

**Policy Related to Creating, Changing, and Terminating
Degree Programs, Majors, Minors, Areas of Emphasis, Certificate Programs,
and Teaching Specializations at West Virginia University**

(8/25/15)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this document is to establish a uniform, institutional standard for the categorization of all degree programs, majors, minors, areas of emphasis, and undergraduate and graduate certificate programs at current locations currently served by West Virginia University. The relevant approval processes are implemented through the Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system. [NOTE: CIM processing is not yet available for certificates.]

These designations are to be used by all academic units to describe the areas of study within the unit.

***Note:** The Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) has the authority to review and approve academic programs that are proposed to be offered at a new location not currently served by the institution. In addition, new off-campus sites must be approved by the Higher Learning Commission prior to program delivery.*

Definitions:

- Degree Program: An area of study approved as such by the institution and BOG and listed on the official HEPC inventory of degree programs.
- Major: A field of study within an approved degree program, having its own prescribed curriculum. A degree program may have more than one major.
- Minor: An area of study outside of the major that encourages students to pursue a secondary field.
- Area of Emphasis: A specific subject area of study that has limited course offerings within an approved degree program and major.
- Undergraduate and Graduate Certificate Programs: A certificate program (as distinguished from the one-year Certificate Degree program offered by the community and technical colleges) is a coherent, specialized curriculum designed for students in search of a specific body of knowledge for personal/career development or professional continuing education.
- Teacher Specialization: A specific subject area of study to enable a student to meet teaching certification standards.

Degree Programs

Definition:

- An area of study approved as such by the institution and BOG and listed on the official HEPC inventory of degree programs.

Policy:

- A degree program is specified by a degree designation and program title. The degree program title indicates the field of the degree program (e.g., finance, physics). The degree designation indicates the degree awarded to students who complete the degree program (e.g., B.A. – Bachelor of Arts, M.S. – Master of Science, Ph.D. – Doctor of Philosophy, M.F.A. – Master of Fine Arts).
- Requests for new or changed degree program titles and designations require consultation with the Office of the University Registrar and approval of the appropriate associate provost (Associate Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs or Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs). This approval should be obtained before submitting a proposal through the CIM system. See <http://registrar.wvu.edu/curriculum> for guidelines concerning degree titles and designations.
- A new degree program must include at least one major (which normally will have the same title as the degree program).
- A bachelor's degree program requires a minimum of 120 credits and a master's degree program requires a minimum of 30 credits beyond the bachelor's degree.
- New degree programs require approval of the Board of Governors.

Majors

Definition:

- A field of study within an approved degree program, having its own prescribed curriculum. A degree program may have more than one major.

Policy:

- Program title and major may be the same. For example, in the case of Bachelor of Arts: English, English is both the program title and the major.
- An undergraduate major requires a minimum of 30 credits.

Minors

Definition:

- An area of study outside of the major that encourages students to pursue a secondary field.

Policy:

- Minors are only available for bachelor's degree students.
- Students may not earn a minor in the same field as their major.
- Requirements for a minor are set by the academic unit offering the minor and must include at least 15 hours of coursework, with a minimum of 9 hours at the upper division level (course numbers 300 or above).

Areas of Emphasis

Definition:

- A specific subject area of study that has limited course offerings within an approved degree program and major.

Policy:

- Normally, a minimum of 12 credit hours and no more than 18 credit hours are expected for an area of emphasis within a baccalaureate degree program.
- Normally, a minimum of 6 and no more than 12 credit hours are expected for an area of emphasis within a graduate degree program.

Undergraduate and Graduate Certificates

Definition:

- A certificate program (as distinguished from the one-year Certificate Degree program offered by the community and technical colleges) is a coherent, specialized curriculum designed for students in search of a specific body of knowledge for personal/career development or professional continuing education.

Policy:

- A certificate program is not attached to a degree program, although credit hours earned in a certificate program may be applied to a degree if they are deemed appropriate by the institution.
- Academic certificates at the undergraduate level may only be awarded simultaneously with a baccalaureate degree.
- Academic certificates at the graduate and professional levels may be awarded either simultaneously with a graduate or professional degree or independently of any degree program.
- Certificate completion is noted on the student's transcript and the student will be issued an official certificate of completion.
- Normally, a minimum of 12 and no more than 21 credit hours constitute a certificate program.
- Financial Aid eligible certificate programs (those requiring 18 credits or more) must be approved by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Teacher Specializations

Definition:

- A specific subject area of study to enable a student to meet teaching certification standards.

Policy:

- A formal proposal is prepared for a new teacher specialization following consultation with the WV State Department of Education.
- The proposal is forwarded to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs for approval.
- Teacher specializations are added to a student's transcript only at the time of graduation.

Combination Programs (Dual Degree, Joint, Interdisciplinary, Accelerated, etc.)

Definitions:

- Definitions and guidelines for the development of combination programs can be obtained from the Associate Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Academic Affairs. Relevant information also is provided in the Undergraduate and Graduate University Catalogs.

Policy:

- Combination programs that involve the development of new degree designations or new majors should follow the approval process for new degree programs or new majors, as appropriate.
- Combination programs that involve combinations of existing degree programs or majors must be approved by the appropriate Associate Provost.
 - If a combination program involves both undergraduate and graduate degrees, approvals must be obtained from the Associate Provosts for both Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Affairs.
 - Approved combination programs will be listed in the University Catalog.

Curriculum and Other Changes

Definitions:

- Examples of items fitting into this category include changes in requirements (including both course and other requirements), changes in procedures within individual programs that are described in the University Catalog, changes in program designations (such as changing an Area of Emphasis to a major or certificate), changes in titles (of departments, programs, etc.), and other changes.

Termination of Degree Programs, Majors, Minors, Areas of Emphasis, Certificates, and Teacher Specializations

Definitions:

- Consideration of termination of Degree Programs, Majors, Minors, Areas of Emphasis, Certificates, and Teacher Specializations may be instigated by program faculty, college/school deans, the Undergraduate Council or the Graduate Council (through the program review process), or the Higher Education Policy Commission (as a result of productivity reviews).

Policy:

- Requests to consider termination of Degree Programs, Majors, Minors, Areas of Emphasis, Certificates, and Teacher Specializations are submitted to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate or Graduate Academic Affairs.
- The request should include the rationale for the request (supported by data if possible), describe plans for assigning the positions and workload of faculty who are involved in the program if appropriate, and describe the impact on students who are already enrolled.
- The Associate Provost may submit requests for termination to the Faculty Senate or Graduate Council for review as deemed appropriate.
- Requests for termination of Degree Programs or Certificates are submitted to the BOG for approval, and, if approved, to HEPC for information.
- Requests for termination of Majors, Minors, Areas of Emphasis, and Teacher Specializations do not require BOG approval and can be approved by the Office of the Provost.