



Graduate School
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Date: December 19, 2014

To: Deans, School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Department Administrators, Directors of Graduate Study, Graduate Studies Committee Chairs, Graduate Program Coordinators, University Council on Academic Affairs and Assessment (UCAAA)

From: Wendy Crone, Interim Dean, Graduate School 

Cc: Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) members, Mo Bischof, Eileen Callahan, Daniel Kleinman, Kelly Haslam, Regina Lowery, Jennifer Martin, Jocelyn Milner

RE: **Graduate Learning Goals Related to the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) Criteria for Institutional Accreditation**

A new policy on graduate level learning goals was approved by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) on November 14, 2014 and discussed by the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) on December 18, 2014.

Although prompted by the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) institutional accreditation criteria, this new policy change is one of the many ways in which our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and the quality of the student experience. The HLC is the federally recognized accrediting agency of degree-granting higher education organizations for the North Central region of the U.S. Compliance with federal requirements by both institutions and the HLC is necessary to ensure that institutions accredited by the HLC are eligible for federal financial aid. A *Core Component* in the *Criteria for Accreditation* is **"The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs."**

A Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) Subcommittee was charged in February of 2014 to recommend to the GFEC a set of overarching learning goals for graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and graduate certificate programs. After an extensive process of consultation and refinement, GFEC unanimously approved the overarching learning goals in its November meeting.

A GFEC Subcommittee was charged in February of 2014 to recommend to the GFEC a set of overarching learning goals for graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and graduate certificate programs. This GFEC Subcommittee engaged in a deliberative process for ten months and involved several iterations of input from School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Directors of Graduate Study, Graduate Studies Committee Chairs. The subcommittee appreciated the engagement of individuals and programs in helping to refine the learning goals.

Graduate Learning Goals Approved by GFEC (see attachment)

The graduate learning goals were created to have broad applicability and to define a minimum set of expectations for our campus within all graduate programs. They are intended to encompass the breadth of graduate degrees offered, including professional and research-based degrees, and were designed to provide basic expectations while being flexible enough to apply to all graduate programs across the disciplines for the master's degree, doctoral degree, graduate certificates, and capstone certificates.

Graduate School

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Timeline for Programs to Articulate Graduate Learning Goals (see attachment)

The collection of learning goals will be coordinated between the Graduate School and Provost's Office during the Spring of 2015 with a due date of July 1, 2015. The graduate level learning goals submitted by programs will be included in the program entry of the 2016-18 Graduate Catalog with a final opportunity for programs to edit learning goals for the Graduate Catalog in September 2015.

The process of adopting program-specific learning goals should occur through the executive body or curriculum body of each graduate program for program-level formal approval. The following is provided as guidance:

Programs may adopt the overarching set of learning goals locally and use them in their program's graduate catalog entry. Individual programs will want to make refinements and additions in order to make them most meaningful and useful for their program. Although verbatim adoption is not an expectation, program level learning goals should meet the spirit of the overarching learning goals and not have major omissions.

For those programs with established learning goals (particularly those with program-level accrediting bodies), a review of their learning goals in light of the overarching goals should take place to identify if there are overarching learning goals not previously articulated. Any additions should be formally adopted and included with existing learning goals.

For programs without prior learning goals, we suggest that the program begin with the overarching set and make refinements that are program specific. There are many "or" statements such where it is expected that a graduate program would choose to streamline the wording. (e.g. "Creates research, scholarship or performance that makes a substantive contribution." might be refined to "Creates research that makes a substantive contribution.") There may also be desirable discipline specific language, as well as areas of learning which are not applicable to all programs where a program may want to make additions (for instance, learning goals associated with teaching, leadership, teamwork, entrepreneurialism, mentorship, or professionalism). After these refinements and additions are made and formally adopted, the program's learning goals should be submitted.

Future Examination and Plans for Graduate Learning Goals

Neither GFEC nor the Graduate School will vet the program level learning goals to be included in the Graduate Catalog this summer. GFEC will continue to review learning goals as part of the regular review process for graduate programs that occurs in the 5th year for new programs and every 10 years for established graduate programs.

However, if programs are interested in having assistance in refining or developing learning goals for their programs, the Graduate School will be working with the Provost's Office to provide assistance through workshops which are being planned for Spring 2015. More information about these workshops will be providing in the next few months.

Directors of Graduate Study and Graduate Studies Committee Chairs are strongly encouraged to attend the January DGS meeting where graduate level learning goals will be an agenda item for the meeting: Thursday January 15, 2015, 10:00-12:00, 2241 Chamberlin Hall.

Overarching Learning Goals Approved by GFEC 11/14/14

| | Master's Level | Doctoral Level |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Introduction | All UW-Madison students enter the Graduate School's graduate programs with at least a bachelor's degree. Graduates obtaining a master's degree from the Graduate School, whether it be a research-based, project-based, or course-work-only master's degree, are expected to achieve the following learning goals by the end of their degree work. | Regardless of whether an individual is awarded a master's degree, the doctoral level learning goals are inclusive of the master's level learning goals. Research-based doctoral programs culminate in a dissertation. Professional doctoral programs culminate in a project or performance. Additionally, students receiving a doctoral degree from the Graduate School in both research-based and professional programs are expected to achieve the following learning goals by the end of their degree work. |
| Knowledge and Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates, critiques, or elaborates the theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry or schools of practice in the field of study. • Identifies sources and assembles evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study. • Demonstrates understanding of the primary field of study in a historical, social, or global context. • Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methodologies and practices. • Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study. • Communicates clearly in ways appropriate to the field of study. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates research problems, potentials, and limits with respect to theory, knowledge, or practice within the field of study. • Formulates ideas, concepts, designs, and/or techniques beyond the current boundaries of knowledge within the field of study. • Creates research, scholarship, or performance that makes a substantive contribution. • Demonstrates breadth within their learning experiences. • Advances contributions of the field of study to society. • Communicates complex ideas in a clear and understandable manner. |
| Professional Conduct | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters ethical and professional conduct. |

Certificates

A certificate program is a designated set of for-credit courses focused upon a specific topic or theme. The certificates are distinguished by the enrollment status of students pursuing the certificates: **Graduate Certificates** are earned by students enrolled in a graduate program and **Capstone Certificates** are earned by post-baccalaureate University Special (non-degree) students.

Students receiving a **Graduate Certificate** are expected to achieve the learning goals at the master's or doctoral level and the following: Demonstrates an understanding of a body of knowledge focused on a specific topic outside or as an extension of the major field of study.

Students receiving a **Capstone Certificate** are expected to achieve the following: Articulates the key concepts, methodologies, or theoretical concepts in a specialized area of study.

GFEC Learning Goals Implementation Timeline

Spring 2014

Develop drafts of overarching (university-level) learning goals for master's programs, doctoral programs, graduate certificates, and capstone certificates. Solicit feedback on drafts from key stakeholders (School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Directors of Graduate Study, and Graduate Studies Committee Chairs), UCAAA members, and GFEC.

Summer 2014 - Early-September 2014

Revise drafts of overarching learning goals.

Mid-September 2014

Solicit feedback on revised drafts from School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Directors of Graduate Study, and Graduate Studies Committee Chairs. Include proposed framework for development of program-level learning goals. Share expected timeline that seeks to have program-level learning goals included in the next Graduate Catalog and coordinates with Provost Office assessment expectations.

Mid-October 2014

Finalize overarching learning goals.

Work with Provost's Office to develop information about current assessment methods utilized by programs.

November 2014

Present and adopt overarching learning outcomes, framework for development of program-level learning goals, and program-level implementation timeline to GFEC.

December 2014

Announce GFEC action to School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Directors of Graduate Study, Graduate Studies Committee Chairs.

Work with Provost's Office to provide information about current assessment methods utilized by programs.

January – July 2015

Coordinate with Provost's Office on assessment plan development with connections to program-level learning goals. Coordinate with Provost's Office to provide workshops to programs.

April 2015

Reiterate deadlines associated with GFEC action to School/College Academic Planners, Department Chairs, Directors of Graduate Study, and Graduate Studies Committee Chairs.

July 2015

Deadline for programs to submit learning goals.

September 2015

Final opportunity for programs to edit learning goals for the Graduate Catalog to the Graduate School.

Deadline for programs to submit Assessment Plan and Annual Assessment Report to Provost's Office.