not been set, it should be noted that a master's degree is a
body of work that is substantially different from a doctoral degree.

4. Minimum Graduate Course Work (50%) Requirement FAQs

a. Can programs meet the "50% graduate level work" rule by changing their existing courses to higher
numbers (above 700)?

We recommend that, as a first pass, departments and programs focus on those courses that they need
to create to provide credit for practicum experiences such as internships and field work, required
research currently not bearing credit, and required seminar attendance, or revisions to existing courses
that bring the number of credits assigned into alignment with expectations of the course.

It is an option to change course numbering, however programs may find that this will be a large-scale
project that may take years to plan and complete given that some programs may find that they would
want to renumber a significant fraction of their courses. No batch process is currently available to
streamline this. Large scale course renumbering should only be done after consultation with the Office
of Academic Planning and Institutional Research.
New course approvals and course changes must go through the appropriate school/college Academic Planning Council(s) or Curriculum Committee and then through the Ad Hoc Interdivisional Curriculum Committee coordinated by the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research. Please note that the on July 1, 2013, administration of the course proposal process moved from the Office of the Secretary of the Faculty to the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research. For further details on the course approval process, please go to http://apir.wisc.edu/courses.htm

b. What does “courses designed for graduate work” mean?

The GFEC has interpreted “courses” here to signify credits, which includes both course work and independent/research credits. Several attributes have been defined to identify courses designed for graduate work.” Graduate coursework includes UW-Madison courses 700 level and above (including research), and UW-Madison courses 300-699 that a) are specifically designed for graduate students within a graduate degree program, b) assess graduate students separately from undergraduate students, or c) have graduate student enrollment >50% in any given semester.

Some course numbering changes may be appropriate, which will require governance action as described above. However, programs may identify and document their decisions about which courses will be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate work policy within the attributes above.

Note that institutional policy currently states the following:

- “Courses in the 300-699 range may be taken for credit by both undergraduate and graduate students; courses in the 300-499 range are generally considered intermediate level and courses in the 500-699 range are generally considered advanced level. Graduate students taking courses numbered 300-699 are expected to do graduate-level work, though they are enrolled in an undergraduate-level course. The 300-699 range is not intended to include undergraduate-only, elementary level courses.
- Courses in the 700-999 range are open only to graduate students.”

c. What number should the 50% be applied to?

Because the HLC wording states “at least 50% of courses applied to a graduate program are courses designed for graduate work,” the GFEC has interpreted this to be 50% of the credits designed by the program for the master’s degree. For instance, if a program determines that students must complete a minimum of 40 credits for their M.S. degree, then 20 of those credits must be graduate work as defined above. For a program designed at the 30 credit minimum, 15 of those credits must be graduate work.

5. **Prior Course Work FAQs**

a. How will prior course (‘transfer’ credits) be handled?

The Graduate School does not articulate transfer credits (in other words, these credits do not appear on the graduate portion of the transcript). Programs may desire to accept prior work from graduate courses taken at other institutions and/or use credits from the UW-Madison while the student was enrolled as an undergraduate and/or University Special student toward the graduate degree requirements. The new policy for prior work allows for all of these explicitly with some limitations on the number of credits and to which minimum requirements they would apply. However, course work earned five or more years prior to admission to a master's degree or course work earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree would not be allowed to satisfy requirements. A summary of the prior course work policies and additional FAQs are provided below. Please note that an individual graduate program may choose to be more restrictive.
b. Can prior course work be allowed to satisfy a program's minor requirement?

If a graduate program has a minor requirement, prior coursework can be used toward the minor requirement in accordance with the policies listed in the above chart. If courses towards the minor are taken while the student was enrolled as a University Special student, the difference in tuition must be paid. As is true now, course work earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree would not be allowed to satisfy minor requirements.

c. Will there be limits for how many credits a student may use to fulfill requirements with graduate coursework taken from other institutions or graduate-level courses taken as a UW-Madison undergraduate?

Some departments/programs already limit how many credits a student may use to fulfill requirements from work done prior to attending graduate school at UW-Madison. There would continue to be no Graduate School policy concerning limits on how many graduate credits from other institutions a student may use to fulfill program requirements (with the exception of the minimum graduate residence requirement or any program-level restrictions).

For well-prepared advanced UW-Madison undergraduate students, the program may choose to count up to seven credits numbered 300 or above (as detailed above) to satisfy degree credits requirements. If courses are numbered 700 level and above they can count toward the graduate course work minimum. In contrast to the senior-grad category (which will be eliminated as of Fall 2014), those credits may 'double-count' towards both the undergraduate and graduate degrees for well-prepared advanced UW-Madison undergraduate students.

d. How will 'University Special' student credits earned at UW-Madison be handled?

Generally, students are encouraged to enter a graduate program as early as possible and not to "try it out" the program as University Special students. If students are interested in a graduate program, they should seek admission as quickly as possible. Officially entering the program allows the student to receive appropriate advising and be fully integrated into the program structure. If University Special student credits are accepted by a program to fulfill program requirements, it is done on occasion as an exception (on a case-by-case basis). The new policy limits the number of credits a student may transfer into a program from University Special student credits earned at UW-Madison to no more than fifteen credits numbered 300 or above (as detailed in the chart above). This must be initiated and approved by
the program. A program may choose to be more restrictive or disallow University Special student credits toward their graduate degrees.

Students using courses taken as a UW-Madison University Special student to count toward the minimum graduate degree, residence, or minor credit requirements would have to pay the difference in tuition between graduate and University Special student tuition for the terms in question (already an established practice for the minimum graduate residence requirement). In addition, these courses would not be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate work minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. Those credits earned in such a semester still appear in the transcript history as "University Special" student, but the Registrar's Office will add a statement in the beginning of the transcript "All credits taken in [term] as a University Special student have been accepted by the Graduate School toward a degree program" after the student has paid the difference in tuition.

6. Maximum Credits per Term FAQs
   a. Will we change the maximum number of credits a student is allowed to enroll in per term?

After considering past student performance and peer institution policies, a change in the maximum number of credits allowed per term has been approved. The current Graduate School policy allows a graduate student to enroll in a maximum of 12 graduate-level credits per term. The new policy will increase this maximum to 15 graduate-level credits per term. Dissertators would still be required to enroll in exactly 3 credits related to their dissertation per term. The increase in maximum number of credits per term is expected to mitigate any concerns about increased time to degree given the new credit minimums.

The Graduate School considers graduate-level credits as those courses numbered 300 or above, taken for a grade (not pass/fail and audits). The enrollment system counts all credits in determining maximum credit loads. An overload request is required if a student wishes to exceed the maximum number of credits they are allowed as a graduate student. Even though pass/fail courses, audit courses, and 100- or 200-level courses are not considered graduate-level credits, they are counted in a total credit load.

If a student wishes to enroll in more than the maximum allowed credits per term, they must submit an overload request to the Graduate School, which is considered by the relevant divisional Associate Dean.

b. What implications will the new policy for "maximum credits per term" have with respect to tuition?

Graduate students enrolling for 8 or more credits during a semester are charged a flat tuition rate. There is no expectation that the tuition plateau level will change as a result of the new policies.

7. Implementation Process FAQs
   a. What will the governance process be for making changes to programs?

Changes in a program's minimum degree credit requirement and any other curriculum changes must be approved by the relevant school/college Academic Planning Council or Curriculum Committee. A template will be provided to the schools/colleges to facilitate the change process and assure that new policy requirements have been met. The changes that are implemented to come into compliance with the new policy will need to be provided to the Graduate School for review and will be given to GFEC as an information item during the 2013-14 academic year.

After a program has completed its planning progress, it should pursue any necessary course additions/changes in parallel with the curriculum approval process. The curriculum approval would be contingent on the course changes/additions that are integral to the proposed curriculum, and may have to be revisited if the course approval process dictates. In order to meet the deadlines discussed below, it is recommended that all course and curriculum approvals be submitted by the program to their respective governance processes by January 2014, with March 2014 as an absolute deadline.
The Graduate Catalog must also be updated by the program during the 2013-14 academic year to satisfy auditing requirements. The coordinator of the Graduate Catalog will be working with schools, colleges and programs over the coming year to achieve this goal. The Graduate Catalog will be considered the authoritative source on basic requirements of all graduate programs and will include information about these and other program requirements.

b. **When will the new requirements take effect? Will the new policies apply to current students, or just incoming students after the requirements take effect?**

The new policies approved by GFEC will become effective at the beginning of Fall 2014. Implement of the new requirements will occur for all incoming students beginning in Fall 2014. Current master's students will have the option to complete under the old policy requirements if they can complete all degree requirements and graduate BEFORE Fall 2016. Students enrolled in an M.F.A., specialist certificate, or doctoral degree prior to Fall 2014 have the option to complete their degree under the prior policy requirements.

A student who chooses to discontinue their degree program for a semester or more must return under the new policy requirements.

Appeals would be considered in exceptional cases.

c. **Will the other Graduate School requirements for graduate degrees remain the same?**

The following items in the current Graduate School policy will not change:

- Courses must be taken as a graduate student
- Courses must be 300 and above
- Course grades must be A, AB, B, or S
- Course grades of BC or C only count if there are equal credits of AB and A respectively in non-research courses
- Course grades of P only count for research courses
- Students must maintain a 3.00 GPA
- Students absent for 5 or more years lose all degree credits earned before absence (for master's students only)

For a student to be awarded a graduate degree, the Graduate School's degree coordinator manually audits each student's transcript to ensure that at least minimum credit requirements (16 credits for a master's degree, 24 credits for the MFA, and 32 credits for a doctoral degree) are being satisfied as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The program must assure to the Graduate School that both the minimum graduate degree credit requirement and the minimum graduate course work requirement (50%) have been met within the prior course work restrictions.

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