

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

3.A.1. [Board Policy](#) requires universities to review academic programs every seven years to ensure they are relevant, high quality and consistent with the mission and Strategic Plan. As discussed in 4.A.1, these reviews include assessment and appropriateness of courses and programs. The review processes for specialized accreditations maintained by the University also ensure programs are current and at the appropriate level of rigor.

Between reviews, faculty, through departmental, college and university level curriculum committees, review and implement changes to ensure offerings are current and appropriate for the degree and/or certificate. The Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee (FSCC) recommends policies and procedures for university wide curricula, reviews catalog offerings and degree requirements, and initiates discussions on future curricular matters. The FSCC reviews proposals from college curriculum committees and makes recommendations for curricular changes to the Academic Affairs Council, which in turn forwards recommendations to the full Senate for consideration. The [Faculty Handbook, \(Section 10.8\)](#) sets forth the policies and procedures for course and curricular approvals. Each course proposal must define course outcomes, content, mechanisms to assess mastery of outcomes, and relationships to other courses. The process to add or discontinue programs involves multiple levels of review by faculty. These faculty-driven review processes are used to ensure that programs and courses are current and relevant, and performance expectations are appropriate to course (lower division undergraduate, upper division undergraduate, graduate, etc.) or degree level. Online resources provided by the [FSCC](#) and the [Office of the Registrar](#) support faculty in this work.

The [University Catalog](#) is reviewed and updated annually to reflect approved changes. The Catalog also describes course numbering, credit and contact hour, prerequisite and other policies. (See <http://catalog.iastate.edu/informationaboutcourses/>)

These mechanisms and policies ensure courses are current and relevant, and that performance expectations are appropriate to the degree or certificate.

3.A.2. General degree requirements for bachelor degrees, undergraduate certificates, and the D.V.M. are included in the [Catalog](#). Requirements for graduate degrees, certificates, and post-doctoral study are included in the [Graduate Handbook](#).

[Bachelor's degrees](#) require a minimum of 120 credits. The specific course requirements for each degree program are provided in 4-year plan templates that are included in the catalog. Undergraduate certificate programs require a minimum of 20 credits. Undergraduate certificates are only awarded to students with a bachelor's degree.

The [Graduate College Handbook \(Ch. 4, 6, 7, and Appendices C, D-F\)](#) establishes general requirements for the completion of an ISU graduate degree while granting to faculty in each graduate program the responsibility to establish specific course offerings, research opportunities and checks on progress toward degree (beyond the required preliminary and oral exams) that are appropriate to their program.

Graduate certificates require at least 12 graduate credits and can be earned either with a graduate degree or as a stand-alone credential.

The number of credits required for a master's degree varies by major. A minimum of 30 graduate credits is required and at least 22 must be earned at ISU. Most master's degrees require a thesis, a scholarly composition that demonstrates the ability of the author to do independent and creative work. Non-thesis programs typically require evidence of individual accomplishment through a creative component.

A Doctor of Philosophy degree requires a minimum of 72 graduate credits; at least 36 graduate credits, including all dissertation research, must be from ISU. A preliminary oral examination of Ph.D. degree students is required; most programs add a written portion as well. The examination rigorously tests a student's knowledge of major, minor, and supporting subject areas, as well as their ability to analyze, organize, and present subject matter relevant in the field. A doctoral dissertation must conclusively demonstrate the author's ability to conceive, design, conduct, and interpret independent, original, and creative research. It must also attempt to describe significant original contributions to the advancement of knowledge, and demonstrate the ability to organize, analyze, and interpret data.

The [degree requirements for the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine](#) are contained in the Catalog. The first three years of the program feature a structured curriculum of required courses and electives. The fourth year is designed to be flexible yet provide a broad-based clinical education involving all domestic species of animals. Students participate in rotations that are considered fundamental to any species orientation the student might choose. Learning outcomes align with the standards required by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

ISU's post-graduate opportunities include postdoctoral research, residencies, and intern programs. Each program or experience is customized to meet the individual student's academic growth needs, and in some cases accrediting body requirements. A [sample of the requirements of a residency program in Veterinary Medicine is provided](#).

Learning goals are articulated by each college, and each program specifies learning outcomes and procedures to measure student achievement. Assessment of these varied outcomes is addressed in detail throughout Criteria 4. [“A Summary of Student Learning Outcomes Defined at ISU University”](#) provides a complete list of links and coded explanations of departmental and program level learning.

To support the differentiation of learning expectations, all graduate courses are taught by graduate faculty and assigned course numbers in the 500's or 600's. As a general rule, 500-level courses are entry level offerings, while 600-level courses are highly specialized and intended for Ph.D. work. Courses offered for dual-enrollment (enrolling both the undergraduate and graduate students) are

[required to differentiate expectations.](#)

3.A.3. As a primarily residential campus, the majority of ISU's programs are offered on campus. All course offerings (whether on-campus or via distance education) take their lead from the course description in catalog. Courses that are offered across different delivery modes have the same general learning goals, and are most often taught by the same instructors.

The Guiding Principles of Online and Distance Learning in the Board's [Distance Education Report](#) are clearly stated and tightly followed. ISU distance offerings provide learner-centered education and meet the same high standards as face-to-face courses. To ensure this consistency of quality, in 2008-09 ISU shifted the administrative responsibility for distance credit courses, certificates and degree programs from Extension and Outreach to the appropriate department and academic college. ISU continues to rely primarily on campus-based faculty to ensure distance courses match traditional offerings.

In Spring 2014, the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) began implementing the Quality Matters (QM) rubric and professional development system to develop a consistent language and set of quality expectations related to online and blended course design. The rubric is a set of eight principal design standards for high quality online and blended courses, and are built on a solid foundation of outcomes-based research. The professional development curriculum includes a variety of rigorous online courses aimed at building a high level of competency in online course design and teaching practices. Currently, 100 faculty and staff at Iowa State have created QM login IDs, and have collectively completed a total of 106 training courses. ISU's first course certification is currently in progress (it has been submitted for QM review/certification), and several more are planned for the near future. Plans include certification of all courses to be offered in the new Masters in Business Analytics Program.

The Online Learning Innovation Hub (within CELT) provides instructional design support/services for faculty teaching online courses. The Online Learning Innovation Hub organized and hosted a first ever Quality Matters workshop for the state of Iowa. The workshop included 21 representatives from 10 institutions, including all three of the Regents' universities.

Outcomes and assessment plans for all courses, regardless of delivery, are reviewed using departmental- or college-identified processes. ISU reports annually to the Board on distance offerings. It is typical that courses, programs, and faculty engage both distance and on-campus students during the same semester. [In 2013-2014 ISU enrolled 10,671 students in distance education courses; 7,043 \(65.5%\)](#) of these students were also enrolled in on-campus courses.

In 2013-2014, ISU offered 25 graduate degree programs, 26 graduate certificates and one undergraduate degree program fully at a distance. (The undergraduate program, a Bachelor of Liberal Studies, is a statewide degree completion program offered at all three Regent universities.) Online degrees and certificates are reviewed on the same schedule as other academic programs.

ISU does not offer dual credit or contractual courses. ISU's only consortia arrangement for offering degree programs is through the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (GPIDEA), which offers primarily graduate degrees and certificates. All GPIDEA members are regionally accredited. Courses ISU offers for GPIDEA go through the same curriculum development and review processes as other ISU courses.

Sources

- 15-16 Catalog - About Courses Section
- 15-16 Catalog College of Veterinary Medicine
- 15-16 Catalog Colleges and Curricula Section
- A Summary of Student Learning Outcomes at ISU
- Academic Program Review Policy - Board Policy Manual
- Board of Regents Distance Education Report 2013-2014
- Dual Listed Courses Proposal Form
- Faculty Handbook - Chapter 10.8 - Development of Courses and Curricula
- Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee Website Content
- Graduate College Handbook May 2015
- Registrar Faculty Support Website
- Sample Vet Med Residency Program Requirements