

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

June 2, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Jim Potchen, Chairperson  
Executive Committee of Academic Council

**FR:** Mary Noel, Chairperson, University Graduate Council (UGC)

**RE:** Allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status with no more than 9 credits from each category, except for 12 graduate certificate credits permitted in the College of Education (Proposal 12)

The University Committee on Curriculum (UCC) made and approved a recommendation to Allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status with no more than 9 credits from each category, except for 12 graduate certificate credits permitted in the College of Education. The recommendation was reviewed by the University Graduate Council (UGC) and based on discussions at the UGC May 5, 2008 meeting, and recommendation from the UCC, the UGC submits the following motion for consideration by Academic Council:

### Motion(s) for Academic Council

Allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status with no more than 9 credits from each category, except for 12 graduate certificate credits permitted in the College of Education



## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

### Office of the Dean

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### Rationale

*Academic Programs* states that Master's degrees are composed of a minimum of 30 credits. In order to provide flexibility for students, policies exist that allow students to transfer credit from various entities. Because there is no policy governing the application of credits holistically, it is possible for a student to argue that nine credits should be accepted from another institution, nine credits be accepted from the Graduate Certification level at MSU, and nine credits be accepted from the Lifelong Education level at MSU, for a total of 27 credits accepted and applied toward the completion of a Master's degree. While it is an unlikely scenario, there is no policy in place to disallow the transfer and application of the credits as described. Allowing 27 credits to be transferred and applied to an MSU Master's degree would significantly devalue the reputation of Master's degree programs at MSU.

### Attachments

Proposal and attachments

**Cc:** Gillian Bice, Chairperson, University Committee on Curriculum (UCC)  
Linda Good, Chairperson-Elect, University Committee on Curriculum (UCC)  
Linda O. Stanford, Associate Provost for Academic Services  
Joy Speas, University Curriculum Administrator  
Doug McKenna, Associate Registrar for Certification

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

April 25, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Karen Klomparens, Associate Provost for Graduate Education  
and Dean of The Graduate School

FROM: Gillian Bice, Chairperson, University Committee on Curriculum (UCC)

RE: UCC Comprehensive Proposal – Proposal 12

Allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status.

For Transmittal to the University Graduate Council (UGC)

The request referenced above is being sent to you for action by the University Graduate Council (UGC).

### UGC Response Requested:

Please ask the UGC to consider the request referenced above at its first meeting in Fall 2008. Please mail the related materials referenced under the heading Attachments at the end of this memorandum to the members of the UGC.

The University Committee on Curriculum (UCC) is requesting to allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status. Specifically to:

- Allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status.
  - Rationale:
    - *Academic Programs* states that Master's degrees are composed of a minimum of 30 credits. In order to provide flexibility for students, policies exist that allow students to transfer credit from various entities. Because there is no policy governing the application of credits holistically, it is possible for a student to argue that nine credits should be accepted from another institution, nine credits be accepted from the Graduate Certification level at MSU, and nine credits be accepted from the Lifelong Education level at MSU, for a total of 27 credits accepted and applied toward the completion of a Master's degree. While it is an unlikely scenario, there is no policy in place to disallow the transfer and application of the credits as described. Allowing 27 credits to be transferred and applied to an MSU Master's degree would significantly devalue the reputation of Master's degree programs at MSU.

### UGC Action Required:

Does the UGC approve of the UCC's recommendation to allow a combined maximum of 9 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status?

If you have any questions about this memorandum or the attached materials, please call me at 5-8420.

Thank you for your consideration.

### Attachments:

1. Proposal 12 and attachments

Cc: Dr. Linda O. Stanford, Associate Provost for Academic Services

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UNIVERSITY  
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Proposal 12 - Page 2

**Proposal 12:**

**Allow a combined maximum of 12 credits to be applied to a Master's degree program from transfer courses, Lifelong Education enrollment status, and the Graduate Certificate enrollment status.**

**Current Policy / Practice:**

There is currently no institutional policy addressing the maximum number of credits that can be applied toward a Master's degree program. Individual policies exist or have been proposed that address specific categories such as transfer credit, credit at the Graduate Certification level, and credit at the Lifelong Education level.

**Rationale for Change:**

*Academic Programs* states that Master's degrees are composed of a minimum of 30 credits. In order to provide flexibility for students, policies exist that allow students to transfer credit from various entities. Because there is no policy governing the application of credits holistically, it is possible for a student to argue that nine credits should be accepted from another institution, nine credits be accepted from the Graduate Certification level at MSU, and nine credits be accepted from the Lifelong Education level at MSU, for a total of 27 credits accepted and applied toward the completion of a Master's degree.

While it is an unlikely scenario, there is no policy in place to disallow the transfer and application of the credits as described. Allowing 27 credits to be transferred and applied to an MSU Master's degree would significantly devalue the reputation of Master's degree programs at MSU.

The College of Education addressed this issue with the following policy:

"Students in any master's program in the College of Education may apply a maximum of 12 credits earned through any combination of courses taken through lifelong education, graduate certification, or in transfer from another institution. Each program may determine if courses are appropriate for the master's program and may allow fewer than 12 credits to be applied to the specific master's program." - *Academic Programs*, College of Education, Graduate Study, Requirements for Degree

**Benefits of Adopting the Proposal:**

Adopting the proposal allows for consistent transfer of credit policies to be in place for all Master's degree programs, as well as enhancing the quality and integrity of a MSU Master's degree.

**Impact of the Proposal:**

No negative impact. Department determination of the applicability of credits to Master's degree programs is maintained within a holistic context. The maximum number of credits from each category is stipulated in different policy statements and still applies. Students currently enrolled in either the Lifelong Education level and/or the Graduate Certification level, who have also earned credit at other institutions who are interested in applying to a Master's degree program will know how the credits earned will relate to the Master's degree to which they are applying.

## MASTER'S PROGRAMS

Graduate programs leading to a master's degree are offered by most colleges, departments and schools at Michigan State University. A student's program of study is administered by the officially designated unit and is subject to approval by the dean of the college. Some variations exist in the requirements of the several master's degree programs. It is important, therefore, for the student to become acquainted with all of the applicable University and unit requirements. The following description covers the all-University requirements, and most of the regulations, and will serve as a general guide.

Proposal 6  
\* Proposal 12

### Master's Degrees Granted at Michigan State University and Minimum Credit Requirements

Following is a list of titles of master's degrees granted at Michigan State University.

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Master of Arts                                   | M.A.      |
| Master of Arts for Teachers                      | M.A.T.    |
| Master of Business Administration                | M.B.A.    |
| Master of Fine Arts                              | M.F.A.    |
| Master of International Planning Studies         | M.I.P.S.  |
| Master of Human Resources<br>and Labor Relations | M.H.R.L.  |
| Master of Music                                  | M.Mus.    |
| Master of Science in Nursing                     | M.S.N.    |
| Master of Public Policy                          | M.P.P.    |
| Master of Science                                | M.S.      |
| Master of Social Work                            | M.S.W. I  |
| Master of Social Work                            | M.S.W. II |
| Master in Urban and Regional Planning            | M.U.R.P.  |

### Credit Requirements

The minimum number of credits required for a master's degree program is 30 beyond the bachelor's degree. Some programs, however, have higher minimum credit requirements. See the specific program sections in this publication.

Specific approved  
different

### Residence

A minimum of 6 credits in the degree program must be earned in residence on campus, but many programs require more. Requests for waivers of this requirement must be submitted by the department or school responsible for the degree program to the appropriate college and then to the Dean of The Graduate School.

Certain off-campus and online master's programs do not require the minimum residence. Contact the department, school, or college offering a specific program for additional information.

### Planning a Master's Program and the Appointment of an Academic Adviser

An academic adviser for each student is assigned by the responsible unit in which the student takes the major work. The adviser alone, or in consultation with the student's advisory committee, will assist the student in planning a program satisfactory to the needs of the student and acceptable to the responsible unit.

Changes in program plans may be made only with the approval of both the adviser and the responsible unit administrator, and, in some cases, the dean of the college.

### Programs of Study

Two types of programs are available:

**Plan A** consisting of prescribed course work, research, thesis, and a final oral examination.

**Plan B** consisting of prescribed course work, without a thesis, and with a final examination or evaluation.

Some colleges, departments, and schools offer programs only under Plan A or only under Plan B. Unless such limitation is explicitly stated in the catalog description of a program, both Plan A and Plan B are available.

### Course Work

Courses taken toward a master's degree should fit into a unified plan aimed at providing the student with both a comprehensive background and a depth of understanding in a major field. The number of course credits required in a major area is determined by each responsible unit. Some programs require a minor. Whether a minor area of study is required, optional, or not accepted toward a degree depends on the student's major program. In any case, the detailed course requirements are left to the judgment of the academic adviser and/or committee subject to the approval of the responsible unit administrator and the dean of the college. *More than half of the credits of the total required for a master's degree must be taken in courses at the 800 and 900 levels except as specifically exempted by the dean of the college.*

### Research and Thesis Plan A

A minimum of 4 credits in master's thesis research (course number 899) is required; some programs require more. The thesis, an abstract of the thesis, and an abstract title page must be prepared in accordance with the specifications in *The Formatting Guide-Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations*, a handbook that is available, along with a packet of required forms relating to the thesis, from the Graduate School or from [www.grad.msu.edu](http://www.grad.msu.edu).

After the thesis adviser—and, if required by unit bylaws, members of the guidance or examination committee—indicate(s) that the thesis is acceptable for examination within the time frame determined by the department the semester in which graduation is anticipated, the student must submit copies of the thesis and abstract for distribution to the thesis adviser and other examiners. The thesis must be in completed form, with finished diagrams, etc. It must not, however, be bound. The oral examination in defense of the thesis must be scheduled within the time frame determined by the department the semester in which graduation is anticipated. After the examiners have reviewed and approved the thesis and voted to pass the student on the final oral examination in its defense, the student must incorporate into the thesis any recommended change(s) and corrections before presenting it to the thesis adviser for final review and signature of the bookplate. *Not later than the deadline date indicated by The Graduate School the semester in which graduation is expected*, the student must submit to the Graduate School a final unbound copy of the thesis, an additional copy of the abstract and the abstract title page, the signed bookplate, the microfilming and binding contract, and other forms required by and available from The Graduate School ([grad.msu.edu/current/packet.htm](http://grad.msu.edu/current/packet.htm)). Some departments, schools, or colleges require additional copies of the

thesis, and it is the student's responsibility to provide such copies to them. In some colleges the master's thesis is first approved in the dean's office before the student submits it to The Graduate School for microfilming and binding.

All master's theses submitted to the Graduate School must be microfilmed. Michigan State University subscribes to the service offered by University Microfilms. One microfilm copy will be deposited in the University Library and will be available for interlibrary loan. The abstract will be published in *Master's Abstracts*, which will announce the availability of the thesis in film form. The microfilming and binding fee required of all master's students submitting theses, will cover the cost of the library microfilm copy, binding, and the publication and distribution of the abstract. The student may order additional bound copies for the department, the thesis director, or others through University Microfilms, or may make other arrangements for obtaining additional bound copies. The microfilming and binding contract, a list of local binderies, and further information may be obtained from the Graduate School.

An extra fee is charged if the thesis is to be copyrighted. Information about the amount of this fee and method of payment may be obtained from the Graduate School. Microfilming is considered by the University to be a form of publication. Publication by microfilm, however, does not preclude the printing of the thesis in whole or in part in a journal or monograph.

Refer to *Costs* in the *General Information, Policies, Procedures and Regulations* section of this catalog for more information.

### Examinations

Students in a Plan A master's degree program are required to pass an oral examination in defense of the thesis. However, students in certain programs are required to pass an oral examination that covers both a defense of the thesis and course work. *This examination must be scheduled within the time frame determined by the department the semester in which graduation is anticipated.* The examination for a Plan A master's degree is administered by an examining committee consisting of at least three Michigan State University regular faculty members (as defined in the *Faculty Handbook*.

"The 'regular faculty' of Michigan State University shall consist of all persons appointed under the rules of tenure and holding the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor, and persons appointed as librarians. In addition, the principal administrative officer of each major educational and research unit of the University shall be a member of the 'regular faculty.'"

An exception may be granted by the Dean of The Graduate School to allow a non-tenure stream faculty member or an Academic Specialist to serve on a master's student's examination committee as one of the three required faculty members or as the chairperson of a master's student's examination committee or as the thesis adviser. With the approval of the chairperson or director of the department or school, an exception may be granted to allow an Emeritus faculty member to serve as one of the three required faculty members on a master's student's examination committee; in addition, an Emeritus faculty member may continue to serve as the chairperson of an examination committee. At the discretion of the examining committee, the presentation and defense of the thesis may be open to members of the academic community. The thesis and the student's performance on the oral examination must be approved by a majority vote of the examining committee.

A final examination or evaluation is required for students in a Plan B master's degree program with the following exceptions: the Plan B programs of study that lead to the Master of Business Administration degree, the Master of Labor Relations and Human Resources degree, the Master of Social Work degree, and the Accounting degree. The examination or evaluation is adminis-

tered in accordance with department or school and college rules by a committee consisting of at least two Michigan State University regular faculty members (as defined in the *Faculty Handbook*.

The 'regular faculty' of Michigan State University shall consist of all persons appointed under the rules of tenure and holding the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor, and persons appointed as librarians. In addition, the principal administrative officer of each major educational and research unit of the University shall be a member of the 'regular faculty.'

An exception may be granted by the Dean of The Graduate School to allow a non-tenure stream faculty member or an Academic Specialist to serve on a master's student's committee as one of the two required faculty members or as the chairperson of a master's student's committee. With the approval of the chairperson or director of the department or school, an exception may be granted to allow an Emeritus faculty member to serve as one of the two required faculty members on a master's student's committee; in addition, an Emeritus faculty member may continue to serve as a chairperson of a committee. In the event of significant discrepancy between the two assessments, the unit chair or coordinator would arrange for a third assessment to break the tie. The content and format of the examination or evaluation are specified by the department or school and college.

For both Plan A and Plan B, the student must be registered during the semester in which the examination or evaluation is administered (see *Maximum and Minimum Credits*). This requirement may be waived by the Dean of The Graduate School upon request of the chair or director of the academic unit, if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered.

### Academic Standards

Michigan State University is committed to high academic standards and expects all graduate students to excel in their particular majors.

A 3.00 cumulative grade-point average for all courses counting toward the master's degree is the minimum University standard; however, colleges, departments, or schools may establish a higher minimum standard.

Each college and department or school determines whether the minimum standards must be attained at the completion of a certain number of credits or by a specified interval after the student's first enrollment in the degree program. Some colleges, departments, and schools will not permit a student to remain in a program if there is an accumulation of more than a specified number of graduate credits with lower than a 3.0 grade even though the cumulative grade-point average is 3.00. A student who fails to meet the standards set by the University, college, and department or school will not be permitted to continue to enroll in the degree program, and appropriate action will be taken by the college, department, or school.

### Transfer Credits

As many as 9 semester credits of graduate course work (excluding research and thesis credits) may be transferred into a 30 credit master's degree program from other accredited institutions or international institutions of similar quality, if they are appropriate to a student's program and provided they were completed within the time limits approved for the earning of the degree desired at Michigan State University. The department or school chairperson or director and dean must grant approval. Only courses in which at least a 3.0 grade or its equivalent was re-

ceived will be considered for transfer. Exceptions to this policy (at least a 2.0 grade) have been granted for the dual degree programs between MSU and the Michigan State University College of Law.

Some colleges with programs that require more than 30 credits for the degree may accept more than 9 credits in transfer, but not more than one-fourth of the total number of credits required for the master's degree may be accepted in transfer.

See *Credits in the General Information, Policies, Procedures and Regulations* section of this catalog for additional information.

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#### Off-Campus Work

Credit for courses taken at Michigan State University off-campus instructional centers is of equal value to credit for on-campus courses. However, for the master's degree at least 6 credits must be earned in residence on the East Lansing campus or at approved Michigan State University instructional sites (e.g. Dubai), although some programs may require more. A student who plans to take off-campus courses should discuss the possibilities of acceptance of such work toward the degree with the academic adviser, department or school chairperson or director, or dean. Such approval should be obtained before enrolling in an off-campus course, just as is done for an on-campus course.

#### Online Learning

The University offers selected degree programs (primarily, professional master's degree programs), certificate programs, and individual courses online. All University regulations, policies, and procedures described in this catalog that apply to on-campus programs also apply to online programs, unless specified otherwise.

MSU courses offered online are considered on-campus courses. Applicability of specific online MSU courses is determined by the requirements of specific programs.

For more information about online learning, visit the Web at [www.online-continued.msu.edu/](http://www.online-continued.msu.edu/).

#### Time Limit

Unless otherwise specified, the time limit for the completion of the requirements for the master's degree is five calendar years from the date of enrollment in the first course included for degree certification. The colleges of Arts and Letters, Human Medicine, Natural Science, Nursing, Osteopathic Medicine, Social Science, and Veterinary Medicine permit six years with the following exception: the time limit for the completion of the Master of Fine Arts degree in the College of Arts and Letters is nine years.

Michigan State University must reserve the right to modify or eliminate programs that are described in this publication. In the event such an action is taken, students affected will be advised by their units of the options available to them to complete their degrees. Every reasonable effort will be made to permit students to complete these programs or similar programs.

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR A SECOND, JOINT, OR DUAL MASTER'S DEGREE

A candidate for a second master's degree, or for joint or dual master's degrees, from Michigan State University may request the application of up to 9 credits, appropriate to both programs, from the first master's degree program to the second or from one master's program to another. These 9 credits must have been earned within the time limitations of the college concerned. Credits used to satisfy the requirements of one master's degree may not be used to satisfy the residency requirements of another master's degree.



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Students in any master's program may apply a maximum of 12 credits earned through any combination of courses taken through lifelong education, graduate certification, or in transfer from another institution with no more than 9 credits from each category, with the exception for students in the College of Education who may apply 12 credits from the graduate certification enrollment status. Each program may determine if courses are appropriate and may allow fewer than 12 credits to be applied to the specific master's program.

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### REQUIREMENTS FOR A JOINT MASTER'S DEGREE AND MEDICAL DEGREE

A student who is enrolled in a graduate-professional program in MSU's College of Human, Osteopathic, or Veterinary Medicine, and who is also enrolled in a master's degree program at Michigan State University may request the application of up to 9 credits, appropriate to both programs, from the graduate-professional program to the master's degree program, as well. These credits must have been earned within the time limit for completing the master's degree program in which the student is enrolled.

### EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST PROGRAM

For information about the Educational Specialist program, refer to the *Educational Specialist* statement in the College of Education section of this catalog.

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**REQUIREMENTS FOR A LINKED BACHELOR'S - MASTER'S DEGREE**

A candidate for a Linked Bachelor's - Master's Degree from Michigan State University may request the application of up to 9 credits toward the master's program for qualifying 400-level and above course work taken at the undergraduate level at Michigan State University or an external accredited institution. The number of approved credits, not to exceed 9, are applied toward the credit requirement of the master's degree. Credits applied to the Linked Bachelor's - Master's Program are not eligible to be applied to any other graduate degree program.