

## **Fairmont State University**

### **Academic Policy: Accelerated Master's Program (4+1)**

**Date of Current Revision: April 2024**

**Primary Responsible Officer: Dean, of Graduate Studies**

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#### **Purpose**

Accelerated master's degree programs at Fairmont State University allow exceptionally well-qualified undergraduates to pursue both a bachelor's and a master's degree in a reduced time frame without compromising educational quality and rigor. Students should consult with advisors early in their program to determine eligibility and ensure optimal degree planning.

#### **Admission Requirements**

**Eligibility:** Only currently enrolled Fairmont State students may be considered for regular admission into an accelerated master's program. All programs must adhere to a baseline admission requirement, including a minimum overall undergraduate GPA of 3.30 and a 3.30 GPA in the major at the time of application. Individual programs may set additional admission requirements as needed.

Undergraduate students must have completed a minimum of 72 credit hours in their bachelor's program to apply. Transfer students must complete at least 24 credit hours as degree-seeking students at Fairmont State before applying. These 24 credit hours should include upper-division coursework relevant to the graduate program.

Accelerated programs are not available to students seeking a second or subsequent bachelor's degree unless approved by the Graduate Program Director and Dean of Graduate Studies.

**Application Process:** Undergraduate students must complete a separate application for admission to the accelerated master's program. The application fee will be waived. Programs must clearly specify any additional requirements, such as standardized test scores (e.g., GRE, GMAT) or professional references. If such requirements differ from those for regular admission, they should be explicitly stated in the program's materials.

#### **Student Status**

Accelerated students will remain classified as undergraduates until they have completed all undergraduate degree requirements and are awarded their bachelor's degree. They will not be classified as new graduate students for retention calculations but will be considered continuing graduate students for headcount purposes. A clear transition process will be established to outline steps for changing student status from undergraduate to graduate.

## **Curriculum Guidelines**

### ***Credit Hour Requirements***

1. To earn a bachelor's degree, students must complete a minimum of 120 credit hours that count toward the undergraduate degree, and a minimum of 30 additional graduate credit hours to also earn a master's degree.
2. Up to 12 credit hours of graduate coursework may count toward both undergraduate and graduate degrees, subject to the following conditions:
  - a. Graduate courses must be relevant to both programs and approved by the program coordinators.
  - b. Graduate courses are typically taken during student's senior year, with up to 6 credit hours each semester double-counted.
  - c. Only courses completed with a grade of 'B' or above may fulfill both undergraduate and graduate requirements.
  - d. Undergraduate courses will not count towards graduate degrees.

### ***Graduate Coursework***

1. All graduate courses must be numbered 500 or above.
2. Students may not continue taking graduate courses beyond the approved double-counted credits until they have satisfactorily completed their undergraduate degree, all graduate admission requirements, and the graduate program has moved to their primary degree program.

### ***Advising and Support***

1. Each accelerated program will designate a primary advisor or coordinator (e.g., Graduate Program Coordinator) responsible for advising students on course selection, dual requirements, and transition processes.
2. As part of its degree-audit process, when certifying students have met all master's degree requirements, the Graduate Program Director will verify that a minimum of 30 graduate-level credits have been successfully completed by the student while maintaining good academic standing.

### **Financial Aid and Tuition**

**Financial Aid Eligibility:** Accelerated students who take graduate courses to fulfill undergraduate degree requirements will be eligible for financial aid as undergraduates. Once students complete their bachelor's degree and their graduate program becomes

their primary program, they will be classified as graduate students for financial aid purposes. Students are advised not to proceed with additional graduate courses beyond the approved double-counted courses until they complete all undergraduate degree requirements to maximize financial aid benefits.

**Tuition Rates:** Undergraduate students electing to take graduate courses (numbered 500 and above) will be assessed at the undergraduate tuition rate without a graduate surcharge while still pursuing their undergraduate degree. Graduate tuition rates will be applied once the graduate program becomes the primary degree.

### **Minimum GPA requirements and continued eligibility**

Accelerated students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (or higher, if specified by program) in both their undergraduate and graduate courses. Grades for courses counted toward both the bachelor's and master's degree requirements will be factored into both GPAs to determine satisfactory academic standing.

### **Withdrawal from Accelerated Master's Degree**

A student may withdraw at any time from an approved Accelerated Master's Degree program by informing the Undergraduate Advisor, the Graduate Program Director, and the Dean of the Graduate Studies in writing. A student's status will then revert to the standard undergraduate degree program. Any graduate hours earned must be approved for use in fulfillment of bachelor's degree requirements by the student's advisor and College Dean.

### **Graduation timing**

Accelerated students can apply for each degree credential as soon as the respective degree requirements have been completed. If a student is unable to complete the graduate degree, they remain eligible to complete their undergraduate degree requirements and obtain their bachelor's degree.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

Undergraduate students in accelerated programs are not eligible for graduate assistantships until they transition to full-time graduate status. Alternative opportunities for undergraduate scholarships, research, or academic involvement should be communicated to students during their undergraduate years."

### **Accelerated Master's Degree Proposals and Approval Process**

**Proposal Submission:** Academic departments proposing an accelerated program must submit a curriculum proposal to the Dean of Graduate Studies that includes a rationale, admission requirements, curriculum requirements, program administration and catalog entry information.

**Approval Process:** Proposals must be reviewed and recommended by the academic department, college dean, and graduate program directors whose endorsement is essential in the proposal moving forward. Additional approval is required from the Office of Administrative and Fiscal Affairs. Final approval resides with the Graduate Council and the Dean of Graduate Studies. A timeline and checklist will be provided to guide departments through the proposal and approval process.

## Accelerated Master's Degree Proposal

Program Title: Accelerated Master's Program in \_\_\_\_\_

College: \_\_\_\_\_

Department (list both is two are involved): \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal Preparer: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Implementation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Approval Signatures

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department chair Signature Date

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College Dean or Graduate Program Director Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Financial Officer Signature Date

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Dean Graduate Studies Signature Date

**A. Program Description**

1. Program full name as it will appear in the catalog:	
2. Existing undergraduate program and major code:	
3. Existing master's program and major code:	
4. <b>Catalog Description:</b> Describe the nature of the program (up to 150 words)	

- B. Rationale:** The Proposal should identify the rationale or need an accelerated degree program. If the undergraduate and graduate programs are in different departments, clarify how they are appropriate for the A.
- C. Admission Requirements:** The proposal should state whether admission requirements for the AMD differ from regular program admission requirements (e.g., completion of certain prerequisites, test scores, letter of recommendation, etc.).
- D. Accelerated Master's Program Credits:** Specify the maximum number of credits (up to 12) that a student may apply toward fulfilling the requirements for both the bachelor's and master's degrees. Additionally, provide a list of courses that students can take while still classified as undergraduates that will count toward both their undergraduate and graduate degree requirements.
- E. Program Curriculum:** Students in the AMP must meet all requirements for both degrees. Attach the accelerated academic program plan (e.g., 5-year model schedule)
- F. Program Administration:** The proposal should clearly specify:
- a. The individual, position, or committee responsible for making admissions decision at the application stage.
  - b. The primary advisor or coordinator for students in the accelerated master's program.
  - c. The procedures for monitoring student academic progress and continued eligibility.
  - d. The individual or position responsible for overseeing curriculum matters specific to the accelerated master's program.