

Comments on Comprehensive Standard 3.6.1

1. The biggest problem is that this narrative has not made the case that the graduate/professional programs are progressively more rigorous than our UG programs. The narrative speaks to the process for monitoring programs, but gives no criteria by which rigor is defined and evaluated when approving programs. What do members of the Graduate Council, HCC, or the Senate look for when they evaluate a program proposal to ensure it is progressively more advanced than an UG degree? There is no evidence that UK requires greater rigor....where are syllabi for graduate/professional courses that document higher expectations? In 2002 UK was cited on this very standard and had to show how it differentiated UG from Graduate work in the 400G courses; this narrative mentions these courses but doesn't reference the appropriate Senate rule and provides no evidence of UK's practice to ensure a higher expectation for Graduate level work in these courses.

2. This narrative needs to make the case that the University's faculty has clear criteria for determining the outcomes expected at the various levels in a manner that they are progressively more rigorous. Providing evidence of learning outcomes in Bb Outcomes for a select group of programs will reinforce the latter, but cannot be a substitute for an overall policy and procedure in this regard. I searched the Senate Rules and can find nothing of substance in terms of defining academic rigor across the various degree levels; I reviewed the Senate Forms to complete when proposing a new program, and there are no questions about learning outcomes or the level of rigor such that those individuals reviewing proposals have a sense of this important characteristic. THERE ARE questions about the distribution of requirements across the numbering system. I think the numbering system in the Senate Rules is UK's best bet for making a case for compliance, but there is nothing in the Senate Rules that establishes expectations for the level of rigor associated with a course at the various levels. The rules are about what level of student the courses are open to. One can infer that this is because these courses are progressively more rigorous, but it is not clear and unambiguous. Perhaps there are rules at the College level that deal with progressively more rigor. If this is where UK's faculty is ensuring rigor, then these rules need to be used as evidence, along with ACTUAL documents such as completed program proposals and syllabi that demonstrate this essential characteristic.

3. Far below is what the SACS resource manual says about this standard. I have added the red highlights. At this point, UK is not in compliance with this standard. Someone needs to give a lot more thought and analysis to making the case for compliance in this narrative. Most of this narrative is text that has been lifted from various documents, with no attempt to develop a rationale that is the basis for making the case. Given what is already there, this is what I recommend:

- Keep the argument that admission requirements reflect the higher level expectations for graduate work, but don't just lift the requirements out of the bulleting and insert them into the narrative. Develop the rationale for this piece of evidence and then provide the reviewers with a link that goes directly to the right page in the bulletin.
- Keep the argument that faculty and the councils monitor program approvals to ensure progressively more advanced content, but simplify the current language as recommended above.
- Add a section that describes degree program requirements across levels, demonstrating greater levels of expectations. See Ole Miss example. Also, see below what I pulled from the Graduate School Bulletin, which is the closest thing I can find to describing expectations for academic content for an advanced degree. This narrative needs more of this type of information.
- Add a section that describes the numbering system and relate this system to the forms that ask for the distribution of courses across the numbering levels; make the case that

- faculty and the councils review this information to help ensure progressively more rigor. The reviewers are faculty who will understand this and accept it as good evidence.
- Ask the Senate to add criteria to the numbering system rule that demonstrates their expectations for progressively more advanced academic content.
 - Find other documentation at the college/graduate school level that defines different levels of academic content and rigor. See attached for how Old Miss did this. Does UK have a similar document? Does CPE have a document that helps us with this?
 - Provide examples of syllabi from the same discipline, such as Anthropology, that show progressively higher expectations for bachelor vs master's vs doctoral students; find such examples from a variety of disciplines.
 - Add syllabi from the 400G courses

From the Graduate School Bulletin--

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.) DEGREE

The Ph.D. degree is intended to represent the demonstration of independent and comprehensive scholarship in a specific field. Such scholarship must be manifested by both the student's mastery of subject matter and capacity to do research. Every applicant for the Ph.D. degree must select a major area of study. The major area is one in which the student's efforts are concentrated. Some programs also require one or more minor areas. Minor(s) must be approved by the student's advisory committee. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is conferred upon a candidate who, after completing graduate work devoted to study of a special field of knowledge, 1) passes comprehensive examinations in the chosen field and the dissertation subject, 2) presents a satisfactory dissertation, and 3) shows evidence of scholarly attainment. Students should note that some doctoral programs have degree requirements that may exceed the minimum requirements of the Graduate Faculty.

From the SACS Resource Manual--

3.6.1 The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs.

Rationale and Notes:

The course content of post-baccalaureate degree programs, as determined by faculty, is progressively more complex and rigorous than undergraduate courses and is consistent with the expectation of higher education institutions. These advanced degree programs build upon the foundation established by undergraduate programs. Requirements in courses not specifically designed for graduate credit but that allow both undergraduate and graduate enrollment ensure that there is a clear distinction between the learning outcomes of undergraduate students and graduate students.

Relevant Questions for Consideration:

- How has the institution clearly defined the content and rigor of post-baccalaureate degree programs?
- What evidence exists that the institution has learning outcomes for postbaccalaureate professional degree programs and its master's and doctoral programs indicating that the programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs?

Sample Documentation:

- College catalogs, policies and procedures, and course syllabi or other documents that show differentiation in undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs

- For programs within the same discipline offered at different degree levels, **samples of learning outcomes at each level** and intended student achievement for outcomes assessed
- **Course syllabi describing the advanced body of learning to be accomplished** through completion of post-baccalaureate coursework