

**LUMPKIN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND APPLIED SCIENCES
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

TO: Council on Graduate Studies

FROM: Mahyar Izadi, Dean
Jerry Cloward, Chair
LCBAS Curriculum Committee

SUBJECT: Curriculum Proposal

DATE: March 24, 2014

The School of Family and Consumer Sciences recently approved the following curriculum proposal which I support.

Revision of MA in Gerontology Program
(Effective Fall 2014 - see attached proposal)

Att.

- c. K. Kennedy-Hagan, Chair, School of Family and Consumer Sciences
L. Simpson, Assistant Chair, School of Family and Consumer Sciences

MEMO

TO: CGS Committee
FROM: Jacquelyn Frank, Graduate Coordinator for the MA in Gerontology graduate program
RE: Multidisciplinary Gerontology MA program revisions
DATE: March 16, 2014

During the 2012-2013 AY, the MA in Gerontology faculty discussed increasing the credit hours for the multidisciplinary Gerontology graduate program from 30/32 hours to 36 credit hours as well as adding a new core/required policy course for the program. The purpose for these changes are two-fold: 1) to make our graduates more competitive on the job market; and, 2) to shape stronger leaders in the field of Gerontology. In March of 2013, the Gerontology faculty voted unanimously to increase the program to 36 credit hours for all students in the Master's program and to create an additional core course for the program (FCS 5400: *Aging Policy in Action*). The rationale for these changes are as follows:

- 1) For the past two years, program alumni, members of our Gerontology Advisory Council, and employers in the field of aging have pointed to the absence of a policy-focused course as a potential hindrance to our alumni as they seek employment.
- 2) When discussing adding a policy course to the core requirements, the gerontology faculty, as well as a group of 18 alumni who were surveyed, agreed that the seven courses currently in the core were all needed for a well-rounded education and that none should be eliminated if a policy course was added.
- 3) Increasing the credit hours for the program puts EIU's program on par with the majority of other Gerontology Master's programs in the U.S. (62% of Master's programs require at least 36 hours credit hours. See Appendix I for data).
- 4) Feedback from all of the 18 alumni who responded to the survey indicated that a 36 credit hour program (versus a 30/32 credit hour program) would not have prevented them from applying to EIU, and many stated that they saw benefits to such a credit hour increase (see Appendix II for open-ended responses by some of the Gerontology MA alumni).
- 5) The Gerontology faculty were in agreement that *all* students enrolled in the Master's program should complete 36 credit hours. The Gerontology faculty believe that having uneven credit hours for thesis versus comprehensive exam tracks in a multidisciplinary program actually serves as a disservice to thesis students who often receive a less holistic educational experience because of they usually take at least two fewer electives than students on the comprehensive exam track.

- 6) In late 2013, the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE)¹ announced that it is moving forward to examine organizational requirements in creating a national gerontology accreditation process which will include core competencies and national standards. As part of this process the accreditation task force is currently examining all Master's degree programs, including core courses and minimum credit hours. As Appendix I illustrates, 77% of all Gerontology Master's degree programs require over 33 credit hours (with 62% requiring 36 or more credit hours), within the next few years it is possible that 36 credit hours will become the standard minimum credit hours for accreditation. Moving to 36 credit hours now would then have our program better aligned with possible accreditation standards before they become requirements.

With the rationale stated above, the Gerontology faculty strongly support the credit hour increase in the graduate program as well as the additional *Aging Policy in Action* core course. At this time the Gerontology faculty are seeking a vote of approval from the LCBAS curriculum committee at the March 24th meeting in order to move forward with this important update to our graduate program.

¹AGHE's mission is two-fold: (1) To advance gerontology and geriatrics education in academic institutions; and (2) To provide leadership and support of gerontology and geriatrics education faculty and students at educational institutions.

Date approved by Gerontology Faculty Committee: March 6, 2013
Date approved by LCBAS Curriculum Committee: March 24, 2014
Date approved by CGS:

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GERONTOLOGY

Degree Requirements

Degree requirements include those outlined for the master's degree by the Graduate School (see "[Requirements for the Master's Degree](#)").

The courses for the degree must total at least 30 semester hours for programs including the thesis and at least 32 semester hours for program without thesis. In addition to the core requirements, 9-11 hours of graduate credit electives are to be selected by the student with prior approval of the advisor. Without the appropriate preparation, additional graduate or undergraduate course work may be required as determined by the Gerontology Program Committee. All students enrolled in this program must satisfy the basic course requirements listed below:

Total Credits: 21

- [EDF 5590 - Educational Response to Third Age Learning](#) Credits: 3
- [FCS 5846 - Administration of Human Services Programs](#). Credits: 3
- [FCS 5900 - Research Methods in Family and Consumer Sciences](#). Credits: 3
- [FCS 5980 - Internship](#). Credits: 3 to 6
- 3 to 4 semester hour credits may be earned with FCS 5980
- [KSS 5225 - Physical Activity and Aging](#). Credits: 3
- [PSY 5540 - Psychological Processes in the Aged](#). Credits: 3
- [SOC 5100 - Sociological Aspects of Gerontology](#) Credits: 3

Revised Catalog Copy:

Degree Requirements

Degree requirements include those outlined for the master's degree by the Graduate School (see "[Requirements for the Master's Degree](#)").

The courses for the degree must total ~~at least 30 semester hours for programs including the thesis and at least 32 semester hours for program without thesis.~~ **36 credit hours for all students enrolled in the program.** In addition to the core requirements, ~~9-11 hours~~ **12 hours** of graduate credit electives are to be selected by the student with prior approval of the advisor. Without the appropriate preparation, additional graduate or undergraduate course work may be required as determined by the Gerontology Program Committee. All students enrolled in this program must satisfy the basic course requirements listed below:

~~Total Credits: 21~~ **Required Courses: 24 credit hours**

- [EDF 5590 - Educational Response to Third Age Learning](#) Credits: 3
- [FCS 5846 - Administration of Human Services Programs.](#) Credits: 3
- [FCS 5900 - Research Methods in Family and Consumer Sciences.](#) Credits: 3
- [FCS 5980 - Internship.](#) Credits: 3 to 6
- ~~3 to 4 semester hour credits may be earned with FCS 5980~~
- [KSS 5225 - Physical Activity and Aging.](#) Credits: 3
- [PSY 5540 - Psychological Processes in the Aged.](#) Credits: 3
- ~~[SOC 5100 - Sociological Aspects of Gerontology](#) Credits: 3~~
- **FCS 5100 Societal Aspects of Aging. Credits: 3**
- **FCS 5400 Aging Policy in Action. Credits: 3**

APPENDIX I

Summary of Gerontology Master's Programs in North America:

- Including EIU's Gerontology graduate program there are 34 Master's degree programs (at 33 different colleges and universities) in North America.
- Programs range from 28* – 48 credit hours
- MA programs = 16; MS programs = 18
- Gerontology Master's programs in Illinois: 3 (including EIU)

**the 28 credit hour MA program at University of Southern California only admits applicants who have at least 5 years of professional experience in the field of aging/gerontology.*

Credit Hours Required across Gerontology Master's Degree Programs

Credit Hours	# of Programs	% of Programs
Programs requiring a minimum of 36 credit hours	21/34*	62%
Programs requiring 33-34 credit hours	5/34	15%
Programs requiring 30-32 credit hours	7/34	20%
Programs requiring under 30 credit hours	1/34**	3%

*4/21 programs require a minimum of 42 credit hours

**Again this is the USC 28 credit hour program requiring 5 years of professional experience for admission to the program.

APPENDIX II:

Alumni Feedback Regarding Credit Hour Increase

Isaac Sandidge, MA (2012)

As the MA in Gerontology program is moving to 36 credit hours for completion, I feel that it creates a more competitive edge with similar programs. As most graduate programs in the discipline require more credit hours for degree completion, the apparent face value to the prospective student will be comparable and students may be more likely to apply. Also, by increasing the credit hour requirement, students will have the opportunity to obtain a more rounded and complete mastery of content. I feel that as a prospective student, the 36 hour requirement would not have deterred me from applying, but rather would have increased my confidence that upon completion of the degree, I would have the skills and knowledge base to be competitive and a leader in the field.

Sheila Greuel, MA (2013)

I decided to enroll in the Master of Gerontology program at EIU because it was a multidisciplinary program, had course offerings at times which would allow me to continue to work full time, and the program was offered at my Alma Mater. I was able to attend due to tuition credits available to me because my employment was through the Moultrie County Counseling Center (which is an intern work site for the EIU Community Counseling and Psychology programs).

I believe the program should have more required credit hours to give adequate mandate to the multi disciplinary aspect of the program. A well-prepared professional for the field of Gerontology will need to understand the multi facets of the world of gerontology which would require more credit hours. The expanse of the lifespan for the cohort involved in Gerontology illustrates the need for the professional to demonstrate proficiency and understanding in Health topics, psycho-social issues, recreational, business management and educational dimensions of older adults, in addition to more expansive knowledge in the interest of the student.

Dustin Yocum, MA (2012)

Increasing the credit hours for the Gerontology program at EIU could potentially benefit future cohorts. The primary benefit of increasing the course load from 32 to 36 hours is the ability to include a subject area that the program currently lacks. In an interdisciplinary program, there are multiple subject areas that are needed to provide a breadth and depth to the learning experience. What I appreciate about the Gerontology program is that a student has the ability to direct their own learning experience. I was a

student more focused on research and theory, however, a majority of the students that make up this program are focused on practical application in the workforce. One of the serious deficiencies that I see with this program, in relation to peer institutions, is that there is a lack of policy-driven curriculum. For those that wish to work in the field or in research, policy is an important component that is currently underserved. A policy course is just one example of the type of addition that warrants increasing the hour requirement, however, I do believe that the addition needs to serve one of the deficiencies in the curriculum rather than simply tack on an elective.

Increasing the requirement also serves to lift EIU's program to the level of most other institutions. Nearly all MA programs require 36 or more hours to graduate. I think the 36 hour requirement is especially beneficial in a program that pulls various academic units across campus into the curriculum. The challenge with a program structured in this way is the difficulty in acquiring a mastery of a topic across multiple disciplines. Adding an additional class that is relevant to the core could serve the students well by providing a familiarity with a wider range of topics.

There is a realistic possibility that the increase in hours may prevent some students from applying to the program. The increase would not have hindered me personally, yet with the cost of college, I could see the argument against it. That being said, comparable programs are in the 36 hour range and the students that are turned away by this requirement are likely those that are obtaining a graduate degree for the wrong reasons. I also believe that the increase could add a legitimacy to the program that might bring in more out-of-state students and better candidates.

Whitney Paul (2013)

As a gerontology graduate student, I actually chose to complete 36 credit hours before graduation. I felt that it was necessary to take these extra courses in order for me to get what I wanted out of the program. There are so many class choices that can be beneficial when working with older adults, and I truly had a difficult time choosing between the courses. I feel that an increase in credit hour requirements is an excellent idea for the program, and that it gives students more of an opportunity to take electives that focus on their particular areas of interest. For example, someone interested in counseling older adults may benefit from also being able to take extra counseling classes on top of the core requirements for the program, and increasing the required credit hours allows for this opportunity. Since I chose to take extra courses, an increase in four credit hours definitely would not have prevented me from applying to the program.