University Policy AC-20.02-12/16

Policy Title: Development of Accelerated Bachelor’s to Master’s Programs Policy

Originator: Dr. George Ellenberg, Interim Provost

Responsible Office: Office of the Provost

Reason for Policy/Purpose:

To set forth policies and guidelines for the development and implementation of academic programs that combine undergraduate work and master's degree work (Accelerated Bachelor’s to Master's (ABM) programs).

Who Does this Govern and Who Needs to Know this Policy?

All University faculty and administrators charged with planning and approving Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Programs (ABM) and students who participate in ABM programs.

Policy Statement:

Accelerated Bachelor’s to Master's (ABM) programs allow high performing undergraduate students at the University of West Florida an opportunity to apply to select ABM programs after successfully completing 75 undergraduate semester credit-hours. Upon acceptance to the ABM program, students will be able to take up to 12 semester credit hours (SCH) of graduate level coursework as an undergraduate. Master's level directed studies, internships, thesis hours, and other culminating/capstone experiences may not be applied toward the bachelor’s degree. The graduate level coursework will be applied to the undergraduate degree program. Upon acceptance and admittance to the graduate degree program, up to 12 SCH of preapproved, successfully completed graduate level coursework taken by the student as an undergraduate may be applied toward the master’s degree.

All ABM programs must be designed so that students in the ABM programs will obtain the same student learning outcomes as their counterparts in the regular undergraduate and graduate programs.

Departments developing ABM programs are responsible for adhering to best practices in higher education. All programs shall assure academic rigor and compliance with the University’s regional accreditor, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and shall satisfy the requirements of any other accrediting bodies and the University.
Program Requirements.

Typically, the same department or program that awards the bachelor's degree must sponsor the master's degree component of the ABM. This does not preclude the development of ABM degrees between departments in related disciplines. All ABM programs at the University must be developed by the department and be approved by the Faculty Senate, the Graduate Council, the Graduate School, and the Office of the Provost using the UWF curriculum change request (CCR) process.

Eligibility Requirements.

- Students must have completed a minimum of 75 credit hours in their undergraduate programs, including credits earned from advanced placement, prior to submitting the ABM Program Application.
- Transfer students must have completed a minimum of 24 credit hours and at least two semesters at UWF.
- Students must have a minimum cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.25 out of 4.0 and a minimum GPA of 3.5 in their major at UWF.
- The minimum cumulative GPA for continuation in the ABM program shall be no less than 3.25 on a scale of 4.0.
- Individual academic departments may have additional requirements and criteria. Failure to meet the additional requirements and criteria will make students ineligible to continue to participate in the ABM program.

Admission Requirements.

- There are two separate application processes:
  1. Submission/approval of the ABM Program Application (allows the undergraduate student to begin taking pre-approved graduate-level courses). The department chair must approve the application and a copy must be submitted to the Graduate School. Admission to an ABM program does not guarantee admission to the Graduate School.
  2. Submission/approval of the graduate admission application (officially admits student into the master's program). Students must meet minimum Graduate School and departmental admission requirements before enrolling as a graduate student.

- A prospective student who meets the eligibility requirements must schedule a meeting with his/her undergraduate advisor and graduate advisor to develop a degree plan for his/her bachelor's to master's degree programs. The degree plans must clearly indicate the courses that will be applied to both the bachelor's and master's degrees. Undergraduate courses cannot be used to meet graduate degree requirements.
- Students who are a part of the ABM program cannot be conditionally admitted into the
graduate program; they must either be provisionally or fully admitted into the graduate program.

Participation and Continued Eligibility Requirements.

- Students must complete the bachelor's degree prior to entering the master's program. Students in the ABM program may not elect to bypass the bachelor's degree.
- Until the undergraduate degree is awarded, students in the ABM program will be considered undergraduates with regard to all policy considerations.
- No more than one year may elapse between undergraduate degree completion and enrolling in the graduate program. The graduate program may set a shorter limit.
- No more than 12 semester credit hours of graduate work (5000-6000 level) may be counted toward the bachelor's degree.
- Students who are enrolled in the ABM program are not eligible for graduate assistantship positions until they complete the bachelor’s degree.
- Students must earn a grade of 'B' or better in each of the graduate level courses that are being applied to both degrees. Courses with a grade of 'B-' or below cannot be applied to the master's degree.
- Students in non-thesis graduate degree programs must complete all master's degree requirements and obtain the master's degree within 18 months of completing the bachelor's degree. Students in graduate level thesis or extended hour programs (36 semester credit hours or more) must complete all master's degree requirements and obtain the master's degree within 24 months of completing the bachelor's degree. If the master's program is not completed within this time limit, the student will no longer be eligible to apply the graduate credit hours earned as an undergraduate toward both degrees (i.e., the graduate credit hours earned may only be applied toward the previously completed bachelor's degree, not both). Inability to complete the program in the aforementioned time-frames will result in the student’s automatic termination from the ABM program. Students who do not meet the completion timeline may petition their department requesting an extension. The extension request must be approved by the department chair, college dean, and Graduate School.
- Students must complete the bachelor's degree requirements with a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or greater. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.25 will become ineligible to continue participating in the ABM program and will be automatically terminated from the ABM program.
- Students who do not follow the approved degree plan may become ineligible to participate in the ABM program.
- At any time, students may withdraw from an approved ABM program by informing the undergraduate and graduate advisor(s) in writing.
- Students who become ineligible to continue participating in the ABM program or who withdraw from the ABM program cannot apply the completed graduate credit hours toward both degrees. The graduate credit hours earned may be applied:
  1. toward completion of the bachelor's degree
     or
  2. toward completion of a future master's degree.
• Students must meet all regular Graduate School and departmental degree completion requirements prior to being awarded the master’s degree.

Procedures:

The Graduate School maintains the ABM Program procedures for this policy: [https://confluence.uwf.edu/display/BPL/Accelerated+Bachelor%27s+to+Master%27s+Program+Guidelines.](https://confluence.uwf.edu/display/BPL/Accelerated+Bachelor%27s+to+Master%27s+Program+Guidelines).

Change Justification:

This policy clarifies the requirement standards for adherence to and compliance with SACSCOC policies.

Authority and Related Documents:

SACSCOC policies including 2.7.1, 3.6.1, 3.12, 3.12.1.

**APPROVED:** Dr. Judith A. Bense, President **Date:** 12/19/16

History:

AC-20.01-05/14 Development of Accelerated Bachelors/Masters Programs Policy, adopted May 2014; revised hereby.