

Guidelines for Multidisciplinary Graduate and Graduate Professional Studies at Case Western Reserve University

Preamble:

This document expands and replaces the “**General Policy Concerning Joint Programs at Case Western Reserve University**” approved by the Faculty Senate April, 2001. All programs approved or being considered under the former document shall have the same status under this document.

I. Purposes

Multidisciplinary studies have as their goal the education of individuals who can make contributions to academic disciplines or professional endeavors that would be less likely to be accomplished by individuals with a background in a single discipline. Departments or faculty members may design a **joint degree** program, which will generally result in two degrees, or a **multidisciplinary degree**, which will generally result in a single degree which has a broader perspective than similar existing degrees. Such programs should meet challenges of new interdisciplinary knowledge and/or developments requiring new combinations of talent. In addition, such programs or degrees should enhance and not duplicate existing programs in the University. Individual students with specific multidisciplinary interests that desire to pursue them at Case Western Reserve University and faculty members who wish to run pilots for joint degree programs or multidisciplinary degrees are encouraged to do so, even if no official joint or multidisciplinary degree program currently exists by organizing an **individual joint degree** or an **individual multidisciplinary degree**. Such degrees require faculty and departmental support. Guidance for the design and approval of both such programs and such individual degrees is given below.

II. Organization

A. Joint degree programs or multidisciplinary degree programs may be organized by the faculties, department chairs, and deans of individual Schools, Schools working in concert within the University, or by a School or Schools of the University in concert with another institution. Joint degree programs and multidisciplinary degrees, if they involve significant inter-school or inter-institution interaction, shall be approved through a petition to the Faculty Senate Graduate Committee. If any degree to be granted has not been previously authorized by the Board of Trustees and the Ohio Board of Regents, then the information required to seek approval from the Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents must be included in the petition and the approval of both must be sought while implementing the program and prior to awarding the new degree. (see VII. Petition and Approvals.)¹

B. Individual multidisciplinary or joint degrees may be organized by current, admitted, or prospective students, in concert with one or more faculty advisors who must be active in two or

¹ Here and throughout these guidelines for multidisciplinary study, paragraphs starting with “A” provide guidance most directed to joint or multidisciplinary **programs** while paragraphs starting with “B” provide guidance most directed to **individual** joint or multidisciplinary degrees.

more departments, with the consent of chairpersons of the appropriate departments. Individual degrees are recommended if minimal demand is expected, or as a pilot program, and are reviewed on a one-by-one basis through a petition to the Graduate Dean. (see VII. Petition and Approvals.)

III. Structure

Joint degree programs will typically result in two degrees. Multidisciplinary degree programs will typically result in a single degree. Both may be either “side-by-side” or “integrated” (see A1 and A2 below). The total length of time required to complete the joint program should typically be less than that required for two individual programs. The student experience in both “side-by-side” and “integrated” joint programs should be demonstrably greater than the sum of the experiences of the two programs at the core of the joint degree program.

A1. "Side-by-side" programs are composed of existing elements of ongoing programs provided by faculty usually engaged in these efforts. The existing program is to be supplemented by some kind of integrative experience designed to make the "joint" or interdisciplinary character of the program explicit.

A2. "Integrated" programs undertake to integrate the material of the constituent programs throughout course offerings and required experience. Such a program is to be conducted by a faculty dedicated to this purpose.

B. Individual multidisciplinary or joint degrees shall include courses from two or more different approved degree programs. One such degree program should be designated the “registration department.” One degree sought must be from the registration department. The students, faculty advisors, and chairperson(s) of the department(s) which grant the relevant degrees must all agree that the course of study is consistent with generally accepted standards for granting the proposed degree(s).

IV. Credit, Shared Credit, Requirements

Multidisciplinary or joint degrees may allocate credits for courses in the degree towards either or both degrees as is deemed appropriate. Normal rules, as established by faculties, for advanced standing shall also apply. Credits may be allocated from and to professional and graduate programs.

A. Multidisciplinary or joint degree programs shall have such requirements as the faculty deem appropriate during the approval process.

B. For individual joint or multidisciplinary degrees, requirements such as the number of courses, credit hours, qualifiers, etcetera should be substantially similar to those for other students seeking the proposed degree or degrees. If two degrees are sought, there should be significant effort specific to each degree.

V. Student Support

A. Students in joint programs often find themselves "between schools," not feeling a part of one program or another. Measures to ameliorate these difficulties should include, but are not limited to, a strong advisor system, a physical home base, staff dedicated to the program, an easily accessible administrator, and an ongoing system of regular contact between the advisors and student outside of class activities. Some other devices that might be considered are: regularly scheduled luncheon seminars to be attended by all program students, joint work experiences, partnering of beginning and experienced students, regular e-mail correspondence, use of "blackboard" chat rooms (or some similar device). For joint programs, the responsibility for registrar, admissions processing, financial aid, academic discipline and other student services must be specified.

B. In the case of an individual multidisciplinary or joint degree, the devices in (A) above should be considered and such devices, at least, should include meetings of the student with both their faculty advisors, at least twice annually. In addition, each faculty advisor and chairman involved in an individual multidisciplinary degree shall provide support for the student, including advising, mail-boxes, office, and laboratory space similar to those provided to students who are getting each single degree. However, all parties may agree in the petition that certain physical resources need be supplied only by one department. The department designated the "registration department" in the petition and the advisor in that department shall have primary responsibility for the student.

VI. Resources

If the joint or multidisciplinary degree involves more than one school of the university then an agreement should be included in the petition concerning the sharing of tuition revenue between the sponsoring programs. This agreement should also specify the student's responsibility for tuition to accomplish the program. It is important when both professional and graduate schools are involved to specify what tuition will be at professional school rates and what tuition will be at graduate school rates.

VII. Petition and Approvals

A. Joint degree programs must be initiated by constituent faculties and need to be supported and submitted by the appropriate Deans after consultation with the Provost. Academic review includes approval by constituent faculties, the Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee, the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees. Should the joint degree program result in the creation of a new degree, Ohio Board of Regents approval may also be required. It is recommended that continuing oversight of all joint programs be vested in the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School so that monitoring of these programs is not lost between Schools.

B1. The petition for an individual joint or multidisciplinary degree should be submitted promptly after a decision is made to pursue the degree, at least a year prior to the anticipated granting of the degrees. The Dean may consult the Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee, or chosen members thereof, in deciding if a petition for an individual multidisciplinary or joint degree shall be approved or rejected. As continuing joint degree programs are generally preferable when there is significant demand, the Dean may also approve a petition with the recommendation that petition be made for a continuing joint or multidisciplinary degree program, and state that similar individual multidisciplinary or joint degrees are unlikely to be

approved in the future. Such action by the Dean is *prima facie* evidence that there is adequate demand for such a program.

B2. A petition for an individual multidisciplinary or joint degree must be agreed to and signed by the student(s), the faculty advisors, the chairpersons of the two departments involved and, if the degrees involve more than one school of the university, also by a fiscal officer of each school. The petition must include a rationale for the program, a list of courses (and options), qualifiers, and theses that are likely to be taken or required, an indication of which degree program (or both) the courses contribute to and, if the degree involves two different schools of the university, a statement of the fiscal arrangement. By signing the petition, the student asserts that (s)he wants the degree(s). The faculty advisors signatures affirm that they will assist and advise the student in the proposed multidisciplinary or joint degree, and, if a degree will be sought in their department, that the proposed course of study substantially conforms to generally accepted standards for a degree in departments similar to their department, and, if two degrees will be sought, that the proposed course load is less than that for each degree separately and that there is significant effort specific to each degree. The chairpersons' signatures affirm that each will designate at least one faculty member to assist and advise the student in the individual multidisciplinary or joint degree, if a degree will be sought in their department, that the proposed course of study substantially conforms to generally accepted standards for a degree in departments similar to their department, if two degrees will be sought, that the proposed course load is less than that for each degree separately and that there is significant effort specific to each degree and that the fiscal arrangements are satisfactory to their department. If the student is not yet formally admitted into a degree program in either (or both) of the departments in which a degree will be sought, then the chairperson's signature also acknowledges that the student has supplied sufficient information to support admission to his/her department and admits the student to a degree program in that department. Finally, if more than one school is involved in the individual multidisciplinary degree, the fiscal officers at each school affirm that the fiscal arrangements are satisfactory to the school.

VIII. *Subsequent Changes*

Changes in a multidisciplinary or joint degree which are requested for a student and which solely affect one or the other department and do not substantially affect the joint or shared parts of the program may be approved through petitions involving the affected department, alone. Both departments must approve petitions which substantially affect the joint parts of the program. A student working on a multidisciplinary or joint degree may withdraw from the multidisciplinary or joint degree and instead pursue a single degree from either program in her/his multidisciplinary or joint degree upon approval of a petition to the office of the Graduate Dean, signed by the student, a faculty advisor and the chairman in the chosen program, independent of whether the student is withdrawing voluntarily or involuntarily from the other program.

Submitted by the Faculty Senate Graduate Studies Committee, December 2004

Approved by the Faculty Senate, March 1, 2005