

Resolution to Create Accelerated Graduate Pathway Policies

Faculty Senate

Educational Policy & Student Affairs Committee

October 7, 2019

For second reading

Whereas Ohio University graduate education policies do not permit undergraduates outside the Honors Tutorial College to earn graduate credit until very close to the end of their undergraduate careers; and

Whereas nine in-state peer institutions offer accelerated bachelor's-to-master's degree programs allowing well-qualified undergraduates to begin work on a graduate degree during their junior year; and

Whereas ten in-state peer institutions also permit some graduate credits to fulfill undergraduate degree requirements; and

Whereas a shorter, earlier path to a master's degree could help recruit high-achieving undergraduates to Ohio University as well as helping to retain them into their graduate work; and

Whereas accelerating entry to a graduate program can reduce educational costs for our students; and

Whereas accelerated graduate pathways need clear university policies and a well-defined approval process in order to promote academic quality and student success; therefore

Be it resolved that the University Curriculum Council shall implement guidelines for description and approval of Accelerated Graduate Pathways based on the principles in Appendix B; and

Be it further resolved that the following language be added to the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs:

Accelerated Graduate Pathways (AGPs)

Some exceptionally well-qualified undergraduate students may obtain conditional admission to a graduate degree program and begin graduate coursework during their undergraduate careers through an Accelerated Graduate Pathway. Each Accelerated Pathway maps a relationship between one or more undergraduate programs of study and a graduate degree program. In some cases, graduate course credit may be applied to both graduate and undergraduate degree requirements.

Admission

Students must have completed a minimum of 60 credit hours to be conditionally admitted into a graduate program through an Accelerated Pathway. A minimum of 75 undergraduate credit hours must be completed before graduate courses may be taken for graduate credit. Individual graduate programs may require a higher minimum number of hours before admission and/or the commencement of graduate coursework.

A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.2, or a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 with at least a 3.5 average GPA in the most recent 30 hours of coursework, is required for conditional admission to a graduate program through an Accelerated Pathway. Individual programs may set higher admissions standards.

Each graduate program defines its own additional admission criteria and processes for students applying through an Accelerated Pathway.

Removal or voluntary withdrawal from an AGP does not prevent a student from applying to begin the graduate program after receiving the bachelor's degree. Final admission to the graduate program after the bachelor's degree is conferred is subject to all university-wide policies for graduate admissions. For more information about these policies, see the Graduate Catalog.

Earning Graduate Credit

To receive graduate credit for graduate courses taken before completing the bachelor's degree, students must qualify in at least one of the following ways: meet criteria for Senior for Graduate Credit; obtain Early Admission to a graduate program; be accepted into an approved Accelerated Graduate Pathway; or be enrolled as a student in the Honors Tutorial College. (HTC students must request graduate credit prior to registering for their graduate courses; otherwise, the graduate courses will be part of their undergraduate record and GPA only.)

Students who wish to begin taking graduate courses through an AGP must first sign an Advising & Risk Acknowledgement Form. This form certifies that the student understands that taking graduate courses for credit will result in a permanent graduate transcript and that graduate classes will not affect eligibility for the Dean's List, Graduation with Latin Honors, or undergraduate probation status. It also certifies that the student is responsible for any impact on financial aid eligibility as a result of their course enrollment.

Courses taken for undergraduate credit and courses taken for graduate credit require separate registration processes. The AGP will identify which courses are eligible for graduate credit before the completion of the bachelor's degree. Students with conditional admission to a graduate program through an AGP may register for these courses with the permission of the instructor and their AGP advisor.

Students may not earn more than 16 hours of graduate credit prior to the conferral of the bachelor's degree. This limitation does not apply to HTC students.

Dual Undergraduate and Graduate Credit

AGPs may allow specific courses taken for graduate credit to also count toward specific undergraduate requirements, including 1) specific undergraduate course requirements; 2) elective hours in the major or college program of study; and/or 3) the 120-hour minimum university graduation requirement. A maximum of 9 graduate credit hours may be applied to undergraduate degree requirements of any kind.

Only courses listed in the student's AGP may satisfy requirements for the bachelor's degree, and these courses apply only to the undergraduate program of study specified in the AGP. If a student changes undergraduate programs to one that is not part of the AGP, it is possible that the graduate courses will count only toward the 120-hour university minimum.

Graduate (5000-level) sections of dual-listed 4000/5000-level classes taken for graduate credit will always appear on undergraduate DARS as a substitute for the 4000-level equivalent. Only the first 9 hours of graduate credit may count toward degree requirements, however.

Graduate credits also satisfying undergraduate requirements will not affect the undergraduate GPA. However, if the undergraduate degree program requires a minimum course grade to satisfy a degree requirement (e.g., B- or better), that minimum applies to graduate courses as well as undergraduate ones.

Standards of Work

Undergraduate students earning graduate credit through an AGP must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 in both their undergraduate and graduate coursework. If either the graduate or undergraduate GPA drops below a 3.0, conditional admission to the graduate program will be rescinded and the student will no longer be eligible to earn graduate credit through the AGP. The minimum cumulative graduate GPA applies to any number of attempted credit hours. (Normal graduate academic probation generally does not apply until a student has attempted 9 hours of graduate courses.)

No course with a grade below C (2.0) may be used to satisfy any graduate degree or certificate requirement. Individual graduate programs, schools, departments, or academic colleges may establish more rigorous standards. Repeating a graduate-level course or taking it again will not remove or replace a grade from a previous attempt.

Enrollment Requirements

Students in an AGP are expected to make timely progress toward bachelor's degree completion. Conditional graduate admission will be rescinded for undergraduate students who fail to earn credit or a PR grade in OHIO courses for three consecutive semesters (including summer). Individual graduate programs, schools, departments, or academic colleges may

establish more rigorous standards for continuous enrollment before the completion of the bachelor's degree (e.g., enrollment each fall and spring).

Students conditionally admitted to a graduate program through an AGP are normally expected to matriculate and enroll in the graduate program after the bachelor's degree is conferred with the next available admit term (i.e., when students would normally next begin the program following regular post-bachelor's admission). To maintain their admission, they may defer enrollment only with the permission of the graduate program.

Appendix A: Definitions

- **Accelerated Graduate Pathway (AGP)**—intentional blending of undergraduate and graduate degree progress to shorten the total time toward the graduate degree.
- **Early Assurance Program (EAP)**—conditional admission to a graduate program for a future term. Most EAPs are offered for incoming first-year or transfer students, and nationally they are most commonly found in health fields (especially medical school).
- **Early Admission**—student has completed all baccalaureate requirements except minimum hours AND switches to graduate status/graduate appointment eligibility when beginning graduate work. This is existing OHIO policy applicable to any major/graduate degree. Note that Early Admission can only happen after the Tier 3 requirement is met, i.e., a semester after the start of senior status.
- **Senior for Graduate Credit**¹—student has a maximum of 6 credits required before completion of the bachelor's degree. Such a student may take up to two graduate classes, normally in the same semester, with permission of instructors. This is existing OHIO policy and does not imply admission to a graduate program.
- **Conditional Admission**—admission to a graduate program contingent upon meeting certain requirements set by the program. For EAPs and AGPs, the conditions always include completion of the baccalaureate degree, but probably also a defined minimum undergraduate GPA, requisite undergraduate coursework, etc. Students conditionally admitted to an OHIO program may not hold graduate appointments until the conditions have been cleared.

Appendix B: Principles

¹ This is different from taking graduate courses for undergraduate credit only. All honors students at OHIO may take up to 9 hours of graduate courses, but those courses do not create a graduate transcript or “count” toward graduate degrees.

1. Students taking an AGP should be exceptionally well-prepared for graduate coursework.
2. The graduate program should not interfere with timely completion of the bachelor's degree.
3. Accelerated pathways should allow equal access and should thus not jeopardize undergraduate financial aid.
4. Accelerated pathways are an opportunity to enhance efficiency in coursework and credit hours.
5. All accelerated pathways should meet the previous principles, but policies should be flexible enough to accommodate the variety of academic fields and different possible relationships between the bachelor's program and the graduate program.