

MEMO

DATE: April 6, 2009

TO: Senate Executive Committee

FROM: Claire Moses, Chair, Senate APAS Committee

SUBJECT: A proposal to make changes to the current University regulation that the final 30 credits in an undergraduate's course of study be taken at this campus.

This text is proposed as a replacement for the entry in the Undergraduate Catalog labeled "Residency Requirement – Final 30-Hour Rule." This entry is the first of several "Degree Requirements" found in Chapter 4 of the Undergraduate Catalog, "Registration, Academic Requirements, and Regulations/Degree Requirements/Residency Requirement--Final 30-Hour Rule," and is intended to replace all 3 paragraphs of that section. Please take note that the heading should now read "Residency Requirement -- Final 60-Hour Rule."

1. Residency Requirement – Final 60-Hour Rule

To graduate with a University of Maryland degree, students are required to have a minimum of 120 credit hours of coursework taken either on this campus or approved here for transfer credit; to have met all of the requirements of the General Education Program, either by transfer or resident courses; and to have fulfilled all of the requirements of a major.

Of the final 60 credit hours of the student's course of study, 30 must be taken on this campus. The requirement that half of the final 60 credit hours be taken on campus ensures that students earning a Maryland degree will take a substantial number of advanced courses in the major and as electives at the University of Maryland. At the same time, this requirement allows for students to take part in opportunities such as Study Abroad and off-campus internships and exchange programs during the senior year. Permission to transfer upper-level credits from another institution during the final 60 credits of study is not automatic, but requires approval of the major department.

2. Credit Requirements

While several ...

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Rationale

Discussion: The Academic Procedures and Standards (APAS) Committee, at the request of the Senate Executive Committee, has considered the current university regulation that the final 30 credits be earned on this campus and has determined to request a change to this requirement.

In response, the committee has identified several reasons that a student may want to take her or his final credits elsewhere. The most frequent of students' requests to transfer credits from some other institution appears to be the student's desire to participate in a Study Abroad program in the senior year; but students have made requests to transfer their final credits for other reasons as well. Some students have wished to study elsewhere, in their senior year, because they have married and are moving to join a spouse. Other students—with as few as 6 credits remaining—have moved to another city to start a job. The committee believes that these requests (and others we did not consider) are reasonable and that the current policy is unnecessarily rigid.

One compelling discovery that influenced our recommendation was that currently students may transfer up to 90 credits from another institution and thus graduate with a University of Maryland degree having taken as few as 30 credits on this campus. We compared this case to that of the student who has earned 105 credits on this campus and wishes to earn the remaining 15 (a typical semester) in a study abroad program. The former case is permitted under the present policy, while the latter is not. We agreed that this disparity is unjustifiable.

The committee did recognize that departments may have varying views on the value of upper-level credits taken elsewhere. For example, a foreign language department might encourage students who were unable to study abroad in their junior year to do so in the senior year; the physics department, however, may offer some of the courses required for the major in the student's final year and be justified in wishing these courses to be taken at this campus. The APAS Committee dealt with this problem by making the permission of the department and fulfillment of all the requirements of the major the crucial elements in the recommended policy. Also, the committee recognized that taking upper-level credit hours on this campus is important for any University of Maryland diploma. The committee's request that the current policy be modified is intended merely to add flexibility.