

## **CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

*DRAFT for discussion purposes only in the Educational Policy Committee – 11/12/08*

*\* This policy is written with the assumption that it will go into effect in fall 2010 along with the ERP conversion to PeopleSoft and the campus switchover to the per-credit-hour tuition calculation model.*

### **Objectives**

The primary objectives of a Continuous Enrollment Policy are:

- 1) To instill a culture of making continuous progress toward graduate degrees in all graduate programs,
- 2) To increase rates of graduate degree completion and reduce overall time to degree,
- 3) To ensure communication and interaction between graduate students and faculty advisors, which includes giving faculty the proper credit for their advising duties, and
- 4) To facilitate administrative tracking and reporting on the graduate student population.

### **I. Minimum Enrollment**

All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill must maintain continuous enrollment from matriculation until completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registration during each semester (Fall, Spring) of the academic year until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated through an official University withdrawal.

This policy adheres to all minimum registration requirements of graduate programs, which typically require maintaining full-time status as degree-seeking graduate students through 9.0 credit hours of course registration or 3.0 credit hours of registration in thesis/dissertation courses (992/993/994). Full-time registration will grant students all the allowances and services which full-time status affords, including use of campus resources and facilities, eligibility for student health insurance plans, access to stipends, assistantships and financial aid, student loan payment deferment, and international visa status. Some graduate programs require only part-time registration, including reduced campus resources; this policy is intended to be flexible and would allow those practices to continue.

Eligible students may alternately enroll for 1.0 credit hour in the distance thesis/dissertation course (99X) through their own program. Students eligible for this option are 1) doctoral students who are classified as having completed all doctoral requirements except the research, writing, and final defense of their dissertation (i.e., ABD status<sup>1</sup>), and 2) master's students who have met all degree requirements except the

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<sup>1</sup> ABD status does not officially exist today. It will be defined due to the PeopleSoft ERP conversion effort and will be in effect fall 2010 at the same time as this CEP policy. Actual specifics are still pending, but it is expected that ABD status will be granted after a student has completed all coursework, examinations, residency requirements, and a prospectus defense. All that should remain for the student is the research, writing, and defense of the dissertation.

research, writing, and final defense of their thesis or approved substitute (i.e., all coursework, examinations, and residency requirements are met).

Eligible students must receive permission to enroll in this option from their primary advisor and program Director of Graduate Studies, who will take the student's progress to date, academic plan for the semester, and need for university resources, including faculty time, into consideration. The Graduate School makes the final decision on enrollment.

Registration in 1.0 credit hour of 99X meets the requirements for continuous enrollment. However, it does not meet requirements for full-time registration and thus will not grant students all the allowances and services which full-time status affords.

Many other programs, offices, and agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and federal financial aid programs require full-time enrollment. Students are responsible for monitoring such enrollment requirements and registering for credit hours accordingly.

The table below indicates the various types of enrollment options available to students, including the corresponding student services.

<b><i>ENROLLMENT OPTIONS &amp; SERVICES</i></b>	<b>General graduate courses (400 and above)</b>	<b>Thesis/ Dissertation (992/993/994)</b>	<b>Distance Thesis/ Dissertation (99x)</b>
<b>Number of enrolled credit hours?</b>	9.0+	3.0	1.0
<b>Fulfills requirements for the Continuous Enrollment Policy?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Grants full-time student status?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Eligible for TA-/RA-ship?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Eligible for student health insurance?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Student loans remain in deferment?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Meets full-time status for VA, INS, and federal financial aid programs?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Provides access to on-campus academic and student services (e.g., Campus Health Services, athletics events/facilities, Writing Center)?</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Provides access to distance-based student services (e.g., Library/e-Reserves access , email account, student software discounts, mainframe computing access)?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Provides access to campus locations and facilities (e.g., building keys, laboratory access)?</b>	Yes	Yes	Program-specific

## II. Monitoring and Compliance

The Graduate School will communicate with graduate programs and students and serve as the unit monitoring compliance with the Continuous Enrollment Policy. Graduate programs are also expected to aid their students in complying with the Continuous Enrollment Policy.

Students are expected to enroll continuously by the first billing date for each upcoming semester. When this deadline arrives, the Graduate School will notify those degree-seeking students who have not enrolled for the upcoming semester that they will lose their status as enrolled graduate students if action is not taken. Students who do not officially withdraw or enroll by the census date (i.e., the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the academic semester) will be notified in writing via their official university email address on file with the University Registrar's Office<sup>2</sup> of their dismissal from their graduate program. Student academic transcripts will reflect the dismissal date.

## III. Readmission Following Dismissal

**Readmission in the same semester of dismissal:** Dismissed students who wish to resume their graduate studies in the same semester of dismissal must apply for readmission through the Graduate School, pre-pay all semester tuition and student fees, and pay the late registration fee<sup>3</sup> before they can register for courses.

**Readmission after one or more semesters of non-enrollment:** Dismissed students who wish to resume their graduate studies after one semester or more of non-enrollment must apply competitively to the Graduate School and their graduate programs as new applicants for admission. Students will be required to submit a new application, including all associated materials within program deadlines, and pay associated reapplication fees<sup>4</sup>. Admission is not guaranteed and requires competitive review by the student's former program.

The academic program and the Graduate School will consult to determine if credits previously earned will meet current degree requirements. The new admission offer may be contingent on fulfilling additional academic requirements, such as retaking coursework and passing comprehensive exams again. The Graduate School and the academic program will

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<sup>2</sup> The CEP will use the same communication plan as e-Billing, which will begin in fall 2010 with the bill notification only being sent to the university's official email account.

<sup>3</sup> It is the CEP Task Force's understanding that the late registration fee post-census will be significantly increased by the time the CEP is implemented. The current \$20 late registration fee is not sufficient in our opinion to change behaviors as intended by the CEP. If the late registration fee is not increased as planned, the Task Force would be in support of a new readmission fee to be implemented in this scenario.

<sup>4</sup> It is the CEP Task Force's recommendation to split the Graduate School's application fee into two groups: the normal fee would apply to new applicants, while a significantly higher fee would apply to applicants in this scenario. This reapplication fee is not proposed as a new fee, rather it is intended to reflect the additional time and effort that must go into processing an application for students who lapse enrollment and wish to re-enter their programs, i.e., researching and developing individualized academic plans.

work jointly to develop academic plans for individual cases, including establishing a new time limit for degree completion.

Additionally, the new admission offer will be contingent on enrollment in course credit hours calculated according to the number of semesters of lapsed enrollment. The required number of credit hours will be calculated at the rate of 3.0 credit hours per semester of non-enrollment. The required number of credit hours is intended to be above and beyond any remaining coursework needed to meet degree requirements.

Dismissed students who wish to resume graduate study after one semester or more of non-enrollment may alternately choose to apply competitively to the Graduate School and their graduate programs as new applicants for admission under the program's current requirements. Special fees and the lapsed enrollment requirement upon readmission will not be in effect. If students elect this option, they begin the academic program anew without any previous course credits, residency requirements, or examinations waived.

#### **IV. Leave of Absence**

A Leave of Absence (LOA) provides a mechanism for students to be temporarily exempt from the Continuous Enrollment Policy due to family medical/health or military circumstances. A LOA requires approval from the student's Director of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School. An approved LOA stands in lieu of registering for the minimum number of credit hours.

**Conditions:** During a LOA, students may not use UNC facilities, resources, or services designed or intended for enrolled students; receive a graduate assistantship, fellowship, financial aid, or health insurance from the University; or enroll in or complete any UNC courses. Students must sign a LOA contract agreeing to these terms.

An approved LOA does not stop the time-to-degree year limits associated with the degree(s) being sought; an extension of the degree time limit may be requested if needed.

An approved LOA does not exempt students from the enrollment requirements of other programs, offices, and agencies such as the Veterans Administration, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and federal financial aid programs.

**Eligibility:** Enrolled students may apply for a LOA for military service or medical/health-related issues. Students should complete a LOA request form and submit it to their Director of Graduate Studies, along with any supporting documentation appropriate to substantiate their request. The academic program should submit approved LOA requests to the Graduate School for final processing.

LOAs will not be granted for reasons pertaining to research/work on the graduate degree or for reasons of employment outside the University.

Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements for a LOA must be enrolled as outlined in the Continuous Enrollment Policy or officially withdraw from the University.

**Deadlines:** Enrolled students may apply for a LOA in a future semester at any time. Applications for a LOA in the current semester must be received and approved by the Graduate School by the census date (i.e., the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the academic semester) to remain in compliance with the Continuous Enrollment Policy. A LOA will not be granted retroactively after the census date.

Mid-semester emergency leaves, including issues of grade assignment and completion plans for in-process courses, will be handled on a case-by-case basis with the student, academic program, and the Graduate School.

**Limits:** Students are eligible for up to two planned semesters of approved leave, plus one emergency mid-semester leave if necessary, during their tenure as graduate students. More than one LOA may be requested as long as the total accumulated time does not exceed three semesters. After three semesters of LOA, students must be enrolled as outlined in the Continuous Enrollment Policy or officially withdraw from the University.

The Parental Leave Policy addresses parental leave situations separately from this LOA policy.

In accordance with federal guidelines, students who are required to complete continuing military service will have the three semester LOA limit waived.

## **V. Implementation**

The Continuous Enrollment Policy will go into effect in fall 2010 for all entering and currently enrolled graduate students.

Students whose enrollment lapsed before the introduction of the Continuous Enrollment Policy and who are still within their original time-to-degree year limits may apply for readmission to their academic program under the regulations previously in place. Special fees and the lapsed enrollment requirement upon readmission will not be in effect. The Graduate School and the academic program will work jointly to develop academic plans for individual cases. Any subsequent lapses in continuous enrollment will be subject to the Continuous Enrollment Policy.

## **VI. Appeal**

Students may appeal actions resulting from non-compliance with the Continuous Enrollment Policy or denial of a requested LOA by submitting a request in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School. Students will be requested to document in writing unusual and extenuating circumstances that could justify an individual exception to the policy.

## Appendix 1 – Financial Implications

The table below indicates the various options available to students each semester, including the corresponding financial implications. Students are expected to comply with the Continuous Enrollment Policy, or the other penalties and fees will be assessed as appropriate to the situation.

### *FINANCIAL IMPACTS FOR DISMISSAL AND READMISSION*

<i>Financial Responsibilities</i>	<i>CEP Compliance</i>	<i>&lt;1 semester of lapsed enrollment</i>	<i>1+ semesters of lapsed enrollment</i>	<i>New applicant</i>
<b>Tuition and student fees</b>	Yes*	n/a	Yes, upon readmission	Yes, upon admission
<b>Pre-paid tuition and student fees</b>	n/a	Yes*	n/a	n/a
<b>Additional registration requirements</b>	No	No	Yes, calculated at 3.0 credit hours per semester of non-enrollment	No
<b>Reapplication fee</b>	No	No	tbd but > \$75	\$75
<b>Late registration fee</b>	No	tbd but > \$20	n/a	n/a

### *\* GENERAL TUITION AND FEES*

	<b>Full-time Enrollment</b>	<b>Distance Thesis/Dissertation Enrollment</b>
<b>Tuition</b>	3.0 T/D to 9.0 or more credit hours	1.0 credit hour
<b>Student fees</b>	Full	Reduced

**Note: these tables will have additional detail added as fee levels are discussed in the coming year.**