

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICY FOR COMBINATION, JOINT, and DUAL DEGREES

I. INTRODUCTION

Combination, joint, and dual degree programs are specialized pathways that provide academically qualified students the opportunity to enhance their educational experience and strengthen their career preparation or readiness for future academic pursuits.

II. POLICY

1. Definitions

- a. *Academically qualified student.* Academically qualified students are those who meet program-defined academic criteria and exhibit the potential for success in the combination, joint, or dual-degree program as determined by the faculty.
- b. *Approved student.* Approved students are academically qualified and have been approved by the faculty to enter a combination, joint, or dual-degree program. Approved students also have enough remaining credit hours in their program to accommodate double-counted credits in the combination, joint, or dual degree program.
- c. *Admitted student.* Admitted students are those who have been approved for a combination, joint, or dual-degree program and have been formally admitted to the associated baccalaureate, graduate or professional program at the University of Florida and/or the partner institution.
- d. *Combination Degree.* A combination degree program, sometimes referred to as a combined degree program, is one where the University of Florida awards more than one degree from an overlapping course of study. Combination degrees often allow a shorter time for completion due to the sharing of some coursework between the degree programs (these result in *double-counted credits*; see Item 3 in this policy). At the University of Florida, this type of program includes any combination of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs.
- e. *Dual Degree.* A dual degree program (also called a *dual academic award*) is one whereby students study at the University of Florida *and* at another institution, and each institution awards a separate program completion credential bearing its own name, seal, and signature.
- f. *Joint Degree.* A joint degree program (or joint academic award) is one whereby students study at the University of Florida and one or more participant institutions and are awarded a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the participant institutions.

- g. *Double-counted credits.* Double-counted credits, sometimes referred to as overlapping or shared credits, are those that a student earns in a degree program that are also applied to (or counted toward) another degree program. The principle of double-counted credits allows the student to earn two degrees without any loss of integrity, quality, or coherence of the two degrees for fewer total credit hours than would normally be required if both academic degree programs were taken independently.
- h. *Justification for double-counted credits.* Academic programs must provide a clear academic justification for the use of double-counted credits that provides evidence that the integrity and quality of each program is not compromised. The justification should address (a) how the shared credits meet the requirements of both degrees, (b) how the combination, joint, or dual degree program present a coherent course of study, and (c) the process used to determine this.

Justifications typically include program-defined admissions requirements, evidence that the student will be able to meet student learning outcomes for both programs successfully with no loss of fidelity, the relevance of the combination, joint, or dual-degree program to the student's desired outcomes, and any other evidence that the student will succeed in and benefit from the combination program.

- i. *Participant Institution.* These are institutions that partner with the University of Florida for joint and dual degree programs.
- j. *Coherent course of study.* At the University of Florida, all approved academic programs present a coherent course of study. This is evidenced by the logical, sequential, and consistent nature of the programs. Combination, joint, and dual degree programs preserve this coherence.

2. Responsibility

- a. Faculty

The responsibility for developing combination, joint, and dual-degree programs resides with the faculty in each academic program. Proposals should be submitted when faculty identify student demand, employment demand, or a justified substantial pedagogical interest that best serves the student.

- b. Administration and Proposal Routing

Requests for combination, dual, and joint degrees must follow the appropriate routing in the UF Approval Tracking System. All combination, joint, and dual degree programs must be reported to the Office of Institutional Assessment at least six months in advance of their implementation.

3. Justification of Double-counted Credit Hours

a. Combination degrees.

i. *Baccalaureate/Masters and Baccalaureate/Professional.*

1. All double-counted credits must be justified in the proposal as described in Item II(1)(h) in this policy. In this policy, double-counted credits *do not* include those that are transferred according to the [University of Florida Transfer Credit Policy](#) for undergraduate programs, and the [Masters](#), [PhD](#), and [nontraditional program](#) transfer of credit policies.
2. *Up to 12 credit hours of double-counted credit.* Upon review by each degree program's department and college curriculum committee, the Dean, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, the University Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Council, the Director of Institutional Assessment and the Provost, **up to 12 credit hours** of graduate coursework may be double-counted toward an undergraduate degree and a graduate degree.
3. *Additional hours of double-counted credits beyond 12.* If the program faculty wish to double count **13 or more hours** of graduate credit toward the baccalaureate and master's degree, the proposal may include a request for the additional hours. A separate justification is required for the additional hours beyond 12 and should present a strong case for how the additional hours preserve the quality and coherence of the combined programs.
4. *Individual student exceptions.* A program may petition on behalf of an individual admitted student for an exception to item II(3)(a)(ii)(2) with justification that the additional hours beyond 12 credits preserve the quality and coherence of each program comprising the combination.
5. Undergraduate credit coursework **may not be** double counted toward the graduate degree.
6. At least 50% (at least one-half) of the credits required for completion of the graduate degree in the combination must be earned after the student has been formally admitted to the graduate degree program.
7. The resulting combination program will consist of at least 120 credit hours counted toward the undergraduate degree and at least 30 credit

hours counted toward the graduate degree, with up to 12 credit hours of double-counted graduate coursework.

8. Graduate courses counted toward the undergraduate degree must be appropriate for that degree program, consistent with the SACSCOC requirement that degree programs embody a coherent course of study, as well as all other principles contained in the SACSCOC Policy on Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees. The integrity and coherence of the graduate program shall be maintained so that the graduate courses are progressively more rigorous than the undergraduate courses.
9. Program faculty will set appropriate admissions standards to ensure that students are academically qualified and prepared for graduate-level coursework.

ii. *Graduate/Professional.*

1. The combinations must have a minimum combination total of 60 unduplicated graduate or professional credit hours.
2. In combinations where one of the graduate or professional degrees has been approved by the University Curriculum Committee at fewer than 30 credit hours, or the program is approved by the area's professional disciplinary accreditor as appropriate at fewer than 30 credit hours, justification is required for the combination. Justification typically rests on the fact that one of the two associated graduate or professional degrees exceeds the 30-credit minimum so that the total credit hour combination meets or exceeds 60.
3. In combinations where the two programs double count credits, justification is required for the double-counted credits (see Item 1[h] in this policy).

b. Dual degrees.

- i. Dual degree programs that share credits must academically justify the double-counted credits [see Item (II)(1)(h) in this policy].
- ii. Each institution may choose to transfer credits between or among the programs. If transfer credits are part of the agreement, these must be clearly explicated in the agreement.

4. Proposal

Faculty interested in creating a new combination, joint or dual degree program should complete the appropriate proposal form available in the Approval System. The proposal should include the following information.

- a. Proposal Purpose
 - i. Define the purpose for proposing the program and the benefits of establishing the program.
 - ii. Justify the program in intellectual and pedagogical terms (see Items II(1)(h), II(3)(a)(i), II(3)(a)(ii), and II(3)(a)(iii) in this policy).
 - iii. Identify the individual responsible for program.
- b. Approval and Admission Requirements, Student Application Procedures, and Advising
 - i. The proposal must explain the process for determining that a student is academically qualified for the combination, joint, or dual-degree program.
 - ii. The proposal must explain the process for approving students to enter the combination, joint, or dual-degree program, including the eligibility period when a student can apply for the program.
 - iii. The proposal must explain the admissions requirements to the associated graduate or professional program, including but not limited to the minimum GPA, GRE score (when appropriate), and the application procedures.
- c. Curriculum
 - i. The core requirements of each academic program and available electives (along with the associated hours).
 - ii. Provide the curriculum for the proposed program.
 - iii. Explicitly identify and justify, both intellectually and pedagogically, specific courses designated as “shared credits” and explain how integrity and quality are not compromised for either degree program.

5. Assessment

- a. Assessment of student learning and program outcomes shall be as follows.
 - i. **Combination degree programs.** Assessment shall be at the individual degree program level.
 - ii. **Joint degree programs.** Assessment shall be shared by the institutions contributing to the degree. Each institution shall follow their institutional processes for assessment planning and reporting.
 - iii. **Dual degree programs.** Assessment shall be completed by each individual institution according to their institutional processes for assessment planning and reporting.

6. Termination of a Combination, Joint, or Dual Degree program

- a. If the University of Florida or the participant institution discontinues the combination, joint, or dual degree program, it will be necessary for the student to complete the requirements for each academic program separately.
- b. If any of the individual programs that comprise the combination or dual degree is closed, the institution is responsible for following its regional accreditor's teachout policy.

7. Degree Conferral

- a. A student enrolled in a combination program will earn the degrees as follows.
 - i. *Baccalaureate/Graduate and Baccalaureate/Professional degree combinations.* The degrees will be earned in one of two ways, at the discretion of the college:
 1. Baccalaureate degree(s) will be earned upon completion of the undergraduate program(s), and master's and/or professional degree upon completion of the graduate/professional degree program, or
 2. The degrees will be conferred upon the completion of the combination.
 - ii. *Graduate/Professional combinations.* The degrees will be conferred upon completion of the combination.
- b. Upon completion of a joint degree program, the student will earn one degree from the participant institutions.

- c. Upon completion of a dual degree program, a student will earn two separate degrees, one from each participant institution.

III. JUSTIFICATION AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

1. This policy is supported and justified by requirements stated in the following standards and policies from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges [Resource Manual](#) (2018).
 - a. Standard 9.2, Program Length; Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees.
 - b. Standard 9.1, Program content (Program Coherence).
 - c. Standard 9.6, Post-Baccalaureate Rigor and Curriculum.
 - d. Standard 10.7, Policies for Awarding Credit.
 - e. Standard 10.8, Evaluating and Awarding Academic Credit.
 - f. Standard 10.9, Cooperative Academic Arrangements.
 - g. SACSCOC [Policy](#), *The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees*
2. Periodic Review
 - a. Combined, joint, and dual degree programs will be reviewed every seven (7) years by the appropriate committees, councils, and administrators.
 - b. This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Director of Institutional Assessment.
 - c. Ultimate review responsibility and authority is with the Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

History:
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