March 18, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: Robert Webb  
Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

Through: H. Joseph Newton  
Dean, College of Science

From: Al Boggess  
Head, Mathematics Department

Subject: Clarification to Proposed Fast-Track Bachelor/Masters Program

This memo is to clarify eligibility requirements of students for teaching assistantships who will pursue our proposed fast-track Bachelor/Masters Program. As a general rule, when students in the Bachelor/Masters program reach 108 credit hours they will be classified as G7 students and will then become eligible for employment as teaching assistants. There may be exceptional cases where we would petition the Office of Graduate Studies to classify students as G7 with less credit hours. However we would only do take this step in situations where it is in the clear best interest for the student (and not merely to increase teaching power with cheap labor).

cc: Mark Zoran, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies
Paulo Lima-Filho, Professor of Mathematics and Associate Head for Graduate Studies

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MEMORANDUM

To: Robert Webb, Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

Through: H. Joseph Newton, Dean College of Science

From: Al Boggess, Head Mathematics Department

Subject: Proposed Fast-Track Bachelor/Masters Program

The Department of Mathematics proposes the creation of a Fast-Track Bachelors/Masters degree program, which will allow highly qualified undergraduate mathematics majors to earn both a Bachelors and Masters degrees with approximately five years of study. Qualified students will be able to select any combination of the degree options within our undergraduate and masters degree programs for the purpose of this new fast-track program. Details of this proposed fast-track degree program are attached to this memorandum.

As department head, I give my enthusiastic support for this fast-track degree program. One of its features is to allow a highly qualified student to use up to six credits of certain graduate mathematics courses to satisfy both undergraduate and masters graduate degree requirements, thus enabling the student to graduate sooner. Currently, a student has to often enroll in two separate, but similar courses - one to satisfy undergraduate requirements and the other to satisfy graduate course requirements (e.g. numerical analysis - Math 417 and Math 609). Highly qualified undergraduates should be able to enroll in the graduate versions of these courses without first enrolling in the corresponding undergraduate courses. This fast-track degree program would thus avoid duplication and shorten the time to masters degree for highly qualified students.

One of the key benefits to our department and to Texas A&M is that this proposed fast-track masters program should encourage our better undergraduate students to remain at A&M for graduate school. Since our masters program is a feeder to our Ph.D. program, I expect that this fast-track program will help our graduate Ph.D. recruiting efforts.

As with most of our graduate students, I would expect many of the fast-track masters students to be supported in our department as teaching assistants (at least once they reach G7 status). As consistent with university policy, I respectfully request that the university cover the tuition for any fast-track masters student employed by our department as a teaching assistant, commensurable to the appointment percentage of his or her teaching assistant duties.

Please contact me or our Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Paulo Lima-Filho, if you have any questions regarding this proposal.

cc: Paulo Lima-Filho, Dave Larson, Sue Geller, Mike Stecher, Mark Zoran

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Texas A&M University
FastTrack Program in Mathematics

The Department of Mathematics proposes the creation of a FastTrack Program in Mathematics. This will be a highly selective program that will allow Math majors to earn concomitantly a Bachelor's and a Master's degree within 5 years of study. The student will be able to select any combination of the degree options that our Undergraduate and Master's Programs currently offer.

1. Admission Process and Requirements:

A student needs to have taken 96 credit hours of coursework in order to be admitted into the FastTrack program. The following additional requirements are necessary:

- The student must have 9 credit hours of honors Math courses, at least 3 of which at the 400 level.
- Math 409 and Math 415 must be amongst the courses taken. (The chain of courses that lead to the prerequisites for these two classes comprise a comprehensive math curriculum. Furthermore, the subjects covered in these two classes give a solid foundation for key graduate level coursework.)
- Both the overall and major GPA must be 3.5 or higher;
- The 96 credit hours must cover all but at most 2 courses to complete the core curriculum.

Once these requirements are fulfilled, students will be eligible to apply for admission into the FastTrack program typically during their junior year.

Students admitted into the program will maintain an undergraduate classification (U4) until they reach 108 credit hours, at which point they will be re-classified as degree-seeking Master's graduate students (G7). For this switch to occur, students must maintain the GPA requirements described above and must also satisfy the same conditions required from any other candidate applying to the Master's program:

- GRE scores should be submitted prior to the completion of the 108 hours.
- Students must submit 3 letters of recommendation from their professors.
- The candidacy must be approved by the Graduate Committee.

The switch will typically take place during the Spring semester of their 4th year.

2. Program Description:

Upon admission in the FastTrack program, students will have completed at least 96 hours towards the completion of their Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts or APMS (Applied Mathematical Sciences) degree in Mathematics.

The program will allow up to 6 credit hours of dual credit. Under this provision, students may use graduate courses to obtain credits towards the completion of the Undergraduate and Master's degrees. Any graduate course may be used towards dual credit, with the following exclusions:

- Math 601, Math 695 and Math 696 cannot be used for dual credit. (These are service courses that we offer for Engineering and similar programs, and math graduate students cannot use these classes in their degree plan.)
- If a student takes an Undergraduate version of a Graduate course and subsequently takes the Graduate version, then this Graduate course cannot be used for dual credit.
Using a combination of Graduate and Undergraduate level courses, students need to cover all courses necessary for the completion of the chosen undergraduate degree, according to Texas A&M University's Undergraduate Catalogue.

In order to be conferred the Master's degree, students will be required to complete the same basic 36 credit hour curriculum for the non-thesis option or the 32 credit hour curriculum for the thesis option as any other student admitted into the Master's program in the Department of Mathematics. The specific course requirements for each of the tracks in our Master's program are displayed in the Department's web page.

International students will be required to fulfill the same language requirements that are required from any other international applicant. A waiver of these requirements may be issued, on an individual basis and upon interview, when the students have been in US throughout their Undergraduate studies.

3. Mentoring and “opting-out”

Students admitted in the program will be advised by a joint committee that will involve both undergraduate and graduate advisers. The committee will also act as the final examination committee, administering the necessary final examination to complete the Master's degree, according to our Graduate Program rules.

Students who choose not to complete the Master's degree after being admitted to the FastTrack program may exit at any time with a Bachelor's degree, once the requirements for the Bachelor's degree are fulfilled.

4. Funding

A limited number of partial Teaching Assistantships will be awarded on a competitive basis. While under the U4 classification students will be paid at the undergraduate TA rate and after reaching G7 status students will be paid at the Master's student rate.