



## FSU POLICY 9-2 COMBINED BACHELOR'S/MASTER'S AND JOINT GRADUATE PATHWAYS

**Responsible Executive:** Provost  
**Approving Official:** Provost  
**Effective Date:** August 15, 2018  
**Revision History:** New

### I. INTRODUCTION

Combined bachelor's/master's and joint graduate pathways provide qualified students with a partially-structured path to earn two degrees from two separate academic degree programs. Admission to both academic programs is required in order to pursue these pathways. The purpose of combined bachelor's/master's and joint graduate pathways is to provide academically prepared and qualified students with an opportunity to expand their expertise and knowledge through joint enrollment and completion of two academic degree programs in an appropriately customized manner.

### II. POLICY

#### 1. Definitions

**Combined Bachelor's/Master's Pathways** - Combined bachelor's/master's pathways provide academically talented undergraduate students an opportunity to complete both a bachelor's and a master's degree. Upon approval, a combined bachelor's/master's pathway allows for up to 12 graduate hours to be shared with, or double-counted toward, an undergraduate degree program.

**Direct-Entry Pathways**. Direct-Entry Pathways are a type of combined pathway structured such that the curricula for two academic degrees are interwoven. Students are admitted to the bachelor's degree program with the understanding that they are expected to complete both degrees.

**Joint Graduate Pathways**- Joint graduate pathways provide qualified master's students with an opportunity to earn two master's degrees or master's/professional degrees from two academic degree programs. Joint graduate pathways share academic content that allows a student to expand their breadth of knowledge and content expertise to include additional domains not covered in a single degree. All post-baccalaureate degree programs must have at least 30 unique hours of coursework. Upon approval, joint graduate pathways allow graduate/professional courses in excess of the 30-hour minimum to be shared with, or double-counted, toward both degree programs.

**Shared-Credits**- "Shared credits" refers to the use of a limited number of credit hours toward the requirements of two separate degree programs. The principle of shared credits allows the student to earn two degrees for fewer total credit hours than would normally be required if both academic degree



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programs were taken independently. Academic programs must provide strong academic justification for the use of shared hours between the two degrees involved in the pathway that explains how program integrity is maintained or enhanced.

### 2. Responsibility

#### a. Faculty

The responsibility for developing combined and joint graduate pathways resides with the faculty in each academic program. Such proposals should be submitted when faculty identify student demand, employment demand, or a substantial pedagogical interest that is best served by offering two degree programs in a combined or joint pathway format.

#### b. Administration and Proposal Routing

Each school or college must ensure that all proposals for developing pathways receive appropriate faculty review prior to submission to the next higher administrative level. For combined and joint pathway programs, the head of the academic unit, the curriculum committee for both the department and college, and the appropriate director (school) or dean (college) submitting a proposal must review and approve the proposal before submission to the next higher administrative level. Proposals involving undergraduate degrees are submitted to the Undergraduate Policy Committee and the Graduate Policy Committee. Proposals involving graduate and professional degrees are submitted to the Graduate Policy Committee. All proposals are reviewed by the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. Final approval resides with the Provost.

The Graduate School is responsible for reviewing proposals and providing any needed internal and external coordination of procedures. The Office of Institutional Research shall post the list of approved combined and joint pathways on their website. The academic college is responsible for listing approved combined and joint pathways in the Undergraduate Bulletin and/or Graduate Bulletin, as appropriate, and for coding students pursuing these degrees in a manner consistent with the registrar's guidelines.

### 3. Shared Credit Hours

#### a. A limited number of courses may count in more than one program of study as follows:

- (1) Combined Bachelor's/Master's Pathways- Upon review by each degree program's department and college curriculum committee and academic dean, and the Undergraduate and Graduate Policy Committees, a maximum of 12 credit hours of graduate coursework may be shared with, or double-counted toward, an undergraduate degree and a graduate degree. The resulting combined 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 overlapping graduate coursework. 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 of the graduate program shall be





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maintained so that the graduate courses are progressively more rigorous than the undergraduate courses. Programs will set appropriate admissions standards to ensure that students are academically qualified and prepared for graduate-level coursework.

Direct-Entry Programs - Direct-entry Programs operate as combined degrees in which students are required to complete the entire interwoven undergraduate-to-graduate curriculum.

- (2) Joint Graduate Pathways- Must have a minimum combined total of 60 unduplicated graduate or professional credit hours, and a minimum of 30 unique hours in each degree program. Upon review by each degree program's department and college curriculum committee and academic dean, and the Graduate Policy Committee, graduate courses in excess of the 30-hour minimums may be counted in both graduate degrees in a joint pathway program.

#### 4. Proposal

Faculty interested in creating a new combined or joint pathway should complete the appropriate proposal form available on the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement's website. At a minimum, the proposal should be written in narrative format and include the following information:

- Proposal Purpose
  - Define the purpose for proposing the program and the benefits of establishing the pathway
  - Justify the pathway in intellectual and pedagogical terms
  - Identify individual initially responsible for program
- Admission Requirements, Student Application Procedures, and Advising
  - The proposal must explain the admissions requirements, including the time when a student applies to the program, minimum GPA and GRE score, and the application procedures
- Curriculum
  - Provide the core requirements of each academic program as well as available electives (along with the associated hours)
  - Provide the curriculum for the proposed program
  - Explicitly identify and justify, both intellectually and pedagogically, specific courses designated as "shared credits" and explain how program integrity is maintained or enhanced

#### 5. Assessment

Assessment of student learning and program outcomes for programs that are part of a combined or joint pathway shall be at the individual degree program level, although student demand for the program shall be assessed as part of the participating academic department's program review (QER) process conducted by the Provost's Office.



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### 6. Termination of a Combined or Joint Pathway

Combined and joint pathways are partially-structured paths to completing the requirements for two separate degrees. Admission to each program is required. As a result, if the institution discontinues a combined or joint pathway, then it will be necessary for the student to separately complete the requirements for each academic program.

### 7. Degree Conferral

A student enrolled in a combined pathway will earn the baccalaureate degree upon completion of the undergraduate program and master's degree upon completion of the graduate program.

Upon completion of a joint graduate pathway, a student will earn two separate degrees, one for each degree.

## III. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

1. Program Length, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
2. Program Coherence, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
3. Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
4. Post-Baccalaureate Program Rigor, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges

Sally McRorie 7.23.18

Provost and Executive Vice President      Date  
for Academic Affairs