



Proposal from the Senate Educational Policy Committee

TITLE: Clarification of Policies on Graduate Minors and Concentrations

RECOMMENDATION: A minimum of 12 graduate hours is needed for either a graduate minor or a graduate concentration. While pursuit of either credential may increase the total number of hours needed for a degree, hours earned toward a concentration, because it is considered a specialization or acknowledged complement to a major, are counted as part of the minimum needed for that major. For minors, each student's major department will determine the extent to which hours earned toward a minor may or may not count toward any general electives that may be included in the minimum hours needed for the student's degree.

BACKGROUND: Senate-approved standards have been under review by the Graduate College for several years. After unintended consequences of changes approved administratively in 2013 were noted in 2014, further study was requested to ensure that the changes were not creating undue disincentives to pursuit of these credentials. The recommendation presented here is the result of a series of studies by the Graduate College and a series of discussions, both separately and jointly, by the Graduate College and the Educational Policy Committee.

JUSTIFICATION: Minors and concentrations are transcribed credentials that add value to graduate degrees and encourage interdisciplinary study. A minor represents completion of a program of courses defined by one or more units outside the student's major program. A concentration represents completion of a specialized program within a major or of an interdisciplinary program designed to complement the major.

Under proposals approved by the Senate in 2004 and 2005, minors have required a minimum of 12 hours. The Graduate College determined in 2013 that the previously endorsed minimum of 24 hours required for concentrations was an undue disincentive and therefore recommended lowering that minimum to 12 hours while noting that several concentrations require substantially more than the minimum. A master's concentration of 24 hours, for example, would represent a significantly greater fraction of the total hours required than would a doctoral concentration of the same number of hours.

The Graduate College initially sought to require that all hours earned toward a minor be in addition to the minimum number of hours needed for the degree to which it was attached. However, after unintended consequences, especially for master's programs that allow and in many encourage use of electives outside the major area of study, were noted, the Graduate College approved a proposal endorsing the original 2004 Senate standard of

allowing each student's major department to determine the extent to which hours earned toward a minor may count toward the minimum needed for his or her degree.

The Graduate College noted that requiring 12 or more additional hours could add a semester or more to a student's plan of study. Allowing students' major departments to determine whether a minor's credits may contribute toward the degree allows graduate minors to more easily fit into some programs and may therefore increase graduate student use of the minor.

Attached appendices include, for information purposes, an unmodified copy of the most recent proposal approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee and an unmodified copy of its most recent study of practices at selected peer institutions.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2015.



THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee

PROPOSAL: To Revise the Graduate College Policy on Graduate Minors and Endorse the Existing Graduate College Policy on Graduate Concentrations

DATE OF PROPOSAL: February 10, 2015

CONTACT: John C. Hart, Associate Dean of the Graduate College, 333-8740, jch@illinois.edu.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: To revise the policy on the graduate minors to allow the major degree department of the student to determine if credits of a minor program may also contribute toward credits required for the graduate major degree. We are also endorsing the change made in 2013 to the Graduate College policy for Graduate concentrations. This change reduced the minimum number of hours for graduate concentrations from 24 hours to 12 hours.

BACKGROUND: The **graduate minor** is a transcribed credential earned from a program consisting of at least 12 graduate hours of courses defined by one or more units outside the student's enrolling major degree program. It encourages and recognizes expertise gained in a particular area beyond a graduate major.

The **graduate concentration** is a transcribed credential earned from a program of at least 12 graduate hours of courses defined by a student's enrolling degree program. It refers either to a specialized program of study within a major or an interdisciplinary program designed to complement the major.

Both the graduate minor and the graduate concentration were formally incorporated into the graduate curriculum as transcribed credentials in 2004. At that time, graduate concentrations required 24 credits any of which could contribute toward the degree, and the graduate minor consisted of 12 credits, but the number of minor credits that could contribute toward a degree varied among different degree programs. In 2013 these policies were revised to reduce the minimum hours of the graduate concentration to 12 credit hours, and to set a uniform campus policy that none of a minor's credit hours could contribute toward the major's degree requirements.

JUSTIFICATION: The graduate minor is a transcribed credential that adds value to a graduate degree, and encourages interdisciplinary study at the graduate level. The requirement that its credits must be earned in addition to the requirements of a graduate major degree creates a disincentive, especially for master's degree students, as the additional twelve or more credits can add a semester or more of graduate study. Allowing the student's major degree department to determine if a graduate minor's credits may be able to contribute toward the graduate degree will allow graduate minors to more easily fit into some graduate degree programs and may increase graduate student utilization of the graduate minor.

The 2013 policy that required minor credits to be earned strictly in addition to degree requirements was based in part on a survey of peer institutions. A more recent survey (attached) compared our peers' graduate minors across more characteristics to reveal a trend that double counting was generally allowed

when a member of the minor program was represented on a student's committee. While our current organization does not support such involvement, the same oversight can be provided by the degree program's Director of Graduate Studies or a Graduate Studies Committee.

PROPOSED REVISION:

Graduate College Handbook

Part 2-Program Administration Policies, IX. Policy for Graduate Minors

B. Background

Graduate programs offer a range of curricular possibilities, including options, tracks, transcribed concentrations, specializations, transcribed minors, and cognate fields. Graduate minors require approval as described below (C .Guidelines), and are noted on the student's transcript.

Minors are a coherent set of courses defined by one or more units outside the student's enrolling program. A minor encourages and recognizes expertise gained in a particular area. This expertise could be completely outside the usual degree requirements or it could significantly extend knowledge in an area closely related to, but still outside, a particular degree program. The spirit of a minor is the development of additional academic strengths. For this reason, credit used toward the completion of one minor may not be applied toward another minor, but it is at the discretion of the major department to determine which, if any, of the courses used to fulfill a minor will also be used to fulfill the requirements for the major graduate degree. Some minors may require that a member of the unit(s) offering the minor serve on the student's master's or doctoral committee.

Graduate College Handbook

Part 1- Graduate Student Policies, V.A.9

Graduate Minors:

A graduate minor is an approved program in a secondary area of study that relates to but is outside of a student's chosen major and is included on an academic transcript. A list of campus-approved graduate minors is available in the Academic Catalog. As noted in the Policy for Graduate Minors, students majoring in an area of study may not pursue a minor in the same area. Some minors may require that a member of the unit(s) offering the minor serve on the student's master's or doctoral committee.

Each program has its own procedures for applying to and completing the minor, and students should contact the minor department for details. Students who wish to add or drop a graduate minor from their academic record must submit a Graduate Student request form to make the change to their academic program. An academic program change alters the requirements needed for graduation, and therefore changes should be made carefully and in consultation with the graduate major program adviser.

It is at the discretion of the major degree department to determine which, if any, of the courses used to fulfill the minor will also be used to fulfill the requirements for the graduate major degree. Minor(s) will not be added retroactively to a student record after the graduate major degree is conferred. Even though a minor may be included in a student's academic record, it will not show on a transcript until the degree has

been conferred. A student's approved enrollment period will not be extended for the purpose of completing a minor. (See chapters V.A.4. and VI.E for more information about time limits.)

If a student has requested to receive a minor, and then wishes to change to a new graduate major degree program before receiving a degree, the new program must note on the Graduate Student request form that they will accept the minor in their degree program and note if any of the courses used to fulfill the minor will also be used to fulfill the new graduate major degree. If the new program does not accept the minor, the minor will be removed from the record when the Change of Curriculum request is processed.

Graduate College Handbook

Part 2-Program Administration Policies, VIII. Policy for Graduate Concentrations

A graduate concentration must consist of a minimum of 12 graduate hours of coursework at the 400- and 500-level, which gives a student more breadth or depth in their major area of study. Because a concentration is intended to be within the major area of study, the hours required to fulfill the concentration should likewise apply toward completion of the degree. However that is not to say that completion of a concentration within a degree couldn't require more hours than the degree itself, in that the student is earning an additional credential.

IMPLEMENTATION:

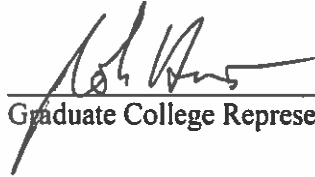
This updated language will be included in the Fall 2015 Graduate College Handbook of Policy and Requirements for Students, Faculty and Staff, and the policy will be implemented starting August 24, 2015.

The Graduate College will communicate with departments offering both graduate major degrees and graduate minors on the upcoming change in policy to allow for recruiting and advising efforts to be successful prior to the beginning of the fall 2015 semester.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: August 24, 2015

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval. These signatures must appear on a separate sheet. If multiple departments or colleges are sponsoring the proposal, please add the appropriate signature lines below.)*

Signatures:



Graduate College Representative:

2-10-15

Date:

Report on Graduate Minors

Jodi Miller, Allison McKinney and John C. Hart, Graduate College

24 Oct. 2014

The Graduate College has provided the following definitions:

1. The **graduate concentration**, a transcribed credential, is a coherent set of at least 12 graduate hours of courses defined by a student's enrolling program. It refers either to a specialized program of study within a major or an interdisciplinary program designed to complement the major.
2. The **graduate minor**, also a transcribed credential, is a coherent set of at least 12 graduate hours of courses defined by one or more units outside the student's enrolling program. It encourages and recognizes expertise gained in a particular area beyond the requirements of the major.

(The graduate major mentioned above refers to a graduate student's primary program of study, which consists of a minimum of 32 hours for a master's degree, and a minimum of 96 hours for a doctoral degree.)

Our current policy allows credit hours from the graduate concentration to be used toward the completion of the graduate major, but does not allow credit hours from the graduate minor to be used toward completion of the graduate major. This credit hour policy on the graduate minor was established for the following reasons:

1. The graduate minor is represents a separate, additional credential from the graduate major degree,
2. The graduate minor is defined without the participation of the graduate major's program, and
3. Our understanding of peer institution policies indicated an emerging standard that credit for transcribed minors should not count toward the major's degree.

A survey of peer institution policies was performed two years ago to provide background information on the current graduate minor policy. We have since revisited this survey to expand the number of axes of differentiation between peer graduate minor policies, more thoroughly refine these differences and to update its results in the presence of peer policy changes and new information.

Based on these results, we have found that the main trend among our peers is that the policy on counting credit from the graduate minor toward the major's degree is not based on whether or not the minor appears on the transcript, but is instead based on whether or not the graduate student's committee is required to include a member from the minor program. Since we currently do not place such requirements on graduate student committees, we recommend that credits from the graduate minor continue to not be counted toward the major's degree.

No Campus Minor	Required Minor	Minor (double count)	Minor (not DC)
Berkeley	Cornell	Iowa State	Illinois
Iowa	Indiana	Nebraska	Minnesota
Maryland	Wisconsin	Ohio State	Penn State
Michigan	UT Austin		
Michigan State			
Northwestern			
Purdue			

Table 1. Comparison of peer institution graduate minor policies.

Methodology. As we did in our previous survey of peer graduate program policies, the information used in this survey is as reported in published documents available as web pages, listed here in the “Sources” section. In many cases, details about graduate minor policies, especially whether or not a graduate minor is transcribed, was not published and required personal communication with colleagues at peer institution graduate schools and registrars.

Some peers do not offer graduate minors. Of the peers included in our survey, Berkeley, Michigan, Iowa, Purdue and Maryland do not offer a graduate “minor” at the campus level, though some support other interdisciplinary distinctions. Berkeley offers an optional doctoral-only “Designated Emphasis” that is transcribed but must be declared at the time of candidacy and organized by a committee¹. Michigan requires all grad students complete a four-hour “Cognate” for breadth². Iowa defines a 15-hour “Certificate” program, but graduate minors are defined only within its colleges³. Maryland supports the organization of courses with “Field Committees,” but defines no programs or recognition for them⁴. Our campus chooses to offer the option of a campus-defined graduate minor to our students to encourage and recognize interdisciplinary work.

Some peers offer graduate minors through colleges and departments. Some of our peers do not provide graduate minors at the university level, but instead allow colleges and/or departments to define minors as part of their curriculum. These include Iowa⁵ and Northwestern⁶. Such minors are not recognized by university-wide policy and, but can be recognized with certificates. Furthermore, these minors are often restricted to students within the offering unit. While we define a campus-wide inter-unit graduate minor that leads to a transcribed credential, we also allow units to issue certificates and other credentials that could be used to recognize interdisciplinary minor-program work that do not necessarily meet campus requirements.

Some peers require a minor as part of the degree requirements. Some of our surveyed peers require all graduate students to complete one or more minor programs in addition to their major program of study

¹ UC Berkeley Guide to Graduate Policy, Sec. F2.1 “Doctoral Degrees with a Designated Emphasis.”

² Rackham Graduate School Academic Policies, Secs. 5.2 & 6 “Cognate Requirement.”

³ E.g. U. Iowa School of Music Theory Pedagogy Minor

⁴ University of Maryland Graduate Catalog: Academic Policies: Field Committees.

⁵ The U. Iowa Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations does not mention minors, but individual units do offer graduate minors, such as the School of Music’s graduate minor in theory pedagogy.

⁶ Northwestern’s Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures does not mention minors, but individual units do offer graduate minors such as the McCormick School of Engineering’s minors in engineering management and entrepreneurship, each of which results in a certificate, but are only open to engineering students.

as part of their degree requirements. These include UT Austin⁷, Cornell⁸, Wisconsin and Indiana. While there is a clear distinction between credits (e.g. “courses counted toward a minor cannot also be counted toward the major”⁹) the credits of a required minor would nevertheless count toward the degree requirements. Our campus chooses not to require every graduate student to complete a graduate minor program as part of its baseline graduate degree requirements.

Some peers require graduate student committee evaluation of the minor. Several of our peers resolve issues of the graduate minor through the graduate student’s committee, e.g. the thesis/dissertation committee. For example, Berkeley determines the details of its doctoral Designated Emphasis as a condition for candidacy, and a member of the minor committee must serve on the qualifying exam committee¹⁰. Iowa State requires a minor representative to serve of the graduate student’s thesis/dissertation committee¹¹. Nebraska requires a minor representative on the dissertation committee¹², and Michigan requires a cognate representative on the dissertation committee¹³. Our graduate minor is designed to provide independence from the major program, and does not place any restrictions on the major’s degree requirements.

Some peers allow minor credits to contribute toward the graduate degree. Our peers are currently split on the issue of double counting of credits for a transcribed minor. Double counting refers to the practice of allowing some or all of the credits used to complete the graduate minor to also contribute toward completion of the graduate degree. Nebraska allows graduate minor credits to count toward the degree, but their master’s degree allows the use of a graduate minor to replace the thesis, and so could be following the same reasoning as our required-minor peers. Iowa State and Nebraska allows graduate minor credits to count toward the degree, but the precise amount is decided by the student’s committee. We currently do not allow graduate minor credits to contribute toward completion of the graduate degree.

⁷ “At least six hours must be in supporting work. Supporting work, often referred to as the minor, is an obligatory part of each degree program.” UT Austin Graduate Catalog: Degree Requirements: The Master’s Degree.

⁸ “A master’s student must choose two subjects of study, one major and one minor. A doctoral student must choose three subjects of study, one major and two minor, except in those fields that have secured permission from the General Committee to require only two, one major and one minor,” Sec. IV.C.3 of the Cornell Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty.

⁹ Indiana University Graduate School Bulletin, General Requirements for Advanced Degrees: Minor Subjects, p. 9.

¹⁰ “To qualify for the Designated Emphasis, students must have on the Qualifying Examination committee a representative of the DE and must be examined in that area of study,” Sec. F2.1, Berkeley Guide to Graduate Study.

¹¹ “[T]he student must have a minor representative on the POS committee” whose duties include “conducting the preliminary oral examination (for Ph.D. candidates) and the final oral examination (for master’s and Ph.D. candidates)” pp. 25 & 48 of the Iowa State U. Graduate College Handbook.

¹² “A graduate faculty member from the minor program must be a member of the student’s Supervisory Committee,” U. Nebraska Graduate Bulletin: Graduate Degrees Offered: Doctoral Degree Requirements: Minor Within Doctoral Program.

¹³ “Committees must have a cognate member who is familiar with the standards for doctoral research,” Sec. 5.5.3 of the Rackham Graduate School Academic Policies.

Minor Member Required on Committee	Minor Credits Contribute Toward Major Degree Requirements	
	Yes	No
Yes	Iowa State Nebraska	Penn State
No	Ohio State	Illinois Minnesota

Table 2. Comparison of policies for peers with an optional graduate minor.

Minor \subset Committee \approx Double Counting. The above table compares our peer graduate programs with optional minors to indicate a trend that programs that allow minor credit to count toward the major do so because the graduate student's committee contains a member representing the minor program that can determine how many minor credits should contribute toward the degree. In addition to Iowa State and Nebraska, the upper left quadrant also contains our non-minor peers (Berkeley's Designated Emphasis and Michigan's Cognate) as well as our peers that require a minor as part of the degree¹⁴. Hence this trend is followed by ten of our peers, with only two outliers, one of which (Penn State) required minor membership on the committee but does not permit that committee to count any of the minor credits toward the degree.

Sources

- Cornell Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty
<http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/policies>
- Indiana Graduate School Bulletin
<http://bulletins.iu.edu/iu/gradschool/2013-2014/gradschool-pdf.pdf>
- Iowa Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations
<http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/graduate-college-manual>
- Iowa School of Music Minor in Theory Pedagogy
<http://music.uiowa.edu/graduate-program/composition-music-theory-ma-phd#pedminor>
- Iowa State Graduate College Handbook
<http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/common/handbook>
- Maryland Graduate Catalog
<http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog>
- Michigan Rackham Graduate School Academic Policies
<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies>
- Minnesota Administrative Policy: Education & Student Life: Education
<http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/>
- Nebraska Graduate Bulletin
<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin>
- Northwestern Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures
<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies>
- Northwestern McCormick School of Engineering Interdepartmental Minors
<http://www.mccormick.northwestern.edu/academics/graduate/programs/interdepartmental-minors.html>
- Ohio State Graduate School Handbook
<http://www.gradsch.osu.edu/graduate-school-handbook1.htm>
- Penn State Bulletin: Graduate Programs
<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/minors/>
- Purdue Policies and Procedures for Administering Graduate Student Programs
<https://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/faculty/publications.cfm>
- UC Berkeley Guide to Graduate Policy
<http://grad.berkeley.edu/policy/>
- UT Austin Graduate Catalog
<http://catalog.utexas.edu/graduate/>
- Wisconsin Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures
<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy>

¹⁴ Wisconsin indicates as a best practice, and UT Austin approves each grad student's program of study (including the minor) through its Graduate Studies Committee from which the examination committee is chosen.

RECEIVED
FEB 11 2015
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

To: Kristi Kuntz/Kathy Martensen

From: The Graduate College

Date: 02/11/2015

Attached is the proposal to revise the Graduate College Policy on Graduate Minors and Endorse the Existing Graduate College Policy on Graduate Concentrations. It was approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee at the February 10, 2015 meeting.