

1. Proposed Change to R&P Sec. 3.21.1 Graduate Admissions (Revision 3-22-2022)

Current Language:

Students of Lehigh University who are within a few hours of meeting the requirements for a baccalaureate degree may, with the special approval of the graduate committee, enroll for a limited amount of work for graduate credit. Lehigh undergraduate students may apply course credits taken as an undergraduate toward a graduate degree under the following conditions:

1. The course credits may not have been submitted as part of the requirements for a previous degree.
2. Courses at the 200 or 300 level must be approved by the course instructor, department chairperson, and the appropriate college dean. A grade of B or better must be attained. It is not necessary for a student to inform the instructor beforehand.
3. A maximum of 6 credit hours taken while an undergraduate (in 400 level courses) may be used in a Master's degree program.

Proposed Language:

Undergraduate students who have achieved junior standing and a grade point average of 3.0 or greater may petition the Committee on the Standing of Graduate Students (SOGS) for permission to register for graduate level coursework. Undergraduate students may also request permission from the college administering the graduate program to apply course credits taken as an undergraduate toward a graduate degree. The following guidelines should be followed:

1. No undergraduate student may take 400-level courses during a term where the student's total credits are greater than 18 (including audits).
2. Students requesting a second 400-level course in a given term must petition the Standing of Graduate Students committee and may not register for more than 15 credits total in that term.
3. An undergraduate student may request permission to use no more than 12 credits (with a maximum of 6 credits at the 400 level) taken as an undergraduate toward a graduate degree. These courses must be at the 300 and 400 level and beyond all undergraduate degree requirements. Courses at the 200 level must be approved by the course instructor, department chairperson, and the appropriate college dean to be considered eligible for a graduate program credits. The course credits may not have been submitted as part of the requirements for a previous degree. A grade of B or better must be attained.

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4. Students who elect to pursue a graduate degree at Lehigh University must apply to their program of interest through the graduate application process. Students may elect to reserve credits either before or after their official graduate application is completed, but before the baccalaureate degree is awarded.

5. All students receiving a graduate degree must be enrolled at least one full semester or summer as a regular-status graduate student prior to the awarding of a graduate degree.

Rationale for Proposal:

The guidelines for undergraduate students who wish to take graduate level courses have existed, with slightly varying language, in the university catalog since the 2004-2005 edition and have been applied in practice up to the present.

R&P should be updated to match current practice. As we look to create a standardized framework for accelerated (4+1) BS/MS programs, or other similar programs, the ability of our undergraduates to reserve coursework for use towards graduate degree requirements is essential. It is important to note that the proposal is not meant only to facilitate 4+1 programs, but also to make a standard across the various colleges in all cases of courses that could be applied to a graduate program (e.g., a certificate) or a graduate degree.

The number of undergraduate students starting their degree-seeking programs at Lehigh with approved college credits included in their academic record has increased in the past fifteen (plus) years. A growing fraction of students challenge themselves throughout their degree programs leading to room in their schedules at the end of their bachelor's degree programs. Some students may elect to graduate early, but many elect to use the time to pursue an advanced degree. Making a formal R&P change to the number of reservable credits will provide clarity and consistency in practice across the colleges. Furthermore, a change of this nature will help students achieve their goals of an advanced degree at Lehigh (and may offer them opportunities to pursue an advanced degree in a field different from that of their baccalaureate). This proposal is not altering student course history in any way, rather, it is allowing coursework that is not needed to fulfill bachelor's degree requirements to be used to fulfill the requirements of an advanced degree.

We have added the statement that "All students receiving a graduate degree must be enrolled at least one full semester or summer as a regular-status graduate student prior to the awarding of a graduate degree" to the proposed R&P change because this statement is consistent with current practice, and is consistent with R&P. We wanted to make clear to anyone making use of this particular section of R&P that students cannot get a graduate degree without being enrolled in at least one semester of graduate experience. Current practice is rooted in R&P, which states that one must be enrolled in the semester one is planning to graduate. For a graduate degree to be conferred, the student would need to be registered as a graduate student.

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A maximum of 6 credit hours taken while an undergraduate (in 400 level courses) may be used in a Master's degree program.

As noted, the current practice has been to allow students to reserve up to 12 credits of approved coursework completed as an undergraduate for use towards a graduate degree. Thus, we have reflected current practice in the wording of the text.

The proposal indicates that these petitions should go to SOGS. This is in fact consistent with current practice because although currently petitions go to both SOS and SOGS, as a practical matter all of these petitions are then referred to SOGS. SOGS, therefore, is the body that has currently been making the decisions. It is important to note that because the students are taking undergraduate courses, they are not going against any undergraduate rules or guidelines. Petitions would not need to go through SOS, and only need to be sent to SOGS because this is a graduate issue. SOGS is charged with making sure that the students are qualified to take the courses. Also, many of the associate deans serve on both SOGS and SOS, so there is substantial overlap. SOGS can request supporting documentation about the student's ability to handle the course work.

Although we have graduate deans who are responsible for graduate admissions, graduate curricula, and graduation degree requirements, bringing these petitions to SOGS allows those individuals to be involved in the decisions while at the same time providing a venue for institutional knowledge to be passed down to subsequent individuals who serve in these roles. Graduate associate deans may step in and out. Graduate program directors and coordinators turn over. Knowledge may be lost in these transitions, such as historical understanding of what has to happen next. Building in mechanisms to protect institutional memory is important. Additionally, at times RAS would need to be consulted and going through the SOGS structure provides a contact point with RAS. There is a clear process for approved petitions to go directly to RAS.

The proposed change would not affect the ability of Associate Deans to admit students for graduate certificates as non-degree graduate students. This proposed revision of R&P pertains to undergraduate students who would like to apply credits taken as an undergraduate to a graduate program or degree. If courses are going to be applied to a graduate certificate or degree, then having it reviewed by SOGS ensures that this is appropriate.