

February 8, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: Undergraduate Assistant and Associate Deans
Academic Advisors

Fr: Douglas W. Estry, Ph.D.
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and
Dean of Undergraduate Studies

RE: Integrative Studies: Standard Operating Procedures

Michigan State University has a unique set of general education requirements (Integrative Studies) that were envisioned to provide students with an integrated understanding of the arts and humanities, biological and physical sciences, and social sciences. Along with writing and mathematics, these requirements form the core of the liberal learning goals MSU has defined for all students. Integrative Studies requirements, while serving as a defining and important characteristic of MSU's undergraduate education, also present challenges as we work to maintain a coherent and consistent set of guidelines that govern the implementation of the Integrative Studies requirements.

During the Fall 2007 semester, a group of Associate Deans, Integrative Studies Center Directors, and College Directors of Undergraduate Affairs met to consider recommendations for the standard operating procedures that would guide the interpretation of current policy. They considered challenges to policy interpretation and implementation in several areas. The following represents the outcomes of these discussions and the standard operating procedures that will guide decisions on a student's fulfillment of the integrative studies requirements. Where appropriate, the rationale for the decision will be provided. It is important to note this work is guided by the fundamental understanding that once matriculated, students signal their commitment to work with us to achieve their personal goals and their agreement to fulfill the MSU graduation requirements. It is important, however, to recognize the diverse sets of courses students may take at other institutions of higher education prior to matriculating at MSU. Therefore, we need to remain flexible in defining how these transfer courses fulfill graduation requirements.

1. **National, International and Multicultural Diversity (N, I, and D)**

Policy: "Students must include at least one "N" course and one "I" course in their Integrative Studies programs. A "D" course may meet either an "N" or an "I" requirement, but not both."

Challenge: Given the unique nature of this requirement, it is difficult for students to transfer courses that directly fulfill the requirement. Until recently, many IAH 211 and above courses did not have assigned designators.

SOP: Transfer students with only one remaining ISS or IAH to complete can use any appropriate IAH or ISS course without regard to N, I, or D designator. Students with two or more remaining courses must be advised to fulfill the diversity distribution requirement. The Center for Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities (IAH) has assigned N, I, D designators to all courses (see attachment). The newly assigned designators may be used retroactively in determining if students have fulfilled degree requirements.

2. AP Credit in Fulfillment of Integrative Studies Requirements

Policy: AP waiver is not used to fulfill Integrative Studies requirements.

Rationale: The University requires a defined number of credits (8) in each of the three areas that constitute the Integrative Studies requirement (24 total credits) and AP waiver does not carry credit.

SOP: 1) The MSU College Board Advanced Placement Program Equivalencies (http://admissions.msu.edu/documents/MSU_AP_Equivalencies.pdf) have been updated to reflect that credit in US, European, or World History fulfills the IAH 211 or above requirement. 2) Students simultaneously having AP English **credit** (Language and Composition or Literature and Composition) and AP **credit** in US, European, or World History have fulfilled the tier I writing requirement (4 credits) and both IAH requirements (8 credits).

Rationale: WRA in combination with an IAH A course is intended to provide an intensive set of writing experiences for the student. Therefore, students with both English and History AP credit have fulfilled their competency in composition.

3. WRA Transfer Credits in Fulfillment of Integrative Studies Requirements

SOP: Excess transfer credits in WRA may not be used to fulfill the Integrative Studies requirements. No change in SOP.

4. Transfer of Integrative Studies Courses and Credits

Policy: Students are required to have a minimum of 24 credits in Integrative Studies (two four-credit courses in IAH, two four-credit courses in ISS, one three-credit course in each of ISB and ISP and one two-credit ISB or ISP laboratory).

Challenge: Frequently, courses taken prior to matriculation at MSU, as well as courses taken at international institutions, have been used to fulfill Integrative Studies requirement even though they are 3 rather than 4 credits.

SOP: MSU continues to be committed to providing a strong liberal arts undergraduate education. Writing, integrative studies, and quantitative reasoning are critical core components of this education. Although the assignment of a specific number of credits may be an imperfect indicator of student knowledge, attitudes, and abilities, it is currently the way we document successful engagement with and completion of this core. Combining the singular nature of

MSU's integrative studies requirement and the desire to minimize barriers to access and the dynamic and unique learning opportunities that come from such experiences as study abroad, we will continue to allow limited flexibility in the current 24-credit total for completion of the Integrative Studies (ISS, IAH, ISB, ISP, and laboratory) requirements through US 09.

- Students must have a minimum of two courses that fulfill the ISS requirement, two courses that fulfill the IAH requirement, one that fulfills the ISB requirement, one that fulfills the ISP requirement, and two credits that fulfill the ISB or P laboratory requirement.
- Policies on courses that transfer to fulfill these requirements prior to matriculation as well as those accepted in transfer once a student has matriculated at MSU remain the same.
- Students with a minimum of two courses in ISS, two courses in IAH, an ISB, an ISP and 2 credits of an ISB or P laboratory and totaling 23 credits will fulfill the Integrative Studies requirement.
- Students with less than 23 credits and the above distribution must have or complete an additional course approved to fulfill an ISS, IAH, ISB, ISP, or ISB or P laboratory. This would include the use of study abroad courses (faculty led, co-sponsored or direct enrollment). The appropriateness of study abroad courses in fulfillment of this requirement will be determined by the relevant Integrative Studies Center Director.

5. **Previous Documentation of Integrative Studies waiver or credit**

Challenge: Various forms and procedures have been used to document completion of Integrative Studies requirements. These have included the "Transfer Credit Course Summary Worksheets" and information posted to Degree Navigator that was subsequently modified as we improved our ability to apply policy in a consistent manner. The transition has led to confusion on the part of both the adviser and the student.

SOP: Existing communications between the University and the student indicating that Integrative Studies requirements have been fulfilled (i.e. Transfer Credit Course Summary Worksheets or documentation in Degree Navigator) will continue to be honored. If an exception is granted when certifying a student's completion of the Integrative Studies requirement for graduation, the reason for the exception should be noted. Exceptions due to this will decline significantly now that systems have been configured to eliminate these errors.

In documented cases in which a student was advised based on past practices that are now inconsistent with policy interpretation and implementation, advisers' advice will be honored. However, through both continuing education initiatives and timely reviews of student files to verify completion of degree requirements, the need for these exceptions will significantly decline.

6. **Transfer of Integrative Studies Requirements Prior to and Following Matriculation at MSU**

Policy/SOP: Prior to matriculating at MSU, students can transfer courses that are not direct equivalents of IAH, ISS, ISB-P in fulfillment of IS requirements. Once students have

matriculated at MSU only courses that transfer as direct equivalents of IAH, ISS, or ISB-P will fulfill the requirements. The policy remains in force.

Rationale: In order to maximize access to MSU, it is important to provide flexibility for those students who have not yet made a commitment to fulfilling MSU degree requirements. However, upon matriculation at MSU, students agree to fulfill remaining University, College, and Program requirements as specified in the Academic Programs. Therefore, only courses that directly fulfill an IAH, ISS, ISB or ISP requirement or an appropriate alternate track option will be acceptable following initial MSU matriculation.

Procedure

In cases where exceptions to the normal IS policies must be considered, those falling within the scope of these SOPs will be made by Associate Deans and Directors of Undergraduate Affairs in consultation with the Office of the Registrar. Requests for exceptions NOT covered by existing policy or NOT falling within this scope must be submitted for approval to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Undergraduate Studies by the appropriate Associate Dean or Director of Undergraduate Affairs of the college. Documentation necessary to inform the APUE should be provided by the Office of the Registrar.

It is anticipated that through timely student degree audits and continuing education opportunities for new and continuing advisers, faculty, or staff, errors arising from variations in policy interpretations or lack of policy understanding will be minimized.

My special thanks to those individuals who assisted in this review and to the advisers, faculty and staff, who consistently make MSU a dynamic environment for students to learn, work, and achieve their goals!