

**Combined Bachelor's to Master's Programs (4+1) that Allow for Fewer Hours**

Revised 7/3/2019

**Background:**

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) has standards and procedures for academic program approval that are pursuant to 3333-1.04 (bachelor degrees) and 3333-1.07 (graduate degrees) of the Ohio Administrative Code for Ohio's public universities and 3333-1.08 of the Ohio Administrative Code for Ohio's independent universities. These standards and procedures are described in the Ohio Department of Education Guidelines and Procedures for Academic Program Review.

Specific to questions surrounding the overlap of hours between bachelor-level programs and master-level programs, ODHE expects that undergraduate bachelor-level degrees have at least 120 semester hours of credit (or the equivalent of 4 years of credit-level activity). Master's level programs should be at least 30 hours beyond the bachelor-level program. The total combined minimum number of hours for both degrees, under these definitions, would be 150 semester hours for a bachelor's to master's program.

The Chancellor's Council of Graduate Studies (CCGS) has proposed that ODHE allow up to 9 hours of master's level hours to count toward the bachelor's degree. This would allow for well-prepared students to have a less expensive education pathway that includes both a bachelor's and a master's degree. After review, ODHE staff developed a process for exception to the expectation of a minimum of 150 unique hours for a combined bachelor's to master's degree.

In order for an institution to allow the overlap of 9 hours between the two programs, the following should apply:

- The combining of the bachelor's program with a master's program must be approved at all appropriate stages at the institution (e.g., department, college, and university curriculum committees, for both undergraduate and graduate curricula, + provost) and by ODHE.
- Only exceptionally well-prepared students are admitted to the program.
- The total number of hours counted toward the master's degree  $\geq 30$ .
- All hours counted toward the master's degree are at the graduate level.
- The total number of unique hours required for the completed bachelor's + master's degree is  $\geq 141$  hours.
- The student is charged undergraduate tuition and fees for no less than 120 credit hours.

**Process for Exceptions:**

In order to be provided with an exception that allows the master's program hours to be counted toward the bachelor's level program, the undergraduate program should work through the provost's office to apply for and receive acknowledgement from ODHE that the undergraduate institution has met the following expectations:

1. Both the bachelor's level program and the master's level program have been approved by ODHE and the Higher Learning Commission.

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2. Confirmed that no more than 9 hours of the undergraduate program will be made up of courses in the master's program.
3. Identified how the undergraduate department within the institution will ensure students meet the program outcomes for the undergraduate degree that they will be receiving once they have completed the credits from the undergraduate program and the credits from the master's program.
4. Ensured documentation and advising for students is clear and transparent.
5. Ensure a pathway is in place for students who wish to leave the program with only a bachelor's degree before finishing graduate level work.
6. Identified how the institution will monitor student success in the program.
7. Described how the institution is ensuring that students pay undergraduate tuition throughout the undergraduate degree (including the 9 hours of graduate level coursework).
8. Agreed to submit annual reports on the scope of the program and student success.

Upon meeting the expectations above, the ODHE will submit a letter to the institution indicating they meet the exception for the combined bachelor's and master's program.



TO: College Associate Deans for Graduate Education  
 FROM: Therese E. Tillett, Associate Vice President  
 Curriculum Planning and Administration  
 SUBJECT: Combined bachelor's/master's degree programs  
 DATE: 18 September 2019

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In July 2019, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) revised the policy regarding the allowance of applying graduate-level coursework toward both a bachelor's and master's degrees for students declared in a combined degree program (i.e. double counting graduate credit).

Previously, the ODHE allowed the double-counting of graduate credit only after a student completed a minimum of 150 unique credit hours (120 for the bachelor's degree and 30 credit hours for the master's degree). With that previous policy, there could be no double-counting of credit if the master's degree was 30 credit hours.

The revised policy permits an exception to the 150-unique-hours policy, allowing a maximum of 9 credit hours of graduate coursework to double count in a combined degree program with the following stipulations:

- The combined bachelor's/master's degree is approved by all appropriate bodies at the university (e.g., department, college, university undergraduate/graduate curriculum committees, provost) and by the ODHE.
- Only exceptionally well-prepared students are admitted to the program.
- Total number of credit hours counted toward the master's degree is minimum 30.
- All credit hours counted toward the master's degree are at the graduate level.
- Total number of unique credit hours required for the combined bachelor's/master's is minimum 141.
- The student is charged undergraduate tuition and fees for no fewer than 120 credit hours.
- The university will submit to the ODHE an annual report on the scope of the program and student success.

Under this revised policy, we will need to seek ODHE approval for any combined degree program where unique credit hours total is between 141 and 149 (see tables on next page). We will *not* need to seek ODHE approval for combined degree programs that are or more than 150 unique credit hours.

### **Office of Curriculum Services**

Table 1: Example of policy in practice for combined degree programs:

Master's degree total credit hours	Maximum credit hours for double counting	Total unique credit hours	ODHE approval needed?
30-38	9	141-149	Yes
39+	9	150+	No
42+	12	150+	No


Table 2: Examples of actual/potential Kent State combined degree programs:

Combined Programs	Maximum credit hours for double counting	ODHE approval needed?
B.S. Applied Engineering (120) + M.E.T. Engineering Technology (30)	9	Yes
B.B.A. Business Management (120) + M.B.A. Business Administration (30-37)	9	Yes
B.S. Fashion Merchandising (120) + M.F.I.S. Fashion Industry Studies (30)	9	Yes
B.S. Speech Pathology and Audiology (120) + M.A. Speech Language Pathology (43)	12	No
B.A. Studio Art (120) + M.A.T. Secondary Education (43)	12	No
B.S.P.H. Public Health (120) + M.P.H. Public Health (46)	12	No

For any program area that wishes to establish a combined degree program that will need the 150-unique-hours policy exception, please have the faculty complete the ODHE Combined Bachelor's/Master's Degree Program Request Form. The form should go through the regular curriculum review/approval process within the department, school and/or college. From there, it will go to EPC as a lesser action item and on to ODHE for approval.

I'm here to assist with any questions.

Best,





Department of  
Higher Education

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Randy Gardner, Chancellor

## Combined Bachelor's/Master's Degree Program Request Form

Date of submission: [DATE]

Name of institution: Kent State University

### Primary institutional contact for the request

**Name:** Therese E. Tillett  
**Title:** Associate Vice President, Curriculum Planning and Administration  
Office of the Provost  
**Phone:** 330-672-8558  
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Name of bachelor's degree program: [DEGREE] in [MAJOR] (e.g., B.A. in English)

Name of master's degree program: [DEGREE] in [MAJOR] (e.g., M.A. in English)

Proposed implementation date: Fall 2020

1. Identify the total number of credit hours in the undergraduate and master's programs combined.
2. Describe how the university will ensure that students meet the expected baccalaureate program outcomes before the bachelor's degree is awarded.
3. Describe how students are informed of this combined degree program. Include in the answer how students are advised regarding opportunities and challenges associated with the option.

4. Describe the options available for students who wish to leave the program with a bachelor's degree before finishing the graduate-level work.
  
5. Describe how the institution ensures that students will pay undergraduate tuition throughout the completion of the undergraduate degree.

Per [Kent State policy](#), students in a combined bachelor's/master's degree program are classified as undergraduate until the bachelor's degree is awarded. Kent State's tuition rate is assigned to the student's level, and not at the course level. Therefore, undergraduate students taking graduate courses will be charged the undergraduate tuition rate.

***Attach to this document a listing of the graduate courses in the master's degree program that will apply toward the bachelor's degree program and explain the requirements they will satisfy in the bachelor's degree.***

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Kent State University agrees to monitor the success of the program and will submit an annual report to Ohio Department of Higher Education on the scope of the program and student success.

Kent State University verifies that the information in this request is truthful and accurate.

Respectfully,

*Signed after the request goes to EPC*

Melody J. Tankersley, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost (Interim)  
Kent State University