9.6 Post-baccalaureate rigor and curriculum

Post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and graduate degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs, and are structured (a) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (b) to ensure engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training.

Compliance Judgment: In Compliance

Rationale

Graduate programs at the University of South Carolina Aiken (USC Aiken) provide an opportunity for students to engage in advanced study with a group of scholars actively engaged in research and professional practice. Graduate program offerings are in response to the advanced educational needs of the local and regional population. Graduate programs at USC Aiken are supervised by the academic units that offer master's level programs.

As noted in the 2019-20 Academic Programs Bulletin, there are four graduate programs offered at USC Aiken – the <u>Master of Business Administration</u> ^[1], the <u>Master of Education Degree in Educational Technology</u> ^[2], the <u>Master of Education degree in Educator Leadership</u> ^[3], and the <u>Master of Science Degree in Applied Clinical</u> <u>Psychology</u>.^[4] The Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree prepares students to amplify their knowledge of the global, technological, and ethical issues in today's business world. Students can complete a general MBA curriculum or specialize in the areas of accounting, finance, or project management. The Master of Education degree in Educational Technology is offered jointly with USC Columbia and is designed to provide advanced professional studies in graduate level course work to develop capabilities essential to the effective design, delivery, and evaluation of technology-based instruction and training. The Master of Education in Educator Leadership is intended to develop administrative skills such as management, supervision and decision-making and prepare school leaders to be instructional leaders. The program

focuses on building collaborative cultures and professional learning as well as continuous improvement through data-driven decision making. The program prepares leaders who have a deep understanding of best practices in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Master of Science degree in Applied Clinical Psychology provides graduate study and clinical experience in preparation for careers in applied clinical and counseling settings and as a foundation for students interested in pursuing doctoral studies. Students enrolled in this program pursue a plan of study that increases professional competence and breadth of knowledge in the field of clinical and counseling psychology.

Advanced Content. There are several means through which the university ensures that graduate degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs including but not limited to curriculum review, professional accreditation, admissions standards, course numbering and sequencing, rigorous academic standards for retention in the programs, and selection of faculty to teach at the graduate level. Classes for graduate degrees involve a greater depth of learning than would be found in undergraduate education; involve an increased specialization or focus that would not be found in undergraduate education; involve a more advanced level of instruction than in undergraduate education; emphasize student self-direction; and emphasize dynamic interaction with the subject matter, the instructor, and other students, and focuses on the generation of knowledge through research and/or the application of new knowledge.

• **Curriculum review.** An integral component to ensure advanced academic content is the review process for new courses and curriculum changes by the Graduate Advisory Council.^[5] As described in the <u>narrative response to Standard</u> <u>9.1 - Program content</u> ^[6], all program development or modification of graduate programs includes but is not limited to the following steps:

- Origination and approval by discipline faculty in consultation with senior administrators to ensure adequate campus resources are available to support the proposal;
- Approval of College Coordinating Council, if relevant;

- Review by the Academic Council;
- Review by the University Planning Committee if the proposal involves a significant departure from current offerings;
- Review and approval by the Graduate Advisory Council of the Faculty Assembly for graduate degree programs;
- Review and approval by the Faculty Assembly;
- Review and approval by the USC Aiken Chancellor;
- Review and approval by the Academic Affairs Committee of the USC Board of Trustees;
- Review and approval by the USC Board of Trustees;
- Review by the state's Advisory Committee on Academic Programs;
- Review by the state's Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing;
- Review and approval by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (SCCHE); and
- Review and approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, if required.

The Graduate Advisory Council carefully examines all proposed course additions or changes to ensure appropriate post-baccalaureate rigor. Similarly, external review by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs, the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing, and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education ensures the curriculum is at an advanced level. The external review of the <u>Master of Education (Educator Leadership) proposal</u> ^[7] is provided to illustrate the careful deliberations that occur when program proposals are submitted.

• **Professional accreditation.** Professional accreditation is another means to ensure that master's degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content. All four degree programs offered at USC Aiken are professionally accredited. The Master of Business Administration is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Both Master of

Education degrees are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. The Master of Science degree in Applied Clinical Psychology is accredited by the Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council.

• **Course numbering system.** The course numbering system used by the University further illustrates the extent to which post-baccalaureate programs are more advanced than undergraduate courses. In accordance with the University of South Carolina <u>system policy ACAF 2.03</u> - <u>Creation and Revision of Academic Courses</u> ^[8], courses numbered 500-699 are reserved for entry level graduate or advanced undergraduate students. As stipulated in the policy, "graduate students are expected to perform at a higher level with additional graduate level requirements." Courses numbered 700 or above are restricted to graduate students and represent advanced content.

Rigorous admissions standards. Graduate courses at USC Aiken build upon the foundational knowledge that students attain via their undergraduate studies. As such, students seeking a graduate degree must meet the rigorous admission standards for the program in which the students intend to study. These standards help to ensure that students have a sufficient and secure foundation of knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to be successful in their graduate studies. For example, application to the Educational Technology program ^[9] can be made only after completion of at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university. The standard for admission is based on the overall profile of the applicant. Successful applicants should have an undergraduate grade point average of at least 3.0, a score of 396 on the Miller's Analogies test or scores of 450 on both the verbal and quantitative portions of the Graduate Record Exam, a well-written letter of intent that matches the objectives of the program and includes a description of previous technology experience, positive letters of recommendation from individuals who know the professional characteristics of the applicant, and a written statement of philosophy of education. Admission to the Master of Science Degree in Applied

<u>Clinical Psychology</u> ^[10] requires a completed application submitted to the Graduate Office, University of South Carolina Aiken; a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with at least 15 hours in psychology; transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work with preference given to applicants who have at least an overall 3.0 undergraduate grade point average; three letters of recommendation, with at least two from faculty at academic institutions; a written personal statement of intent describing professional goals, and satisfactory performance on the Graduate Record Examination (153 verbal score and 144 quantitative preferred). Admissions requirements for other graduate programs are available in the <u>narrative response to Standard 10.5 – Admissions policies</u> and practices. ^[11]

• *Rigorous retention standards.* The graduate degrees at USC Aiken also have rigorous academic standards that must be maintained in order for students to be retained within their program of study. Each of the graduate programs has policies that include specified periods of time for degree completion, thesis requirements, minimum credit hour requirements, minimum acceptable grade point average, standards for satisfactory academic progress, admission to candidacy, and qualifying examinations that candidates must pass.

Graduate courses may be passed for degree credit with a grade as low as C, but the student's average on all courses attempted for graduate credit must be at least B. Students who receive grades below B on 12 or more graduate credit hours within a six year period are consequently suspended from degree candidacy status and are not permitted to enroll for further courses even as non-degree students without the specific approval of their academic unit. This rule applies to courses taken for non-degree purposes as well as to courses taken in degree programs. Courses six years old or older are not counted toward a master's degree without revalidation.

• **Graduate faculty.** Faculty teaching at the graduate level have fewer students in their graduate classes to ensure advanced study and more intense faculty-student interaction. Faculty must undergo review by their Department

Chair or School Dean before being approved to teach at the graduate level. In accord with graduate faculty criteria specified in the Faculty Manual [5], this process includes a review of the faculty credentials, terminal degree status, scholarly publications, and evidence of professional accomplishments. In Fall 2019, the average graduate class size was 8 students compared to a lower division average undergraduate class size of 22 of an upper division average class size of 14.

• **Syllabus review.** Table 9.6-1 provides links to a sample of graduate course syllabi for the Master of Business Administration and the Master of Science in Applied Psychology degree programs and syllabi in similar, but lower level content areas at the undergraduate level. The table provide a comparative analysis of the syllabi and support the conclusion that these master's degrees are more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs. The two Master of Education degree programs offer content that leads to graduate level teacher certifications not available at the undergraduate level and thus are not amenable to such a comparison.

Graduate class syllabus	Undergraduate class syllabus	Notable differences
ACCT A717 Accounting for Decision Making [12]	BADM A225 Principles of Financial Accounting ^[13]	 The course descriptions are different. The A717 course surveys the field of accounting to provide managers with decision-making capabilities and this is not included in A225 The learning objectives are different. The A717 course is oriented toward applying and evaluating accounting processes vs. the A225 class which presents the basic principles. The A717 course also includes coverage of ethics and this is not in A225 The text books are different. The text for A717 surveys the field of accounting vs. the A225 text which focuses on financial accounting The A717 class requires prerequisite credit hours in accounting vs. the A225 class that does not The A717 class requires extensive online engagement and interaction on the part of all enrolled students vs. A225 which is presented in a traditional lecture format

Table 9.6-1. Comparison Sample of Graduate and Undergraduate Syllabi

Master of Dusiness Administration classes

MGMT A728 Operations Management [14]	MGMT A475 Operation and Supply Chain Management [15]	 The course descriptions are different. The A728 course considers value creation, analytical skills, competitive advantage, sustainability, and strategic issues related to operations vs. the A475 course that introduces basic processes that enable an organization to match supply and demand The learning objectives are different in terms of Bloom's Taxonomy. The A728 course is oriented toward critical analysis, development, application, and deep knowledge vs. the A475 class which is oriented toward understanding The text books are different. The A728 class uses an operations management text; there is a separate supply chain management for A475 The A728 class uses <i>McGraw-Hill Connect</i> to complete weekly activities aimed at reinforcing and mastering the learning objectives vs. A475 which uses in class exercises The A728 class requires extensive online engagement and interaction on the part of all enrolled students vs. A475 which is presented in a traditional lecture format
BADM A760 Business Vision, Innovation, and Strategy ^[16]	BADM A478 Strategic Management ^[17]	 The course descriptions are different. The A760 course includes and emphasizes strategic vision and innovation vs. A478 which focuses on decision making in the face of changing conditions The learning objectives are different. The A760 class engages in advanced conceptual discussion wherein students must produce and evaluate a vision, a mission, and apply concepts to an integrated strategic plan vs. A478 that emphasizes knowing and identifying basic concepts The text books are different. The A760 class uses five books authored by top strategy scholars, including a compendium of scholarly articles by more scholars vs. an introductory text for A478 The A760 class uses a different online strategy simulation that is scored at a more advanced level than the undergraduate simulation in A478 The A760 class requires extensive online engagement and interaction on the part of all enrolled students vs. A478 which is presented in a traditional lecture format
MKTG A716 Marketing Management ^[18]	BADM A350 Principles of Management ^[19]	 The course descriptions are different. The A350 course focuses on basic marketing principles <i>vs.</i> the A716 course that goes beyond marketing principles and focuses on the marketing skills needed by managers The learning objectives are different. The A716 course activities examine, articulate, apply, and communicate marketing concepts vs. the A350 course activities that identify, describe, and explain The text books are different. The A716 course uses a Marketing Management text <i>vs.</i> the A350 course that presents basic marketing concepts

MGMT A715 Management and Organizational Behavior ^[20]	MGMT A376 Organizational Behavior ^[21]	 The assessments are different. Students in A716 produce an extensive marketing plan, a research article summary, and quizzes vs. A350 where much more of the grade is allocated to exams and tests. The A716 class requires extensive online engagement and interaction on the part of all enrolled students vs. A350 which is presented in a traditional lecture format The course descriptions are different. The A715 course goes beyond the basic motivation concepts found in A376 to cover leadership and team development, as well as effective managerial communication techniques in varying contexts The learning objectives are different. The A715 course covers reflexive sense-making, historical and contemporary perspectives on management, the complexities associated with work, and diversity awareness vs. the A376 class wherein the objectives are to present basic concepts of organizational dynamics The text books are different. The A715 course uses a book with an advanced view on managing organizations from both a theoretical and practical perspective vs. the A376 book with provides an introduction to organizational behavior The assignments are different. The A376 course where students engage in team activities, presentations, and a sense-making project The A715 class requires extensive online engagement and interaction on the part of all enrolled students vs. A376 which is presented in a traditional lecture format
	pplied Clinical Psycholo	
Graduate class syllabus	Undergraduate class syllabus	Notable differences
PSYC A610 Developmental Psychology ^[22]	PSYC A310 Developmental Psychology ^[23]	 Use of text book in A310 vs. a reading list of journal articles in A610 Lecture format in A310 vs. a seminar format in A610 Exams and case study assessments in A310 vs. exams, case studies, research proposals, leading a class discussion, and class participation assessments in A610
PSYC A620 Psychopathology [24]	PSYC A320 Abnormal Psychology [25]	 Use of text book in A320 vs. a more advanced text book supplemented with a reading list of journal articles in A620 Lecture format in A320 vs. a seminar format in A620 Exams and in-class activity assessments in A320 vs. exams, research paper, poster presentation, leading a class discussion, and class participation assessments in A620

PSYC A625 Statistics and Research Methods ^[26]	PSYC A325 Psychological Statistics ^[27]	 Use of an introductory text book in A325 vs. an advanced IBM Statistics Manual in A625 Interactive class lectures in A325 vs. flipped classroom delivery in A625 Basic statistical methods in A325 vs. basic and advanced statistical methods in A625 Exams, weekly quizzes, homework and project assessments in A325 vs. assignments, flipped classroom assessments, collaborative research projects, and research presentations in A625
PSYC A640 Social Psychology and Human Diversity ^[28]	PSYC A340 Social Psychology ^[29]	 Use of text book in A340 vs. a reading list of journal articles in A640 Lecture format in A340 vs. a seminar / discussion approach in A640 Multiple-choice tests, quizzes, assignments and research paper in A340 vs. essay exams requiring synthetization of material, weekly written summaries on articles, presentation of articles in class, and a research proposal in A640
PSYC A760 Neuroscience ^[30]	PSYC A370 Cognitive Neuroscience ^[31]	 Use of text book in A370 vs. a textbook and online resources for neuroanatomy in A760 Lecture format in A370 vs. student led seminars and class discussions in A760 Multiple-choice tests, flipped assignments, and group debate assignments in A370 vs. essay based exams, class presentations, authoring of Wikipedia pages on neuroscience topics in A760

Inclusion of knowledge of the literature of the discipline. As illustrated in the syllabi provided through Table 9.6-1, graduate classes typically include reading lists of scholarly journal articles and advanced text books of the discipline. Graduate students must demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the discipline's literature through the completion of scholarly papers, presentations, in-class or online discussions, and essay exams.

Student learning outcomes for each graduate degree program include knowledge of the literature within the discipline and its application. For example, the Master of Business Administration has a student learning outcome that "students will attain core knowledge in the theories and practices of accounting, finance, management, and marketing disciplines." The student learning outcomes in the Master of Education in Educational Technology requires the demonstration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the design, development, utilization, management, and evaluation of technology use in instructional practice. The student learning outcomes for all graduate programs are provided through Table 9.6.2 via links to curriculum maps for each of the four programs. These maps indicate how each student learning outcome progresses from being introduced, reinforced, practiced, and mastered across the courses that make up the curriculum of the program.

Table 9.6-1. Graduate program curriculum maps

- Master of Business Administration ^[32]
- Master of Education in Educator Leadership [33]
- Master of Education in Educational Technology [34]
- Master of Science in Applied Clinical Psychology ^[35]

Engagement in research, professional practice, and training. All graduate programs at the University of South Carolina Aiken are in a professional field (i.e., teaching, clinical psychology, or business). The professional application of knowledge and skills is evident at both the course level in terms of activities and learning objectives and at the program level in terms of student learning outcomes and required courses.

• *Master of Business Administration.* Students in the Master of Business Administration program must attain knowledge of key business topics and theories. Several classes such as <u>MKTG A716 – Marketing Management</u> ^[18], require the completion of research papers and assignments. Training is provided in analytical skills in courses such as <u>ECON A714 – Economics for Decision Making</u> ^[36], and <u>MGMT A728 – Operations Management</u> ^[14] and in the creation and use of various business related documents and practices of accounting, finance, management, and marketing in courses such as <u>ACCT A717 – Accounting for Decision Making</u> ^[12], and <u>FINA A731 – Advanced</u> <u>Corporate Finance</u>.^[37] Application of the knowledge and skills attained in the program is required in the capstone course, <u>BADM A760 – Business Vision</u>, <u>Innovation, and Strategy</u>.^[16]

• *Master of Education in Educator Leadership.* Students in the Master of Education in Educator Leadership program must attain research skills through <u>EDUC A664 - Applied Research</u> ^[38] and <u>EDUC A663 - Assessment and Data</u>

<u>Analysis</u>.^[39] Training in the application of knowledge and skills is provided in classes such as <u>EDUC A636 – Linguistics for ESOL Teachers</u> ^[40], <u>EDEL A720 – Middle Level Curriculum and Organization</u> ^[41], and <u>EDEX A625 Methods and Materials for Teaching People with Learning Disabilities</u>. ^[42] Application of knowledge and skills in a professional setting occurs via required practicum courses such as EDUC A672 – The Teacher Leader in Practice I. ^[43]

 Master of Education in Educational Technology. Students in the Master of Education in Educational Technology program must attain and demonstrate research skills through classes such as EDRM 700 – Introduction to Research in Education.^[44] In addition, many classes require the critical reading of scholarly research articles such as EDET A746 – Management of Technology Resources ^[45] and EDET A755 - Design and Evaluation of Information Access and Delivery.^[46] Training is provided in the use of technology in classes in courses such as EDET A703 - Design and Development Tools II.^[47] Application of knowledge and skills in a professional setting occurs via classes such as EDET A709 Application of Learning Principles ^[48], EDET A722 Instructional Design and Assessment ^[49] and the required capstone class of EDET A793 Advanced Instructional Design and Development.^[50]

 Master of Science in Applied Clinical Psychology. Students in the Master of Science in Applied Clinical Psychology program must complete research papers in several classes such as <u>PSYC A620 - Psychopathology</u> ^[24] and <u>PSYC A640 - Social Psychology and Human Diversity</u>.^[28] In addition, student must complete <u>PSYC A625 - Statistics and Research Methods</u> ^[26], <u>PSYC A798 - Thesis Preparation</u> ^[51] and <u>PSYC A799 - Thesis</u>.^[52] Training is provided in the use of psychological assessment instruments in classes such as <u>PSYC A630 - Career and Lifestyle Development</u> ^[53], <u>PSYC A680 - Cognitive</u> <u>Assessment</u> ^[54], and <u>PSYC A780 - Personality and Pathology Assessment</u>.^[55] Application of knowledge and skills in a professional setting occurs via required practicum courses such as <u>PSYC A790 - Practicum in Clinical/Counseling</u> <u>Psychology</u> ^[56], <u>PSYC A791 - Advanced Psychotherapy Practicum</u> ^[57], and <u>PSYC A792 - Clinical/Counseling Internship</u>.^[58]

Supporting Documentation

- 1. Academic Bulletin: Master of Business Administration
- 2. <u>Academic Bulletin: Master of Education Degree in Educational Technology</u>
- 3. Academic Bulletin: Master of Education degree in Educator Leadership
- 4. <u>Academic Bulletin: Master of Science Degree in Applied Clinical Psychology</u>
- 5. Faculty Manual: Graduate Advisory Council
- 6. Narrative response to Standard 9.1 Program content
- 7. Reviews and Approval of the MEd (Educator Leadership) proposal
- 8. USC System Policy ACAF 2.03 Creation and Revision of Academic Courses
- 9. Academic Bulletin: Admissions criteria for MEd (Educational Technology)
- 10. <u>Academic Bulletin: Admissions criteria for MS (Applied Clinical Psychology)</u>
- 11. <u>Narrative response to Standard 10.5 Admissions policies and practices</u>
- 12. Graduate Class Syllabus: ACCT A717 Accounting for Decision Making
- 13. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: BADM A225 Principles of Financial Accounting
- 14. Graduate Class Syllabus: MGMT A728 Operations Management
- 15. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: MGMT A475 Operation and Supply Chain Management
- 16. Graduate Class Syllabus: BADM A760 Business Vision, Innovation, and Strategy
- 17. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: BADM A478 Strategic Management
- 18. Graduate Class Syllabus: MKTG A716 Marketing Management
- 19. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: BADM A350 Principles of Management
- 20. <u>Graduate Class Syllabus: MGMT A715 Management and Organizational</u> <u>Behavior</u>
- 21. <u>Undergraduate Class Syllabus: MGMT A376 Organizational Behavior</u>
- 22. Graduate Class Syllabus PSYC A610 Developmental Psychology
- 23. Undergraduate Class Syllabus PSYC A310 Developmental Psychology
- 24. Graduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A620 Psychopathology

- 25. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A320 Abnormal Psychology
- 26. Graduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A625 Statistics and Research Methods
- 27. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A325 Psychological Statistics
- 28. Graduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A640 Social Psychology and Human Diversity
- 29. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A340 Social Psychology
- 30. Graduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A760 Neuroscience
- 31. Undergraduate Class Syllabus: PSYC A370 Cognitive Neuroscience
- 32. <u>Master of Business Administration Curriculum Map</u>
- 33. <u>Master of Education in Educator Leadership Curriculum Map</u>
- 34. <u>Master of Education in Educational Technology Curriculum Map</u>
- 35. Master of Science in Applied Clinical Psychology Curriculum Map
- 36. Syllabus: ECON A714 Economics for Decision Making
- 37. <u>Syllabus: FINA A731 Advanced Corporate Finance</u>
- 38. Syllabus: EDUC A664 Applied Research
- 39. <u>Syllabus: EDUC A663 Assessment and Data Analysis</u>
- 40. Syllabus: EDUC A636 Linguistics for ESOL Teachers
- 41. Syllabus: EDEL A720 Middle Level Curriculum and Organization
- 42. <u>Syllabus: EDEX A625 Methods and Materials for Teaching People with Learning</u> Disabilities
- 43. Syllabus: EDUC A672 The Teacher Leader in Practice I
- 44. Syllabus: EDRM 700 Introduction to Research in Education
- 45. <u>Syllabus: EDET A746 Management of Technology Resources</u>
- 46. <u>Syllabus: EDET A755 Design and Evaluation of Information Access and</u> <u>Delivery</u>
- 47. Syllabus: EDET A703 Design and Development Tools II
- 48. <u>Syllabus: EDET A709 Application of Learning Principles</u>
- 49. Syllabus: EDET A722 Instructional Design and Assessment
- 50. Syllabus: EDET A793 Advanced Instructional Design and Development
- 51. Syllabus: PSYC A798 Thesis Preparation
- 52. Syllabus: PSYC A799 Thesis

- 53. Syllabus: PSYC A630 Career and Lifestyle Development
- 54. Syllabus: PSYC A680 Cognitive Assessment
- 55. Syllabus: PSYC A780 Personality and Pathology Assessment
- 56. Syllabus: PSYC A790 Practicum in Clinical/Counseling Psychology
- 57. Syllabus: PSYC A791 Advanced Psychotherapy Practicum
- 58. Syllabus: PSYC A792 Clinical/Counseling Internship