

Guidelines for Approving Minors at HSU

Initial ICC Approval 9/21/10

Introduction: The Academic Master Planning (AMP) Committee is working to establish curricular guidelines for minor programs of study. These guidelines include a program definition (language for the catalog), program standards, and factors to consider. When proposing new minors, faculty document how their program meets the standards. The AMP is considering ways to expedite the documentation process. Initially, these standards will apply only to new minors. At some future date, these guidelines may be extended to all existing HSU minors.

Background

This impetus for these guidelines is a mix of issues:

- The ICC has received various curricular proposals related to minors and needs consistent standards to use in making recommendations about those proposals. In addition, the ICC Constitution charges the committee with developing criteria for approval and continuation of all academic programs. Because of the need to respond to proposals for new minors, the ICC began its criteria-development work with minors.
- Unlike most of our sister CSU campuses, HSU presently has virtually no standards for minors, resulting in extreme variability in minors in terms of number of units, coherence, and faculty understandings as to the purpose of minors.
- The HSU catalog lists many more minors than can be found in most other schools of our size. Many of the minors average only one or two graduates per year; some average even fewer than that.
- Minor curriculum needs to be kept up-to-date. Whenever changes are made to courses included in minors, student handbooks, minor contracts, catalog copy, DARS reports, and various other pieces of documentation must be revised. In many cases, faculty have failed to submit the appropriate curriculum change forms, resulting in out-of-date information in the catalog and at the registrar's office *and* the need for time-consuming course substitutions on the students' Minor contract.
- Students frequently plan to earn minors, but then drop them as they near graduation.

Program Definition

Minors provide a coherent exploration of a field of study different from a student's Major. Students may not complete a minor with the same name as the major (e.g., Biology Majors may not earn a Biology Minor), with the following exceptions:

Major: Studio Art; Minor: Art History

Major: Art History; Minor: Studio Art

Major: English; Minor: Teaching English as a Second Language

Minors consist of 15 to 30 units of coursework, *including* any prerequisites for any courses. A minimum of six of those units must be in Upper Division courses. At least 8 units in the minor must be applied exclusively to the minor requirements and may not be used to meet any other program requirements with the exception of General Education requirements or minors that are required as part of the requirements for a Major.

Rationale: Earning a Minor implies that the student has completed a certain amount of study apart from the requirements of the Major. After examination of policies at other CSU campuses, the ICC recommends 8 units to be the number of distinct units required for a Minor. This definition brings HSU policy more in line with policies found at other CSU Institutions.

Program Standards**I. VISION AND BENEFIT**

Minor programs of study support the Mission and Vision of Humboldt State University and provide learning opportunities that enrich the student's education.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. The minor supports the University Vision.
2. The benefits of the minor program to students are articulated in one or more of the following contexts:
 - The minor offers students complementary learning opportunities for one or more majors
 - The minor provides professional preparation for students in one or more majors
 - The minor enables students to pursue additional intellectual growth.
3. There are positive indications for current and/or potential demand from students for the minor. Once established, a viable minor program averages at least 3 completions per year.

Rationale: A minor program should contribute to HSU's educational identity as well as student needs and interests in order to justify the direct and indirect costs associated with minors.

II. COHERENT CURRICULUM

Minor programs have an intentional structure that provides students with opportunities to study one or more aspects of an area of study in sufficient depth to develop noteworthy knowledge and understanding.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. The minor program has a stated curricular focus, a set of related student learning outcomes, and an explanation of how the curriculum supports those learning outcomes.
2. The set of courses required in the minor program are justified with respect to the development of student learning; each course in the minor is mapped to learning outcomes which are articulated with the program student learning outcomes.
3. The minor consists of 15 to 30 units of coursework, including the prerequisites for any courses.

Rationale: Students and faculty need to know what they will learn from the Minor. Faculty need to assess the program to determine if those learning outcomes indeed are being met.

III. FACULTY EXPERTISE

Minor programs have identified faculty expertise and Departmental commitment.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. At least one tenure-track faculty is needed to advise students in the minor. In addition, the minor program must demonstrate that sufficient faculty resources are available to support the curriculum.
2. Permanent faculty are involved in offering the minor coursework.

Rationale: A viable program reflects the training and interests of more than one faculty member. Minors should not need to be eliminated because one faculty member has left the University.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Minor programs are administered by an academic department (home) in one of the three colleges. This administrative home ensures periodic assessment of student learning outcomes, program review and consistent student advising.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. The home department chair of the minor program acts as or designates an advisor in the program.
2. The home department organizes periodic assessment of student learning outcomes for students in the minor.
3. Review of the minor program is included within the related major program review. For interdisciplinary minors, the home department may schedule a separate review.

Rationale: Knowing who is responsible for oversight of a program is essential so that the necessary work is consistently completed.