

Proposal: Revision to Catalog Policy on Undergraduate Students Taking Graduate Hours

November 19, 2024

We propose a revision to the policy on undergraduate students taking graduate hours in the SMU undergraduate catalog. If approved, the change would go into effect in Fall 2024. The proposed change is designed to bring SMU into alignment with SACSCOC standard 9.2, which prohibits double counting of coursework across a bachelor's and master's degree, except above 150 credit hours earned. SACSCOC further requires students to be admitted to the degrees they earn. The proposal is also designed to bring SMU into alignment with peer and aspirational peer institutions, which heavily restrict the number of graduate courses an undergraduate student may take (see for example Vanderbilt: <https://as.vanderbilt.edu/internal/policies/undergraduate-graduate-courses.php#:~:text=The%20student%20must%20have%20a,graduate%20course%20in%20an%20semester>).

The existing SMU Policy is given below and may be found here: <https://catalog.smu.edu/content.php?catoid=40&navoid=3150#:~:text=Graduate%20hours%20earned%20as%20an,federal%2C%20state%20and%20institutional%20aid>.

Existing SMU Catalog Language:

Other Graduate Course Enrollment

In addition to the Accelerated Pathway Programs, with the written permission of their academic dean and permission of the dean of the graduate courses, an excelling undergraduate student may enroll for graduate level coursework that will be part of their undergraduate record, count towards the undergraduate degree and be included in the undergraduate scholastic totals. The undergraduate student must have accumulated 90 credit hours toward their baccalaureate degree. Graduate hours enrolled as an undergraduate are included in the determination of full-time status for the term. An undergraduate is limited to earning a maximum of 30 graduate hours as part of their undergraduate record.

Please note that the existing policy does not lay out requirements for these graduate hours count (or do not) toward graduate degrees, and we must, to be compliant with SACSCOC standards, ensure that these hours do not double toward a master's degree, except above the 150 earned hours threshold, and we must ensure that students are admitted to any graduate program to which these hours are applied.

Proposed Revision:

Undergraduate Enrollment in Graduate Courses (Outside of an Accelerated Pathway Program)

Undergraduate students at SMU may, in exceptional cases, enroll in graduate-level courses (courses numbered 6000 or above) for academic credit, subject to the following conditions:

1. Eligibility Criteria:

The student must:

- Have achieved junior or senior standing.
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.000.
- Meet all prerequisites for the graduate course.

2. Approval Process:

Enrollment in a graduate course requires:

- Written approval from the student's undergraduate academic advisor.
- Written approval from the instructor of the graduate course.
- Written approval from the department chair or graduate program director of the department offering the course.

3. Credit Applicability:

- Credit earned for a graduate course may apply to the undergraduate degree, subject to the approval of the student's academic advisor and degree program requirements.
- Graduate-level coursework completed by an undergraduate student cannot be retroactively applied toward a graduate degree unless permitted by a specific accelerated degree program and approved in advance.

4. Enrollment Limits:

- Undergraduate students may not enroll in more than one graduate course in any given semester, except under extraordinary circumstances and with additional approvals from the Dean of the undergraduate school.

5. Graduate Tuition Charges:

- Graduate hours earned as an undergraduate student may result in additional tuition charges, and such coursework may impact eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid.

6. Course Load Considerations:

- The graduate course must fit within the student's overall course load and not exceed the maximum allowable semester hours for undergraduate enrollment, except with special approval.

Undergraduate students are encouraged to consult with their academic advisors and review their degree plans to ensure the graduate coursework aligns with their academic and professional goals.