

The Graduate School  
West Texas A&M University  
**The Accelerated College Degree/Bachelor's to Master's Degree**  
January 24, 2012

The bachelor's to master's degree is a way to support and encourage the most talented of our undergraduate students to pursue a master's degree in an accelerated format. Additionally, the bachelor's to master's degree provides potential for increasing graduate enrollment. Departments may choose to participate or not. (Participating programs will be listed on the Graduate School web site)

**The WTAMU Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Degree**

Proposed: 2012

Contact Information: Dean of the Graduate School

I. Introduction and Overview Summary

The Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's degree program allows talented undergraduates at West Texas A&M University an opportunity to complete the requirements for both the bachelor's and master's degrees at an accelerated pace. To qualify, a student must be approved for the program and reside in a discipline that has selected to participate in the accelerated program. Approved undergraduate students may count up to 12 graduate credit hours toward their bachelor's degree and should obtain a non-thesis master's degree in the same field within 12 months of completing the bachelor's degree or obtain a thesis-based master's degree in the same field within 18 months of completing the bachelor's degree. Extensions, requested by both the student and the associated disciplinary program, may be submitted to Graduate School for consideration when exceptional circumstances prevent timeline completion. Students entering the participating programs should be encouraged to place a focus on research as a part of their undergraduate/graduate plan. Departments may choose to participate or not.

Sponsorship

The same department or program that awards the bachelor's degree must sponsor the master's degree. This does not preclude master's degrees in interdisciplinary graduate programs in which the sponsoring department participates, nor acceptance of the student in a closely related field, if the department granting the graduate degree recommends admission to the Graduate School.

Admission

Students must have a minimum cumulative grade point average as approved by the associated department and college, typically this is a 3.0/4.0 in undergraduate work

at WTAMU. As incentive, no GRE or other standardized test score will be required unless the participating program or department requires it for admission to their program.

A student may apply when he/she has successfully completed a minimum of **75 and a maximum of 108** credit hours in their undergraduate programs, including credits earned from advanced placement (including approved transfer hours).

All students, including transfer students, must have completed a minimum of two semesters as a full-time student at WTAMU, a minimum of 24 hours.

## II. Establishing the Program

### 2.1 Process

Prior to admission of any student into the accelerated bachelor's to master's program, the program must be developed by the department/program and college and approved by the Graduate Council, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The program must include:

- A minimum of 108 bachelors hours,
- 12 graduate hours counted on the bachelor's degree and then transferred to the master's degree,
- 18 graduate hours (a total of 30 graduate hours when combined with the 12 hours counted for the undergraduate degree),
- Equals a total of 138 total hours.

### 2.2 Sponsorship

The same department or program that awards the bachelor's degree must sponsor the master's degree. This does not preclude master's degrees in interdisciplinary graduate programs in which the sponsoring department participates, nor acceptance of the student in a closely related field, if the department granting the graduate degree recommends admission to the Graduate School.

## III. Application to the Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Degree Program

3.1 A prospective student who meets the eligibility requirements (admission criteria determined by each discipline) must initiate a meeting with his/her graduate program director in the program of interest. This should be done between the 75 and 108 credit hour mark. The graduate advisor will work with the undergraduate advisor as appropriate.

3.2 An integrated bachelor's to master's degree plan should be created that provides an overview of the degree pathway. A template will be created by Graduate School.

3.3 Before admission to a preferred program can be finalized, students must submit the standard application for admission to the Graduate School which includes:

- a. Graduate application
- b. Application fee
- c. Copy of all transcripts should already be on file including transfer work if applicable.
- d. The integrated bachelors/graduate degree plan must be signed by the prospective student, the undergraduate advisor, and the graduate advisor (and other signatures as required by the associated college).
- e. Other admission requirements as per the department/discipline.

*The Integrated Bachelor's to Master's Degree Plan must clearly indicate the following:*

- Undergraduate courses required for the bachelor's degree (min of 108)
- The master's degree courses (maximum of 12 graduate hours) double counted for bachelor's degree and the master's degree
- The graduate courses that will be taken after matriculating into the graduate program (minimum of 18)
- The graduation date for the master's degree that meets the time limit for the accelerated master's program (i. e., should obtain a non-thesis degree in the same field within 12 months of completing the bachelor's degree or obtaining a thesis based master's degree in the same field within 18 months of completing the bachelor's degree.)

Visual Example:

### Combined Bachelor's to Master's Program

Freshman 30 Credits	Sophomore 30 Credits	Junior 30 Credits	Senior 30 Credits	Graduate 30 Credits
Undergraduate Hours Required = 120 (includes 12 taken at graduate level)				
		Graduate Hours Required = 30 (12 at the undergraduate level + 18 at the graduate level)		
		Apply to Department's Accelerated Degree Program and to the Graduate School		Graduate School transfers 12 undergraduate credits to apply to the graduate degree
		Submit supporting documents for admission (if required)		
		Admitted for term following graduation		

### 3.4 Combinations of undergraduate and graduate

*Many combinations of undergraduate and graduate programs may be possible and are not restricted to the confines of a single discipline or major. For example, an integrated undergraduate/graduate program may be developed for a bachelor of science leading to a master's in Business Administration or Environmental Science.*

Any changes to the Plan of Graduate Work must be submitted in writing and approved by the Graduate Advisor and the Dean or Associate Dean of the Graduate School

## IV. Criteria for Admission to the Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Program

4.1 Permission to pursue an accelerated Bachelor's to Master's degree program does not guarantee admission to the Graduate School. Admission is contingent on meeting the following eligibility requirements at the time of entering the graduate program:

4.2 Students must have completed a minimum of 75 and a maximum of 108 credit hours in their undergraduate programs, including credits earned from advanced placement;

4.3 All students, including transfer students, must have completed a minimum of two semesters as a full-time student at WTAMU, a minimum of 24 hours;

4.4 Students must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0/4.0 or as specified by the associated discipline at WTAMU.

4.5 No GRE (Graduate Record Examination) or other test scores are required unless the graduate program wishes to include that requirement.

4.6 Other admission criteria, as specified by the discipline must be met.

## V. Requirements for Participation and Graduation

5.1 Students must complete the bachelor's degree prior to full admission to the master's program. Early completion of the bachelor's degree will support undergraduate graduation and retention initiatives at WTAMU. Students in the accelerated bachelor's to master's program may not elect to by-pass the bachelor's degree or to select only to participate in the accelerated master's component. Students must participate in both the accelerated bachelor's and the master's degree at WTAMU.

5.2 Students must earn a grade of B (3.0/4.0) or better in the double-counted graduate level courses. Courses with a grade below B cannot be double counted between the two degrees. Any course with a grade of less than a B must be retaken and replaced in order to be utilized in the accelerated bachelor's to master's degree program.

5.3 No more than twelve (12) hours of graduate work may be counted towards the requirements of both degrees.

5.4 Students should complete the master's degree within 12 months from the completion of the bachelor's degree for non-thesis master's degree and within 18 months for the master's programs requiring a thesis. If the master's program is not completed within these time limits, none of the courses can be double counted. The student would be removed from the accelerated bachelor's to master's degree program. The student could reapply to the associated, traditional master's degree program. Graduate hours, excluding those counted for the undergraduate degree, would apply toward the traditional degree, generally a minimum of a 36 hour program, but may be more, depending upon the discipline.

## VI. Continuing Eligibility

6.1 It is the responsibility of the student to recognize his/her eligibility status. However, students in discipline programs or classes may be informed by their professors if there are accelerated programs compatible to the student's interest areas. Advisors in undergraduate programs are encouraged to promote the accelerated bachelor's to master's programs and to encourage qualified students to contact graduate faculty advisors.

6.2 If a student completes the bachelor's degree requirements with an accumulated GPA of less than 3.0/4.0, then he/she is no longer eligible to double count credit hours and is automatically terminated from the accelerated bachelor's to master's program. Individual departments may have higher requirements and these must be in writing and posted on the Graduate School web site. Student failure to meet requirements will make a student ineligible to participate in the accelerated program.

6.3 A student who does not follow the approved Plan of Graduate Work will become ineligible to participate in the accelerated bachelor's to master's program.

6.4 A student who is ineligible to participate in or withdraws from the accelerated bachelor's to master's program cannot double count any courses for both bachelor's and master's degrees. However, courses successfully completed with a 3.0 or better may count toward the bachelor's degree as appropriate substitutions. Graduate courses utilized for a bachelor's degree cannot be utilized for a graduate degree outside of the accelerated bachelor's to master's degree program.

6.5 If a student becomes ineligible to participate in the accelerated bachelor's to master's program, the Graduate Advisor must inform the student in writing of his/her ineligibility. A copy of the letter to the student must be sent to the Graduate School.

#### 6.6. Withdrawal

A student may at any time withdraw from an approved accelerated bachelor's to master's program by informing the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Programs in writing. A copy of this request to withdraw must be sent to the Graduate School. (See 6.4)

### VII. Next Steps

7.1 Upon receiving all student application materials, including the integrated bachelor's to master's graduate degree plan, the Graduate School will process and file admission materials.

7.2 Graduate School will formally notify the student of acceptance as per the discipline/departments recommendation (based on admission standards).

7.3 Upon acceptance, the student will work with his/her academic advisors to enroll in the appropriate courses.

7.5 Applications should be submitted to the Graduate School no later than the following dates:

- August 1<sup>st</sup> for fall term admission
- December 1<sup>st</sup> for spring term admission
- May 1<sup>st</sup> for summer term admission

### VIII. Departmental Responsibilities, If This Degree Option is Chosen:

8.1 Determine courses and sequencing applicable for students to achieve the accelerated bachelor's to master's program(s).

8.2 Include information about this degree option in their portion of the university catalog and program web pages.

8.3 Designate a point faculty member (graduate program chair) in the department who will be the information source for questions and student monitoring for the degree pathway.

8.4 With an accelerated program format, accountability to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and skills required for the discipline is necessary and such procedures for assessment must be included in the program materials.

8.5 The department and advisor should encourage research/scholarship/internship as a part of the degree planning.

8.6 The low producing program count (as per THECB requirements) is inclusive of both the students involved in the accelerated component of the master's degree and the traditional master's degree. This may be of benefit to disciplines with low program enrollment.

8.7 For implementation beginning in spring 2012.

## IX. Financial Aid Implications

9.1 Students will be classified as "undergraduate" while still meeting requirements for the undergraduate degree component, even when taking the 12 graduate hours referenced above. Thus, students will continue to receive financial aid at the undergraduate level.

9.2 Federal financial aid will not pay for graduate level classes taken by undergraduate students; therefore, students who require federal grants and loans are advised to take a minimum of six (6) undergraduate hours each semester they also enroll in graduate hours. If budgeted carefully, it may be possible to pay for the cost of the graduate class (tuition and fees) with the overage paid to the student after all tuition, fees, or other applicable charges have been paid.

9.3 Once the bachelor's degree has been conferred, the student's classification will be changed to "graduate," allowing the student to receive federal financial aid at the graduate level.