

# Standards for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs

An institution shall refer to these standards and Coordinating Board rules Section 5.45, "Criteria for New Baccalaureate and Master's Degree Programs," in developing new degree programs. An institution is expected to incorporate these standards into its program unless it can provide information that justifies deviations from the standards.

## I. Need

Job Market Need – The institution shall provide recent and reliable data on the number of potential job openings in the discipline that reflect both short- and long-term need. Types of data to be used are: 1) documented vacancies in existing positions; 2) documented need for new positions; and 3) evidence of emerging markets. These data can come from: a) survey of advertisements for job openings; b) employer surveys; and c) evidence from professional associations, workforce commissions, and related governmental agencies.

If the discipline does not have an association with a single (and specific) job market (e.g., English), the institution shall provide data on the kinds of potential jobs available for graduates of the program (e.g., copywriter, public relations specialist, advertising specialist, etc.).

Student Demand – The institution shall provide recent and reliable data of short- and long-term evidence of student interest. Types of data to be used are: 1) Increased enrollments in related programs at the institution; 2) high enrollment in similar programs at other institutions; 3) qualified applicants rejected at similar programs in the state or nation; and 4) student surveys.

Enrollment Projections – Enrollment projections shall reflect student demand estimates and shall ensure financial self-sufficiency by the end of the program's fifth year. In calculating yearly FTSE, 30 SCH equals 1 FTSE for bachelor's programs and 24 SCH equals 1 FTSE for master's programs.

## II. Quality

### Degree Requirements

*Core curriculum* - The number of SCH in the general education core curriculum shall equal the number of SCH in the institution's approved Core Curriculum Plan.

*Number of hours in a major* - A minimum number of SCHs are required for an academic major (required courses and prescribed electives):

- Bachelor's program – 24 SCH (30 SCH for most majors)
- Master's program – 18 SCH in a 30 to 36 SCH program; more for longer programs

*Number of hours in a degree program* - The number of SCHs for the degree shall be comparable to the number the SCHs required for similar degrees in the state. A minimum number of SCHs are required to complete a degree:

- Bachelor's program – 120 SCH
- Master's program – 30 SCH

### Curriculum

*Required Courses* - Required courses are taken by *all* students in the program. These courses shall meet all requirements for accreditation, licensure, or certification and shall be consistent with similar programs in the state and nation.

*Prescribed Electives* - Prescribed electives are a list of specific courses from which students must choose to meet curricular requirements of the program. Prescribed electives shall complement the required courses and are numerous enough to provide breadth and depth of study.

*Free Electives* – Free electives are selected by the student, subject only to advisor approval.

### Faculty

*Core Faculty* - A core faculty member is tenured (or tenure-track) who devotes an average of fifty percent or more of his or her teaching time in the program. (Some programs such as interdisciplinary degrees may have core faculty devoting less than 50 percent of their teaching time to the program.) The background and education of each core faculty member shall be in the field of the program or in a closely related field. A minimum number of core faculty shall be devoted specifically to the proposed program:

- Bachelor's program – three FTE or two FTE if comprised of four individual faculty members. (Note: The standard for upper-level institutions could be lower for those programs in which lower-division courses are required for the major and taken at feeder institutions.)
- Master's program – three FTE or two FTE if comprised of four individual faculty members

*Qualifications of Faculty for Bachelor's Programs* - To meet minimum SACS standards, 25 percent of faculty supporting the program shall have terminal degrees. Beyond that minimum standard, the percentage of faculty with terminal degrees shall compare favorably to the percentage of faculty with terminal degrees at similar programs in the state and nation.

*Qualifications of Faculty for Master's Programs* - All faculty supporting the master's degree program shall have terminal degrees.

*Degree-granting Institution* - Coordinating Board rules Sections 5.45 (3) (B) and 7.4 (a) (1) require that core and support faculty have terminal degrees from institutions that are accredited by agencies recognized by the Coordinating Board or from equivalent institutions located outside the United States.

*Support faculty* - A support faculty member is a 1) tenured/tenure-track faculty from related disciplines, 2) adjunct faculty, and 3) a graduate teaching assistant (only if he or she meets minimum SACS requirements). The program shall have a sufficient number of support faculty to teach the scope of the discipline, consistent with similar programs in the state and nation.

Library Resources – Resources shall meet the standards of the appropriate accrediting body or other professional association and be adequate to support the program. Faculty and library staff shall collaborate on writing a collection development policy for the program and on purchasing core collection materials.

Facilities and Equipment – Facilities and equipment shall be equivalent to those provided at similar programs in the state and nation.

Accreditation – The institution shall identify plans to seek accreditation from appropriate accrediting agencies or organizations. The Coordinating Board requires institutions to meet accreditation deadlines for certain programs (*e.g., ABET for undergraduate engineering*) as a contingency of continued program approval. If the institution does not plan to pursue accreditation, it shall provide the rationale for that decision.

### **III. Costs and Funding**

Revenues shall cover the costs of operating the program. New formula funding shall not be considered as a funding source for the first two years of the program and shall not exceed more than 50 percent of all funding for the program for years three through five.

Cost of the program shall include any “replacement costs” of existing faculty who would be reassigned to responsibilities in the proposed program.