

## **Dual/Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Degree Program Guidelines**

*(Approved by Graduate Council on 2/1/2007, Revised on 11/1/07)*

### **1. Nature and Rationale**

The Dual/Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Degree Program offers the opportunity for outstanding students to advance their careers in a significant way by pursuing the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in a parallel and coordinated program. In addition, it may be possible for the students to complete the requirements for both degrees (in the same field) in an accelerated time frame. The goal of this program is to provide the student with a high level of academic advising culminating in the preparation of a graduate program of study while the student is still in their sophomore or junior year. Graduate education involves a close working relationship between a student and a Graduate Faculty mentor, and the Dual/Accelerated Degree Program develops this relationship early in a student's career. Doctoral degrees are excluded from this dual program.

### **2. Procedures for Submitting the Degree Program Proposal**

Graduate programs are invited to develop program specific guidelines for recruiting potential undergraduates and current undergraduates into the Dual/Accelerated Degree Program and for guiding students admitted to the program. These guidelines should include the basis for identifying eligible outstanding students, the time in the student's undergraduate career in which the student would be admitted into the graduate program (generally 30-45 hours from completion of the undergraduate requirements), and the plans in place to provide the student with the high level of advising necessary for program success. These guidelines should outline any deviations from the standard undergraduate program and the standard graduate program, as these are considered in the Dual Degree Program. One deviation from the standard programs may be the possibility that a limited number of *joint-degree hours* – hours taken for graduate credit (700 level and above) can be applied to the Bachelor degree (not more than 9 hours in a 30-hour graduate program and 12 hours in a 36-hour graduate program). If this deviation is requested, joint-degree hours may not be workshop courses, undergraduate core curriculum courses, cooperative education courses, or courses that are prerequisites for the graduate program. Joint-degree hours would be credited to both the undergraduate degree requirements and the graduate degree requirements would show on both the graduate and undergraduate transcripts.

The specific program proposal requires approval through the regular curriculum change process to the level of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research (including review and approval by the Graduate Council).

### **3. Minimum Program Guidelines**

Initial admission to the Dual/Accelerated Degree Program occurs soon after the program area identifies the outstanding candidate. This typically occurs during the first semester of the junior year, but may occur anytime after the student has completed 60 hours of undergraduate work. Minimum standards for initial admission require a cumulative undergraduate G.P.A. of 3.00. After initial admission, continuation in the program requires a continuing WSU undergraduate cumulative G.P.A. of at least a 3.00 and a graduate G.P.A (when available) of at least 3.0. Individual departments may require additional admissions criteria including a higher admission G.P.A. Individual departments would specify (in their proposal) the criteria established for identifying outstanding students to be admitted to the program. Any interested student should contact the relevant graduate program.

Undergraduate students apply for Bachelor's to Master's Programs using the regular Graduate School application form and admission process (including paying the Graduate School application fee). Students would normally apply for graduate admission at least one semester before the semester in which they plan to obtain credit at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Should the student meet the admission

requirements set for the program, a tentative admission will be granted, pending the award of the bachelor's degree. Tentative graduate admission does not guarantee final admission to the graduate program. Final graduate admission is contingent upon the student meeting all the admission requirements in place for the graduate program at the time the Bachelor's degree is awarded. If a tentatively admitted student does not achieve final admission, the graduate work already completed is moved to the undergraduate transcript.

Until the bachelor's degree is awarded, for each semester in which the student takes courses at the graduate and undergraduate level, a dual enrollment form (attached) must be completed which indicates the courses taken for graduate credit. The bachelor's degree may be awarded at any time following the completion of the undergraduate degree requirements and completion of the joint-degree hours. The bachelor's degree must be awarded at least two semesters before the graduate degree is awarded. Graduate course work taken in this program must be completed within eight years (from the time that the first graduate course is taken that is counted toward degree requirements) or within six years from the awarding of the bachelor's degree whichever comes first.

It is anticipated that the supervisory committee will be listed on each dual enrollment form, and a program of study filed as soon as the student has received their Bachelor's degree. A tentative "outline for degree completion" should be developed by the student and his/her advisor and kept in the student's departmental file. The outline for degree completion projects courses to be taken each semester and the semester in which the Bachelor's degree and Master's degree would be awarded. In addition, annual reviews of student progress will be conducted with a written progress report placed in the student's departmental file. These procedures recognize the importance of excellent academic advising in the success of accelerated programs such as this.

Students in a Dual/Accelerated Degree Program may not hold a graduate assistantship until after the Bachelor's degree is awarded, and the student is fully admitted to the graduate program. For the purpose of requesting exceptions to program and university regulations, students in a Dual/Accelerated Degree Program are considered undergraduates and thus proceed through the undergraduate processes until the Bachelor's degree is awarded. If a student admitted to the dual/accelerated program requests admission to any other WSU program (or does not complete the dual/accelerated program within the prescribed time limit), the joint hours posted to the graduate transcript will be removed.

#### Procedural Notes:

1. On the computer screens, the tentative admit to graduate school would have a date associated with it that reflects the semester in which the students believe they will earn the Bachelor's degree. Tentative admits cannot be awarded financial aid, so Financial Aid personnel would need to carefully check the date when that tentative takes effect (as that date could be 2-3 years in the future).
2. Initially international students will be issued I-20s to study in their undergraduate program. Upon receiving their Bachelor's degree and being fully admitted to the graduate program, they will be issued an I-20 for the graduate program of study.
3. Approved Bachelor's to Master's programs will have a unique major code (at the graduate level), however, the major code will not be included on the Graduate School application form.
4. Courses taken for graduate credit (via the dual enrollment form) while classified as an undergraduate student will originally be posted only to the graduate transcript. Graduate School staff will need to notify (at the end of each semester) the Registrar's Office to also post any joint credit hours onto the undergraduate transcript.