

Approved as revised by the Faculty Senate, February 24, 2016.

Proposed Guidelines for Graduate Major Concentrations

A Graduate Major Concentration is a formally recognized subfield of study within a discipline offered in a graduate program. It represents a coordinated grouping of courses that emphasize a particular subfield or area within the graduate program discipline to indicate the students' focus according to research interest and/or professional goals. It indicates that the students have achieved a level of competence or skill within a subfield of the graduate curriculum for that discipline. Major concentrations can be proposed in any graduate program, including masters, doctoral, and other graduate programs.

A Major Concentration is available only for students in the graduate program in which the Major Concentration is housed or administered. A Major Concentration is comprised of a specific grouping of courses and/or research activities that forms a coherent, yet distinctive complement to the general graduate degree program.

The Major Concentration is defined by its learning outcomes. Such learning outcomes might be appropriate for multiple graduate programs, but each graduate program must define the Major Concentration as appropriate for their students. In some cases, it might be appropriate for a Major Concentration to be defined by multiple graduate programs as an appropriate Major Concentration for the students within their programs. The Major Concentration is within the full program of study of the graduate degree. It must align to and meet the minimum standards of the University and the existing graduate degree program as stated in the General Announcements.

All Graduate Major Concentrations must be approved by the Graduate Council and the Faculty Senate. Major Concentrations, as with all graduate degree programs, should be reviewed periodically by Graduate Council on behalf of the Faculty Senate.

Note that Major Concentrations are distinct from graduate certificates. Major Concentrations are offered within a graduate program and are only available to students of that graduate program.

Guidelines

1. Each graduate degree program is responsible for determining the number of credits and the courses that satisfy the Major Concentration.

Minimum standards:

- The program requirements for each Major Concentration must meet the minimum standards of the University and the existing graduate degree program as stated in the General Announcements.
 - Incorporation of the emphases of the Major Concentration within the students' thesis and/or other work.
- a. All graduate degree programs are eligible to submit proposals for the granting of Major Concentrations.

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- b. Students must apply for and obtain the approval of their Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chair to declare a Major Concentration. The Major Concentration will appear on the transcript at the time it is declared, and its completion will be confirmed as part of the degree conferral process. Alternatively, a Director of Graduate Studies or Chair may identify students in their program that have fulfilled the requirements of a Major Concentration and request that the Major Concentration be added to the academic transcript.

2. A Major Concentration defines the graduate program for which the degree is awarded and may be identified by a graduate student or the graduate program's director of graduate study or department chair to further define a student's specific field of study on their academic transcript. The Major Concentration should be assigned an appropriate CIP code which may differ from the graduate program or discipline.

3. Students may, with departmental permission, apply for more than one Major Concentration for each graduate degree earned.

4. All proposals for a Major Concentration must originate from the faculty of the department or program offering the Major Concentration. Proposals must be endorsed in writing by the appropriate school dean(s) and the Dean of Graduate Studies. Multiple Major Concentration proposals can be submitted in a single proposal from a graduate program, provided questions are addressed for all Major Concentrations proposed. Major Concentration proposals should be submitted to the Speaker of Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Graduate Council and should include:

- a. Justification for the Major Concentration program. What is the target audience for the Major Concentration? What is the need or demand for the Major Concentration? How does the Major Concentration requirements and curriculum differ from the other graduate degrees offered by the academic unit? Is there any potential for the Major Concentration to attract students to the detriment of existing graduate degrees? How will it complement their graduate degree? How is the major concentration distinct or related to previously approved major concentrations? Is a student required to complete a Major Concentration to complete the graduate degree program or is the completion of a Major Concentration optional?
- b. Description of the requirements for the Major Concentration. Please list any required courses, electives, other requirements to complete the Major Concentration. Please provide assurance that the courses proposed for the satisfaction of the Major Concentration are offered regularly enough to allow for timely completion of the Major Concentration requirements.
- c. Multiple concentrations. Will students in the graduate program be permitted to declare and pursue more than one Major Concentration? If so, please provide a justification. Please describe how the additional Major Concentration is identified and earned. How will it provide benefit to a student? Is there a potential for it to be detrimental to a student? Could the set of requirements for one Major Concentration automatically fulfill the requirement for other Major Concentrations within the graduate program?

- d. List of participating faculty. Identify those faculty who will have primary roles in administering the Major Concentration and advising student participants.
- e. Procedures and qualifications for approval to pursue the Major Concentration (i.e. document the departmental/program procedures that will be up in place to certify eligibility and completion of the Major Concentration requirements, etc.)
- f. To comply with SACSCOC accreditation requirements, as well as best practices in curriculum design, the proposal must include (1) description of the Major Concentration's student learning outcomes that are clear standards for observable, measurable student-centered outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and behaviors; (2) a curriculum map that relates the components of the proposed Major Concentration curriculum to the specified student learning outcomes; and (3) an assessment plan for measuring the success and effectiveness of the Major Concentration curriculum and students' achieving the learning outcomes after implementation. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is charged with assisting proposers with the development of these elements. In addition, the proposal must include a letter from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness indicating whether SACSCOC notification and/or approval is required and, if so, the schedule for notification.
- g. Supporting letters from chair(s) of participating departments/programs and the appropriate dean(s) verifying that: a. The proposed Major Concentration has been reviewed and received faculty approval through appropriate governance procedures; b. Resources to support the Major Concentration, as presented in the proposal, are available without impacting other courses and programs for at least five years.
- h. The complete and specific language describing the official name of the Major Concentration and the exact requirements for students to complete it – as they would appear in the General Announcements if the proposal were approved. The Major Concentration must be in place and in the General Announcements for the year in which the student matriculates, or graduates, or any year in between.
- i. Specification of a CIP code for the proposed Major Concentration with justification. The Offices of the Registrar, Institutional Research and Institutional Effectiveness can assist and will ultimately determine the appropriate CIP code to be assigned.