Policy for the Establishment of Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs[1,2]

Developed and approved by GC: November 29, 2023

1. Each program at UCM can provisionally admit incoming students to an Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Program (HDP) at any time. HDP is the official language used by the UC Compendium for coupled degree programs that allow students to complete undergraduate and graduate programs simultaneously. HDP do not necessarily reflect programs characterized by blended instructional modalities. Likewise, HDP differ from Dual Degree programs and Joint Degree Programs which are programs offered in collaboration with other institutions that lead to the award of separate and single degrees, respectively. Admission criteria to the HDP must be established by each program and then approved by the Graduate Council. In general, these criteria should exceed the normal admission requirements set by the specific program. UCM programs proposing a HDP must communicate the program's requirements to the Admissions Office and offer eligible students consultation on the HDP.

2. Admitted students maintain their provisional enrollment in the HDP if their cumulative GPA exceeds at least 3.3. A program may set its minimum GPA level for eligibility to their HDP higher than 3.3. If students fail to maintain the minimum GPA standard, they are disenrolled from the HDP but are eligible to re-enroll if their cumulative GPA subsequently exceeds this minimum level for two consecutive semesters. The same condition would be applied to all new enrollments requested after freshman entry, including transfer students.

3. A student, who is provisionally enrolled and in good standing in their HDP programs, will transition to full enrollment at the start of the first semester by which they have completed 48 units or more of coursework towards their Bachelor's degree.

4. HDP students must fulfill all the requirements set for their undergraduate degree programs at UCM without any modifications, except as specified in this policy regarding the counting of graduate level units toward their undergraduate degree. In particular, the HDP students must meet the specific program requirements set for the number of total units and for units within the major. HDP students would automatically become graduate students after receiving a Bachelor's degree.

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[1] Adapted from UC Riverside's Policy: https://ucmerced.box.com/s/4zu5ddroehrmcj97670u1cvb5bo4q5l6.

[2] Terminology: The term "Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs" is the official language used for these programs in the UC Compendium. To be consistent with the compendium this official UC language was adopted in this policy. In the day-to-day use the term "Hybrid" may be substituted with terms like "4+1", "Blended", "Coupled", "Merged", "Tandem", or other terms of synonymous meaning.

5. HDP programs allow for up to 12 units of graduate level coursework to count toward their undergraduate degree requirements.[3] Each HDP program sets its upper limit of graduate level units which can be counted towards the Bachelor's degree, but the upper limit should not exceed 12 units, unless otherwise approved by exception by the Graduate Council (GC). This number of units that can be so counted may further be limited as follows.

    - Each HDP must establish a minimum threshold of upper division major units taken beyond which the counting of graduate units toward both the undergraduate and graduate degree becomes an option.
    - Each HDP can also specify that only a subset of the upper-division courses in the major are eligible for substitution by graduate courses that can be counted toward the Bachelor's degree.

    In determining these limits, programs are to consider which skills and knowledge provided at the upper division undergraduate level are essential and potentially not obtained through graduate level courses.

6. The graduate level courses counted for the undergraduate degree and the graduate degree may not be applied in any manner to reduce the following requirements:

    - General education requirements
    - Lower division requirements

7. Each HDP program must specify the requirements for obtaining the graduate level degree, in accordance with the policy for establishing stand-alone graduate degree programs.

8. In their proposal to establish an HDP, programs must address the financial impacts to their students. They must (a) address student loan impact, (b) if available provide data from comparison programs, and (c) outline measures to attain borrowing levels and repayment rates that meet UC Merced standards.[4]

9. Proposals to establish an HDP must carefully address the resource requirements. Points to pay particular attention to include:

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[3] While some UC schools limit the number of units of undergraduate level coursework that are double counted toward the Master's degree, the policy here is distinct in that it limits the number of graduate level units that may be doubled counted toward the undergraduate degree.

[4] At the time this policy was developed, UC Merced does not have standards for borrowing levels and repayment rates. Policies may be developed by the Senate and administration. However, should a HDP be proposed prior to the development of such standards, proposers should demonstrate reasonable effort to meet this criterion.

a) Proposals require a statement on the financial impact of their program on university public goods (e.g., Library).

b) Proposals to establish an HDP that involve a thesis track (Plan I Masters) should address the impacts the program would have on research infrastructure.

c) Proposals to establish an HDP should discuss if Teaching Assistants are anticipated to be required for delivering the graduate courses in which HDP students may enroll in accordance with the policy on graduate students teaching graduate students.

10. Proposals for an HDP in collaboration with another institution (e.g. other UC campus or CSU campus) need to also consider guidelines for Dual Degree Programs or Joint Degree programs as provided in the CCGA Handbook.