

Establishing a New Undergraduate Degree and/or Distance Education Degree Program

What is an Undergraduate Degree Program?

A degree program is a program of study in a discipline specialty that leads to a degree in that distinct specialty area at a particular level of instruction. **The minimum number of required credit hours in any degree program is 120 and shall not exceed 128 credits.** Any requirement beyond 128 hours must be approved by the Board Of Governors. Any program authorized by the BOG requiring 135 semester hours or more shall be designated as a five-year baccalaureate program.

All degree programs are categorized individually in the University's academic program inventory ([API](#)) at the [six-digit CIP code](#) level. As a general rule, in order to be considered for degree program status, a course of study should require **at least 27 semester hours** in the proposed program area at the undergraduate level. Anything less than this within an existing degree program should be designated as a concentration.

Undergraduate Degrees may be established either as an on-campus program, a distance education program or both. In accordance with [UNC-GA Policies for Academic Planning](#) and [NC State guidelines for new degree development](#), certain documentation and approval is required for establishing a new degree and/or a distance education (DE) degree. [Specialized program accreditation](#) for degree programs are noted at OIRP.

Click the link below to for the first step in establishing a new Undergraduate Degree and/or Distance Education Degree Program:

- [Requesting Authorization to Plan](#)

What needs to be considered in the development of the curriculum?

Program Development and Prioritization

Check to ensure that the degree program aligns with the guiding principles under [Academic Program Planning Process](#) which is considered when establishing and prioritizing new degree programs.

Hours Required for Graduation: 120-128 credit hours

The minimum number of required credit hours in any degree program is 120 and shall not exceed 128 credits without approval of the Provost and the Board of Governors and shall not exceed 134 without approval of the Provost and the Board of Governors as a five-year program. Four-year curricula must be attainable within a period of eight semesters. Eight-semester displays (**Format A**) should show a range of 15-17 credit hours per semester.

General Education Program (GEP) Requirements: 39 credit hours and co-requisites

The mission of the [General Education Program \(GEP\)](#) is to provide students the opportunity to experience diverse and integrative disciplinary perspectives. General education enhances students' intellectual engagement in their majors, prepares them for the changing demands of professional careers, equips them for a lifetime of learning, and lays the foundation for involvement in their communities as responsible citizens and leaders. The General Education Program for undergraduates at NC State was approved by the Provost on February 1, 2008 to be effective Summer II, 2009.

The GEP requirements must be included within the curriculum. Note that a GEP category may not be subdivided (e.g. a program or college may not require a student to take a specific GEP course to satisfy the GEP requirement). But, if a course is required in the major and is also on a GEP course list, the course may be double-counted as satisfying the requirement of the major/minor and the specific GEP

requirement, with the exception of the Additional Breadth category. A course chosen from the Additional Breadth cannot double-count with a course required in the major but may be used to double-count in satisfying a requirement for a minor or the GEP USD or GK co-requisite. When double-counting, the number of credits are not counted twice. For more information on the General Education Program including category requirements, rationale, objectives, and course listings, please refer to GEP requirements.

Major Field of Study, Course Requirements, and Electives

Courses constituting a major must be approved permanent courses (i.e. not a special topics) and may satisfy General Education requirements if applicable.

Major Field of Study

In order to be considered for undergraduate degree program status in the UNC system, **at least 27 semester hours** should be required in the major field of study and sufficient coursework in the major field and related areas should be included to satisfy the objectives of the program. The curriculum should demonstrate required rigor and depth by appropriate distribution of introductory and advanced coursework. Requiring a 500-level course in an undergraduate curriculum is discouraged. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

The major field of study may consist of courses specifically required and/or of courses to be selected from groups of courses. Individual courses or groups of courses designated as part of the major requirements may be courses offered by the major department (or interdisciplinary program) or collateral courses equally central to the major field of study that are offered by other departments. Requiring a course(s) offered by a college or department outside of the college conferring the degree will require consultation with the affected department to determine course availability, enrollment concerns, and other considerations.

Course Groupings and Electives

Groups of courses from which a student can choose from to satisfy curricular requirements should be labeled as **Elective Groups** on **Format B**. Appropriate terms should be selected to designate a group of elective courses so that the meaning and extent of student choices are clear (e.g., Geophysics electives, Management electives, Engineering Science electives.)

Examples of elective groupings

- Advised elective is understood to mean the student chooses a course in coordination with their adviser and should not be associated with a course list.
- Restricted electives - specifies a select group of courses central or supplementary to the major field of study
- Departmental Electives - courses offered primarily by the major department
- Technical Electives - technical or scientific courses offered primarily outside of the major department
- Concentration (Sub-plan) Electives - courses that together form a concentration within a degree program

Free Electives

All colleges are encouraged when possible to include free electives in their curricula to satisfy their educational objectives. The University does not require that free electives be required in any curriculum. Free electives may be taken on a credit-only (pass/fail) basis up to a maximum of 12 credit hours under the provisions of the [Credit-only Courses Policy](#).

Any elective in a curriculum is interpreted as a free elective unless qualifications are specifically stated.

No limitations may be imposed upon the student's choice of free electives provided the student has satisfied the pre-requisites and provided that no elected course covers material:

1. considered remedial; or
2. at an elementary level after the student has taken comparable material at an advanced level; or
3. substantially presented in a course or courses previously taken.

Curriculum Assessment Consideration

Assessment is a form of research that allows for systematic evaluation of the extent to which the program meets its objectives (goals) and outcomes. At NC State University, especially in the academic arena, it is used to improve programs through proactive, well-informed decision-making. This is handled by the Office of Assessment.

Because faculty members are in the best position to assess student learning, NC State strives to give maximum flexibility to faculty members with respect to crafting assessment plans and measures for their programs while maintaining the minimum university level oversight consistent with the requirements of regional accreditation. To that end, the Associate Deans in each college with the responsibility for undergraduate academic affairs have been tasked with ensuring that their departments and programs are engaged in the process. In return, the Associate Deans are free to administer the assessment process in their respective colleges in ways that are most amenable to their faculty within the broad parameters of the university guidelines.

What are the Purposes of Assessment?

To indicate the extent to which a program achieves its objectives and outcomes so that the program can use the findings to inform:

- program planning,
- decision-making to improve the program,
- revisions of program objectives, and
- resource allocation and budget requests.

What is the Assessment Cycle?

The assessment cycle is continuous. It should identify/document strengths, weaknesses, needs, improvements and future plans:

- It begins with the identification of program missions, objectives, and outcomes
- It continues with the evaluation of those missions, objectives and outcomes
- Through the reporting of the results of the evaluation, it uses the results for the purposes described above
- Then, it begins again, reexamining mission, objectives, and outcomes, evaluating the outcomes, etc.

What are Objectives?

- They are broad, general statements of [1] what the program wants students to be able to do and to know or [2] what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know.
- They are evaluated directly or indirectly by measuring specific outcomes related to the objective.
- They are related to the mission and goals of the department and college in which the program resides, and to the mission and goals of the University.

What are Outcomes?

- Outcomes are more detailed and specific statements derived from the objectives. They are used to determine the presence or absence of, amount of, or level of the behavior or knowledge specified by an objective.
- They may be things the program wants students to know (cognitive), ways students think (affective/attitudinal), or things students should be able to do (behavioral, performance, psychomotor).
- Outcomes are observable, measurable results or evidence of the educational experience.
- They are detailed and meaningful enough to guide decisions in program planning and improvement and decisions about pedagogy and practice.

How is Assessment Conducted?

- Participants (assessors) systematically collect and review measures that demonstrate whether or to what extent outcomes have been achieved.
- Measures may be quantitative or qualitative, direct or indirect. They go beyond performance indicators such as graduation rates and may take the form of surveys, assignments or student products from portfolios and capstone courses, interviews, etc.
- It is best if multiple sources of evidence can be used to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes.

How To Establish an Undergraduate Degree Program

To create a new degree, the details for the program must be documented using the following procedure. This documentation is then submitted for routing through the approval process.

Required Documentation for UNC-GA Forms concurrent with UNC-GA Policy No. 400.1.1:

- [Request to Plan a New Degree Program](#) (On-Campus or Distance)
Include as an attachment with a 1 page concept paper addressing the [seven guiding principles](#) as specified by the Provost to Request to Plan a New Degree Program.
- Contact the [Office of Undergraduate Courses and Curricula](#) to obtain a **routing number** for Request to Plan a New Degree Program.

Note: The request for authorization to plan (Request to Plan a New Degree Program with attachment) will be reviewed by the Council of Deans and Provost for approval to continue. Upon approval by UNC-GA to plan, Request to Establish a New Degree Program will be required to be submitted to UNC-GA within 4 months of submission of Request to Plan a New Degree Program.

- [Request to Establish a New Degree Program \(On Campus or Distance\)](#) will be submitted once UNC-GA grants approval to plan based on submission of Request to Plan a New Degree Program.

Request to Establish a New Degree Program Attachments to Include:

- Executive Summary
- Statement of reference to College's current long range plan and UNC Tomorrow. If proposed program is not referenced in current long range plan, indicate how it is consistent with that plan or why plan is now changed.
- Catalog description to be posted in the Undergraduate Catalog
- Detailed budget including all costs related to the proposed program and resources to be allocated if not clearly defined in budget information in Request to Establish a New Degree Program.
- Listing of Degree Requirements (**Format B**)

- Semester-by-Semester Display of Requirements (**Format A**)
- Intracampus transfer requirements for the program
- [Routing Form](#) - Identifies the on-campus routing of the action before submission to UNC-GA
- Signature Page - Identifies the signatures required
- Provide the name of NC State program representative who will be the contact for this program.

Curriculum Development Checklist

- Are the hours required to complete the curriculum within 120-128 hours?
- Does the curriculum require at least 27 semester hours in the proposed program area (apart from any college requirements)?
- Is the 4-year curriculum attainable within 8 semesters?
- Is the course load evenly distributed over the eight semesters with a range of 15-17 credit hours per term?
- Is the curriculum appropriately arranged so that the level of courses (100, 200, etc) is consistent with the academic level of students (FR, SO, JR, SR)?
- Does the sequence of courses provide the necessary pre-requisites in time for later advanced coursework?
- Are the courses normally offered in the semester in which they appear in the 8-semester display?
- Does the curriculum provide reasonable transfer opportunities at the appropriate levels (FR, SO, etc) for students from other institutions or within this institution, consistent with the goals of the program?
- Have all the necessary or appropriate interdepartmental or intercollege consultations been held and the results been documented?
- Have all the general education program requirements been accounted for in the curriculum?

How To Establish an Undergraduate Distance Education Degree Program

Required Documentation

For new Undergraduate Distance Education degree programs that are already authorized in the [Academic Program Inventory](#) the following forms must be included in the documentation package in accordance with [UNC-GA Distance Education academic planning procedures](#).

UNC-GA and NC State Forms and attachments include:

- Signature Page
- [Routing Sheet](#)
- Appendix J - if applicable. ex: site-based programs
- Include a detailed budget including all costs related to the proposed program and resources to be allocated

For development of a new Undergraduate Distance Education degree program that is not currently authorized in the Academic Program Inventory, follow the procedure outlined above for the establishment of a new degree, as well as applicable procedures outlined for establishment of distance education programs. Request to Plan a New Degree Program and Request to Establish a New Degree Program must be submitted simultaneously.

Required Assessment of DE Programs per UNC-GA

UNC-GA authorizes degree-related distance education programs for a maximum initial period of five years. At the completion of the fourth year of operation (or at least two months prior to expiration of the

program if sooner than four years), an assessment of the program must be completed by the program and the results submitted to the UNC-GA Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (with the request for renewal if there continues to be a demand for the program). This assessment and any request for renewal should follow the format in Appendix H of UNC-GA Policy No. 400.1.1.1[R]

Types of Distance Education program offerings: these programs fall into two categories as outlined below:

1. Off-campus instruction offering 26-49 Percent of a degree. Programs proposing distance education activities, including site-based/classroom group instruction or distance learning/technology-based group or individual instruction where the instructor and student are geographically separated, should notify the Office of Undergraduate Courses and Curricula in the Division of Academic and Student Affairs (DASA). They will notify University Planning & Analysis who will **coordinate the notification** of SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) and copy the Senior Vice President. This must be done prior to reaching the point where 26% of a student's credits toward graduation can be completed via Distance Education.
2. Distance Education programs offering 50 Percent or more of a degree program. Distance education programs in which 50% or more of a degree program is provided via distance education (site-based/classroom group instruction or distance learning/technology-based group or individual instruction where the instructor and student are geographically separated) **must be authorized** by the UNC-GA Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and SACS must be notified (to be done by UPA). This must be completed six months in advance of implementation.