Higher Learning Commission
Assumed Practices

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Key Points

- What is the HLC
- Why important
- Assumed Practices that must be addressed
- Policy drafts
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. For now, the 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

- Wisconsin: 16
- UC Berkeley: 20
- Michigan: 24
- Indiana: 30
- Ohio State: 30
- Michigan State: 30
- Minnesota: 30
- Iowa: 30
- Purdue: 30
- Penn State: 30
- Illinois: 32
- UT-Austin: 30
- Oklahoma: 30
- UN Carolina: 30
NOTE: Institutions without a bar signal no identified credit requirement.
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 departmental 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.”
Policy Drafts

- HLC assumed practices required attention to master’s degree requirements and graduate coursework at all levels
- In the process, other related policies were affected (i.e. credit policies for MFAs and doctoral degrees; prior course work policies; maximum credit load)
- Drafts for 5 Main Policy Categories
  - Minimum Graduate Residence Credit Requirement
  - Minimum Graduate Degree Credit Requirement
  - Minimum Graduate Course Work Requirement
  - Prior Course Work
  - Maximum Credits per Term
Graduate Residence & Degree Requirements

- Graduate Residence Requirements
  - Reinstating 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; and
  - 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); and currently, there are no limits on how many credits can be used, how old they can be, or how they interact with HLC policy requirements.

- Proposed policy would allow programs to decide approval of prior course work from:
  - graduate-level course work taken at other institutions;
  - UW-Madison undergraduate career; or
  - UW-Madison 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 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>*Allowed up to 15 credits numbered 300 or above</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>*Allowed up to 15 credits numbered 700 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Graduate Course work 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Requirements</td>
<td>*Allowed</td>
<td>*Allowed</td>
<td>*Allowed</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

- Policy Draft: Students are allowed to enroll for a maximum of 15 credits per term (instead of 12 credits)
- Campus consultations regarding any possible fiscal implications are underway
- 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

Maximum Credit Enrollment Allowed per Term

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

- New or readmitted Fall 2014 students 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 stop out for a semester or more would return under new policy requirements
Sources