

**AGENDA ITEM: 4 B**  
FOR DISCUSSION: OCTOBER 2016 MEETING  
(SEE PAGE 3 FOR CURRENT HANDBOOK POLICIES)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE TO POLICY

**1) *relaxing the age limit to as old as 10 years***

Comments/Considerations: If this is done, what about related policy concerning time-to-degree limits? If the age limit on courses is changed to 10 years, does the council support the consequence of this, that all graduate degree programs can take up to 10 years to complete, even master's degree programs?

**2) *minimum credit number earned close to graduation***

Comments/Considerations: This would be new but related policy that at least a certain number of "content-rich" graduate-level credits (non-research, non-independent study, non-seminar, etc.) must be earned within, say, two years of the degree being awarded? The idea here would be to promote degree completion by curtailing the tendency for doctoral students to be ABD for long periods of time, during which the average age of their content courses increases. Once a student is ABD for more than two years, he/she would need to start earning new, content-rich credits. Perhaps at least three credits within the two-year window would be reasonable.

**3) *defining a "window" of negotiable courses ages, perhaps 11 to 16 years***

Comments/Considerations: The idea here is to define a time frame for negotiable credits earned beyond 10 years before the degree is to be awarded. Credits in this age category could be approved for use via a process involving the student, her/his committee, and the program DOGE(s). Handbook language on the process could be changed to direct all parties to a form provided by the Graduate College. The form would be completed following clear instructions, thereby removing doubt about what we are looking for as justification. We might model our form and process after what's been used for years in the Department of English. The student is highly involved in that process, but signatures/support are required by pertinent faculty. Should there be cap defined on the number of these credits?

**4) *setting a firm age limit beyond which credits cannot be used under any circumstances, perhaps 16 years***

Comments/Considerations: This would greatly simplify processes in the Graduate College. Sixteen years may not be the best age to use for this, but any defined age limit beyond which there is no possibility of use would be very helpful. I believe it also would help faculty and program leaders who are contacted by students wanting to return to a degree program that was started many years earlier; faculty would have a very clear policy that could be conveyed to students, and the Graduate College would have direction from the council that courses older than

OVERAGE COURSE POLICY  
GRADUATE COUNCIL

this limit cannot be used, period. A relevant question relates to whether to distinguish between students who earned a graduate degree long ago with the old credits vs. students who did not earn a degree. It would complicate matters to make this distinction, but perhaps such a distinction is warranted. We get a lot of requests to use old courses from students who earned a master's degree 20 to 30 years earlier and have been employed in the discipline ever since. The claim often is made that such students have "kept current" with the material via their careers.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENT:** The Graduate College has been honoring commitments made to the School of Education and AESHM after they petitioned the Graduate Council for leniency with their students. If the council makes changes to the age policy, I'd like to see it required for all graduate programs. So we'd want Education and AESHM in the loop and understanding of the fact that the new policy would negate their individual arrangements.

## OVERAGE COURSE POLICY

### RELEVANT POLICIES – GRADUATE COLLEGE HANDBOOK

---

#### 6.3.4 Overage Courses

A course is considered overage if it was taken beyond the time limit for the master's or doctoral program (see [Chapter 4 for time limit requirements](#)) unless there was an exemption for the student's specific program.

A written request for acceptance of overage courses should be submitted as an attachment to the POSC form. It should include the following:

- a justification for why the courses are still relevant,
- an assurance that the student has kept current with the information covered in the overage, and
- an explanation of how the student will be evaluated on overage material. Evaluation could include a written examination (a preliminary, qualifying, or comprehensive examination), evidence of satisfactory performance in course(s) for which the overage courses are prerequisites, or the completion of an audit in one or more current courses in the areas encompassed by the overage course. The object should be to determine whether the material learned in those courses is still timely and adequate. The evaluation method should be specified by the committee at the time the POSC form is submitted.

#### 4.4.5 Time-to-Degree Limit

The Graduate College's time-to-degree limit for all graduate students, both master's and Ph.D., is seven years. **Graduate programs may establish more restrictive time-to-degree limits.** For example, at the program's discretion, a student beginning a Ph.D. degree program at ISU with a master's degree could be expected to complete the program within three or four or five years, while a student beginning a Ph.D. degree program without the master's degree could be expected to complete the program within five or six or seven years. This is an option that would be enforced at the department level. Requests to extend the seven-year time limit will only be considered in the event of rare circumstances involving medical or other extenuating situations.

Cases in which the student leaves ISU during his or her graduate career and later returns are dealt with individually by the POS committee and the Graduate College. The inclusion in the program of study of course work that is beyond the time limit ("over-age" courses) must be justified by the POS committee in a statement accompanying the submission of the program of study.

#### Links to Relevant Policies in Graduate College Handbook:

Chapter 4: <http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=4>

Chapter 6: <http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=6>