

UCF Graduate Council

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GRADUATE POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of February 22, 2006 meeting

Members Present	Patricia Bishop, Jim Moharam
Recorder	Rhonda Nelson
Guests Present	Max Poole, Neal Gallagher, Jamal Nayfeh, Manoj Chopra

The meeting began at 11:40 a.m. in 243 Millican Hall. Jim Moharam officiated as Chair as Steve Goodman was not available for this meeting.

Jim Moharam began the meeting and stated that today's discussion was on the minimum course level qualification for a degree in a master's level program. The three issues to discuss were:

- a. Accelerated programs and the sharing of courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs.
- b. Flexibility in the use of 4000 level courses inside/outside the major.
- c. Meeting SACS accreditation policy in the use of 4000 level courses.

Dr. Bishop shared that she and Dr. Poole met with the Engineering group on February 16 for a discussion on these issues. Following that meeting, she had a discussion with Julia Pet-Armacost, and also the Provost regarding the SACS issues in question. Julia Pet-Armacost indicated that their office would contact the SACS Office and ask for a clarification on the use of 4000 level courses in a graduate program. The point of confusion is whether the SACS language means that at least 30 hours of coursework in a program must be at the graduate, post baccalaureate level (the resolution proposed by the Graduate Council to try to fix the SACs non-compliance issue) or whether SACS language means that at least 30 hours of coursework in a program must be taken while the student is in graduate or post baccalaureate status (this would mean that coursework taken while an undergraduate, even if graduate, could not be used in a graduate program of study).

Dr. Bishop indicated that since she is lacking clarity right now on this issue because of the above interpretations that are possible, she recommended to the Graduate Council that we not try to establish changes in policies until we can get clarification, which should happen shortly. Clarification would help to better understand what current policies might be problematic.

The following discussion points came up during this meeting:

Discussion came up on Virginia Tech and Georgia Tech and that their programs allow defined 4000 level courses in their programs. However, Georgia Tech does not allow any courses taken while an undergraduate to transfer into a graduate program, even if graduate courses, and they also only allow 2 courses to be shared in an accelerated program and both must be graduate courses (and this program can only be used for those with a 3.5 gpa, in the same major, and only for a master's degree received within 2 years of the undergraduate degree).

Dr. Nicholson asked the question if our Graduate Council Curriculum Committee could approve 4000 level courses to be used as graduate courses. Dr. Bishop stated that according to Julia, the common numbering system would not allow 4000 level courses to be used as graduate courses. Max Poole then stated that Georgia Tech has 30 semester hour post bac programs but that they charge students for UG or GR level courses, according to the student's academic level.

Dr. Chopra indicated that we need to separate these two issues-those outside the major and those within an accelerated program, and that different policies might be needed for each. We have to make sure that the graduate programs are complete from a learning point of view. He said that SACs shouldn't be determining the curriculum and Dr. Poole responded that SACS establishes what a master's program entails and does not determine curriculum.

Dr. Gallagher pointed out that this 4000 level issue is a critical issue for Engineering and Computer Science, and that this could cripple programs from a competitive standpoint. He pointed out examples as follows: Environmental Engineering students take classes in cleaning water and pollutants, and they may also need chemical and biology courses at the UG level. Electrical Engineering may need to take UG Math and Physics courses. He stated that Princeton, Colorado State, and Purdue did not require that all programs must have courses above the 4000 level. Breadth is more important than depth. He summarized by saying that he thinks this may become a broader issue across the campus as students working on programs in other colleges may need to take 4000 level courses outside their major.

Dr. Moharam indicated that we really have two issues here; one is the use of 4000 level courses inside the major and the use of 4000 level courses outside the major.

Dr. Nayfeh then shared that the associate dean of engineering at UF indicated that their university allows two 4000 level courses to be part of the student's master's program. He then stated further that Virginia Tech allows students to also take 4000 level courses within their major.

Dr. Poole stated that his research shows that institutions tend to have their own interpretation regarding these issues. Georgia Tech does not have 5000 level courses, and uses the 4000 level. Virginia Tech uses 4000 level courses, only when approved by their Graduate Council with a graduate syllabus. The graduate dean at UF tells us that only Art programs at UF allow the use of 4000 level courses.

Dr. Chopra then stated that the issue centered on whether SACS interpretation was based upon the status of the student or the level of courses.

Dr. Nicholson asked the question of whether we could submit a graduate syllabus through the Graduate Council for 4000 level courses. Dr. Bishop asked why we would want to do that - when for the same work and same process, we could approve a 5000 level course instead.

Dr. Wright then asked the question as to whether we could adopt a 4000/5000 level course.

Dr. Chopra asked if we could take a list of approved courses to Graduate Council. He then asked how advanced level is shown on the syllabus.

Discussion then followed regarding the students that are in a master's program that may need basic courses in other areas.

Dr. Bishop indicated that we really need clarification from SACS first. She wants to find out from the numbering system standpoint if we have flexibility. She indicated that she would recommend to the Graduate Council to table the discussion on courses outside the major until we get SACS clarity, which should occur soon, and possibly focus on the issue of taking courses inside the major.

Dr. Gallagher pointed out that SACS is applying assessment feedback and establishing rules and parameters.

Dr. Chopra asked the question as to whether the 4000 level courses are advanced enough to count as graduate level. He would like to recommend to the Graduate Council that the use of the lower level courses be tabled until we can get clarity and also asked if the group could now focus on 4000 level courses inside the major.

Dr. Nayfeh then stated that the BSMA accelerated programs were approved through the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. He indicated that a restriction on using 4000 level courses would be the wrong policy to institute when they are trying to increase domestic students.

Dr. Bishop indicated that we do not want to be in noncompliance with SACS and that it would be better to get the clarification and get a solution prior to their visit.

Dr. Nayfeh indicated that we should not restrict this 4000 level issue more than it needs to be.

Dr. Chopra asked what our tuition policy was for courses beyond 30 hours. Dr. Bishop indicated that we allow additional hours for thesis and dissertation hours. If a student takes hours beyond their 30 hours, they can continue their tuition.

Dr. Nicholson shared that there was a difference between SACS and ABET accreditation.

Dr. Moharam summarized by indicating that we will wait to hear from Pet-Armacost and Young regarding clarification and find out where our flexibilities are and what SACS is trying to do before we continue further with this issue.

Dr. Nayfeh then indicated that the 4000 level courses were really advanced courses with more rigor and more content. Dr. Chopra then asked to see the additional rigor descriptions. He indicated that these possibly need to be approved by the Graduate Council. He did go on to say that we need to be thinking about what we can do to solve this problem and to come up with a resolution that meets the SACS guidelines.

Dr. Bishop said that she will make every effort to get the accelerated programs handled for the catalog for this fall, even if we lack clarity of SACS intentions right now. She stated that since we don't know whether SACS is saying that we can or cannot share courses between the undergraduate and graduate programs, that she did not think the Graduate Council would be in a position to deal with them without the clarification.

Meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

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