April 27, 2012

MEMO TO: Mike Bailey, Chair
       Curriculum Council

FROM: Brenda McComb, Dean

RE: Graduate Options proposal

Mike, the proposal to establish transcript visible options for graduate programs is supported by the Graduate School. The proposal was a result of several meetings to understand the benefits and obstacles to developing such options. An initial meeting with Jim Coakley, COB and Kent Kuo, Registrar was arranged at Jim’s request, following a discussion between and Jim and me. Jim’s suggestion, which I agree with, is that since undergraduates can have transcript visible options, then some graduate programs may find this advantageous for their students as well. The initial meeting was to understand the process that would have to be followed to allow this to occur. Kent indicated that the process would follow one similar to that followed for undergrads except that while the Graduate School would be responsible for auditing degree requirements prior to graduation, the Graduate Program Directors would be responsible for auditing the option requirements. Further, we agreed to limit the number of options that could be created per graduate program, but that an individual student could meet requirements for more than one option. We also agreed that not all programs would elect to have transcript visible options, and that some may prefer to maintain Areas of Specialization which are not transcript visible.

Jim subsequently drafted a plan for Graduate Options that was reviewed by the Graduate School. Jim and I subsequently met with representatives from CAS, COE, COF, and CPHHS who all were supportive of such an approach.

From my perspective, options provide opportunities for degree programs which are inherently broad in scope to recognize the expertise gained by students in more specific areas of the broad discipline and ensure that the student’s transcript reflects that more specialized training. The change does not come without cost to the Graduate School and especially the Registrar’s Office to ensure that options are correctly assigned to each transcript for each student aligned with an option. But we do feel that the approach could provide a benefit to a student applying for a job in a
specific area. Further it may make it more likely that graduate programs which decide to reorganize do so around broader more inclusive themes with specialized areas clearly identified within the broad program, much the way that Forest Ecosystems and Society and the Masters of Public Health has done, and that Horticulture and Crop and Soil Science are contemplating.

Hence in my view, the benefits of going to a transcript visible option far outweigh the additional costs associated with the change, will more fully meet the needs of the students, and incurs little to no risk to Graduate Programs. It has the full support of the Graduate School.

Cc: Jim Coakley, COB
Proposal for Graduate Options

Proposal.
To create a Graduate Option that would appear on the official academic record and transcript for a student. The definition of an option at the graduate level is as follows:

A graduate option consists of a minimum of 12 designated quarter credits of related coursework, comprised of coursework offered by the sponsoring unit as well as by other academic units. The option may be comprised of specific courses, completion of a designated number of credits from a longer list of alternative courses, or a combination of specific and alternative course lists. Approved options may be added to a graduate Program of Study, and approved by the faculty advisor(s) and the director of the sponsoring unit. When the unit submits the final examination card to validate awarding of the major to the Graduate School, the unit will also validate that the requirements of the option have been completed.

To create, change, or drop an option, departments submit a Category II proposal. The proposal must contain a list of courses as they will appear in the OSU Catalog and documented liaison with all departments involved. The proposal must also list the graduate faculty and appropriate facilities associated with delivery of the option (necessary facilities and faculty expertise to support the option must be available). Upon approval by the Graduate Council and the Curriculum Council, the option will appear in the OSU catalog and an option code will be created for use within the Banner system.

Concept.
The graduate-level option would be similar to the options that are currently available at the undergraduate level. The options will facilitate tracking and degree accountability of graduate students pursuing specialized areas of study within a graduate degree program. The options differ from an Area of Concentration (see background below) in that the designated students will be assigned a specific option code within the Banner system and the option will appear on the academic transcript. The use of Banner option codes necessitates a restriction of graduate options to recurring areas of study.

Implementation Considerations.
Oversight over the faculty who participate in a particular option (teaching courses or serving on committees) will be left to the director of the degree program. The Graduate School will verify that all faculty listed on the program plan are associated with the degree program. The director of the degree program is responsible for validating that coursework on the program plan are adequate to satisfy option requirements and that the faculty committee is comprised of appropriate faculty academically qualified to represent the option.

Declaration of an option is not required. The decision to declare an option should be made by the individual student and their faculty committee.

Conversion from an “area of concentration” to an option is not required. Degree programs may contain both areas of concentration and options.
Proposed change to current OSU Policy:
http://oregonstate.edu/ap/curriculum/policies.html#40

Options
Options are for students of a specific major. An option is one of several distinct variants of course aggregations within a major that focus on an area of study designed to provide a student with specialized knowledge, competence, and skills while sharing a minimum core of courses.

Options consist of a minimum of 21 designated quarter credits of related course work, 15 of which must be at the upper-division level.

For an undergraduate option to appear on a student's official academic record and transcript, the student must make application to the Registrar's Office at the same time formal application is made for a degree. The Graduation Audit from the Registrar's Office will list the option as well as the major and degree. This audit is sent to the student's dean for certification of the option at the same time the student is cleared for graduation.

To create, change, or drop an option, departments submit a Category II proposal. Proposals must contain a list of courses as they will appear in the OSU Catalog and documented liaison with all departments involved.

- Courses required for an option may not count towards a minor in the same field of study. Students may not take an option and a minor from the same field of study.
- Options must be approved by all academic units involved.
- Courses may be selected from those offered by the sponsoring unit as well as by other academic units.
- Course substitutions must be approved by the dean of the sponsoring college, who must certify that all requirements are fulfilled.
Proposed change:
Options are for students of a specific major. An option is one of several distinct variants of course aggregations within a major that focus on an area of study designed to provide a student with specialized knowledge, competence, and skills while sharing a minimum core of courses.

An undergraduate option consist of a minimum of 21 designated quarter credits of related coursework, 15 of which must be at the upper-division level. For an undergraduate option to appear on a student's official academic record and transcript, the student must make application to the Registrar's Office at the same time formal application is made for a degree. The Graduation Audit from the Registrar's Office will list the option as well as the major and degree. This audit is sent to the student's dean for certification of the option at the same time the student is cleared for graduation.

A graduate option consists of a minimum of 12 designated quarter credits of related coursework (excluding thesis credits), comprised of coursework offered by the sponsoring unit as well as by other academic units. The option may be comprised of specific courses, completion of a designated number of credits from a longer list of alternative courses, or a combination of specific and alternative course lists. Approved options may be added to a graduate Program of Study, and approved by the faculty advisor(s) and the director of the sponsoring unit. On the Program of Study, there should be no overlap in course credits between options (the same course cannot be used to satisfy credit requirements in multiple options). When the unit submits the final examination card to validate awarding of the major to the Graduate School, the unit will also validate that the requirements of the option have been completed.

To create, change, or drop an option, departments submit a Category II proposal. Proposals must contain a list of courses as they will appear in the OSU Catalog and documented liaison with all departments involved.

- Courses required for an option may not count towards a minor in the same field of study. Students may not take an option and a minor from the same field of study.
- Options must be approved by all academic units involved.
- Courses may be selected from those offered by the sponsoring unit as well as by other academic units.
- Course substitutions must be approved by the dean of the sponsoring college, who must certify that all requirements are fulfilled.
- For graduate options, the category II proposal must also list the graduate faculty and appropriate facilities associated with delivery of the option (necessary facilities and faculty expertise to support the option must be available).
Background.
Table 1 below shows the minimum credit hours for various degree programs at OSU.

Table 1. Minimum Credit Hours for OSU Degree Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>108 beyond UG</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - Proposed

Graduate Area of Concentration:
An area of concentration is a subdivision of a major or minor in which a strong graduate program is available. They may be shown on the student's program of study, but they are not listed on the student's transcript. Areas of concentration are listed in the OSU Catalog.

The Graduate School provides departments instructions for adding/dropping areas of concentration for their graduate major and minor offerings in conjunction with the annual production of the Graduate Catalog. In addition to this annual process, departments may change their areas of concentration at any time without having to do a full curriculum proposal (unless the proposed change would constitute a major shift in the thrust of the program, in which case a more comprehensive curriculum proposal may be required). Any new courses would need to be submitted for approval as Category II proposals.

To change an area of concentration, the graduate department or program should submit a memo to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School specifying:

- the curriculum and faculty associated with the new area,
- how the new area differs from other areas that exist, and
- evidence of appropriate liaison with other programs that may be affected.

If approved by the Graduate School, the changes will appear in the OSU Catalog, and students may use the new area on their programs of study.

Ref: [http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/apaa/academic-programs/curriculum/curricular-policies-and-procedures#90](http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/apaa/academic-programs/curriculum/curricular-policies-and-procedures#90)

Graduate Minor:
A graduate minor is an academic area that clearly supports the major. It consists of a group of related courses totaling at least 15 credits in a specific topical area. On a master's or doctoral program, a minor may be:

- an academic area available only as a minor,
- a different major,
- the same major with a different area of concentration,
- an approved major at another institution in the Oregon University System, or
- an integrated minor. An integrated minor consists of a series of cognate courses from two or more areas. These courses must be outside the major area of concentration, with most
of the courses being outside the major department. The graduate faculty member representing the integrated minor must be from outside the major department.

Although the courses in a graduate minor may be from more than one academic department, one academic unit/program must be responsible for directing the minor. Necessary facilities and faculty expertise to support the minor must be available. For a graduate minor to appear on a student's official academic record and transcript, the minor must be listed on the student's approved degree program.

To create, change, or drop a graduate minor, departments submit a Category II proposal.

To propose a graduate minor, units without an approved graduate major must include in their proposal:

- Identification of the academic unit/program responsible for the minor.
- Listing of a sufficient number of approved and related graduate course offerings to support the minor, at least 15 credits. Please list courses as they will appear in the OSU Catalog.
- Identification of sufficient faculty expertise and facilities to support the minor.
- Liaison with other academic units must be addressed.

Ref: http://oregonstate.edu/ap/curriculum/policies.html#38

Graduate Major.

A graduate major is the area of academic specialization, approved by the State Board of Higher Education, in which the student chooses to qualify for a graduate degree. Upon completion of a graduate degree, the degree awarded and the graduate major are listed on the student's transcript. To create, or change an undergraduate or graduate major or certificate, units must submit a Category I Proposal. An Abbreviated Category I is necessary to do any of the following:

- Rename a major
- Move responsibility for an academic program
- Merge or split an academic unit
- Terminate a degree, certificate, or academic unit
- Suspend or reactivate a degree, certificate, or academic unit

Ref: http://oregonstate.edu/ap/curriculum/policies.html#36