CAS Minimum Requirements for an Accelerated Bachelor/Master Degree (ABM)

I. Introduction

ABM’s are gaining currency at universities across the country and have also been at the center of discussions at meetings of the Council of Graduate Schools. These degree programs are in part driven by the needs of our knowledge-based professional world which is increasingly requiring graduate degrees as a prerequisite for employment. Partially it is also motivated by financial reasons because some students wish to save a year of tuition costs by completing a Bachelor/Master degree in five years instead of the usual six or more. An important aspect from our end is that ABM’s recruit rising juniors to our own graduate programs.

CAS has been cognizant of this development. In this regard, the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice have instituted such accelerated degree programs. Whereas their programs were put together on their own initiative, it would seem to be time to develop a general framework for such programs in order to insure minimum qualitative consistency. ABM’s may vary widely beyond these minimum requirements and may not be feasible for every discipline.

II. Establishing an ABM Program

ABM’s are specifically intended for exceptional undergraduate students and allow them to complete the requirements for both the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at an accelerated pace.

There is no particular format to follow when proposing an ABM. However, that proposal must include outcomes that are very similar to a traditional Master’s at SLU and a benchmarking comparison with ABM’s at comparable institutions. While a reasonable set of comparable institutions for benchmarking will vary by discipline, the expected default set of institutions should come from comprehensive Jesuit Universities and flagship state universities in the Midwest.

In all cases, six hours is the maximum number of hours that may count toward both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. Courses in the major may not be double counted unless justified in the proposal. Departments can choose to count less than six or to count such hours only as electives for the Bachelor portion of the ABM.

III. Minimum Requirements

An ABM program in CAS will adhere to the following minimum requirements and guidelines:

- with [http://www.slu.edu/Documents/arts_sciences/ABMApplication2.pdf](http://www.slu.edu/Documents/arts_sciences/ABMApplication2.pdf), the student applies to be admitted to the ABM during the spring semester of the junior year;
- in exceptional cases, the student may also apply by the end of the fall semester of the senior year;
- ABM programs may require more supporting documentation than what is minimally indicated on the form;
- minimum overall GPA and in the ABM field: ordinarily 3.4 (B+);
• minimum of 90 hours completed toward the Bachelor at the end of the junior year, 105 by the end of fall semester of the senior year;
• a transfer student must have completed a minimum of 30 hours at SLU;
• the ABM program may decide to forego the GRE and letters of recommendation based on having first-hand experience with the student;
• although the student has been accepted into an ABM, s/he strictly remains an undergraduate until the Bachelor’s degree is awarded for the purposes of financial aid and scholarships;
• during the student’s senior year, s/he may take up to six hours of graduate-level courses that count both for the undergraduate degree and the graduate degree;
• since the student has been accepted into the ABM program, it will not be necessary for the student to use the “Petition by an Undergraduate to Enroll in Graduate Coursework”; the student must receive at least a B in the graduate courses taken as an undergraduate;
• if the student falls below the 3.4 minimum GPA after being admitted into the ABM but before fully taking graduate courses during the fifth year, the student will need departmental approval to continue in the ABM track;
• a graduate-level assistantship may be awarded pending conferral of the Bachelor’s degree;
• the ABM proposal requires CAS Curriculum Committee, BGE, Faculty Council and CAS Dean approval.

In some cases it might be possible to set up an individualized ABM outside of ones that already exist, perhaps also crossing disciplines. It would be set up in close consultation with the student, the student’s academic advisor(s), the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and the Associate Dean for Graduate Education, and would follow the same guidelines as above.

Further issues and challenges to keep in mind:

• in order to insure completion of the ABM within five years, close tracking of the student will be necessary, and the exact sequencing and availability of courses should be clearly laid out on the attached form and guaranteed;
• an ABM is in many ways an extension of undergraduate studies without necessarily providing for a more formal transition to graduate studies and the demands they entail; hence, a department is advised to create an intentional transition and orientation as much as possible;
• given the short timeline toward ABM completion, a thesis may not be realistic;
• it is best that a separate advisor be in charge of all ABM students in a particular department.