Residency Requirement Policy

Baccalaureate Degrees

The residency requirement policy for Eastern Kentucky University states that students seeking a baccalaureate degree are required to “Earn at least 30 of the last 36 hours through Eastern Kentucky University, . . . ”. The “residency rule” was instituted at EKU September 1, 1959 and represents a response to an academic environment that needed to be addressed at that time. It may be presumed that the policy was needed to insure that a baccalaureate degree awarded was indeed representative of the institution; more specifically that students in their discipline-based majors had completed sufficient coursework in the major at EKU to reflect an appropriate level of knowledge of the discipline, determined by the discipline-based faculty.

Today the academic environment of higher education is decidedly different than in 1959 because of the greatly increased mobility of students, a national trend referred to as “swirling”. Students very commonly attend multiple institutions during the completion of their degree program, including the transfer of significant coursework (more than six hours) near the completion of their baccalaureate degree program. Increasingly, students are finding themselves having completed all baccalaureate degree requirements except the residency requirement. Deans find themselves waiving up to three and occasionally six hours so that the student can graduate. Requests for waiver consideration in excess of six hours are becoming more frequent.

The CAA Subcommittee for Degree Requirements has examined the question of whether the residency requirement remains an academically relevant policy, especially in the educational value added to a baccalaureate degree. Are students well served in their educational experience by being required to take additional coursework (to meet the residency requirement) when all other baccalaureate degree requirements have been met?

SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.5.2 states that “The institution awards degrees only to those students who have earned at least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree through instruction offered by that institution.” Simply stated, students must complete at EKU a minimum of 32 hours of the 128 hours required for a baccalaureate degree at Eastern Kentucky University. This policy provides a built-in residency requirement that is not constrained by when coursework is completed.

The Subcommittee does not believe that today’s degree-seeking students are educationally well served by the residency requirement. Therefore, the following proposals are recommended.

- The residency requirement policy (“Earn at least 30 of the last 36 hours through Eastern Kentucky University, . . . ”) is abolished, effective immediately.
- The academic departments/colleges will determine the minimum residency requirements for the major coursework for the discipline-based baccalaureate degree programs. (Note – Any residency requirements adopted by academic departments/colleges must be appropriately published to inform students.)
**Associate Degrees**

There also is a residency requirement for associate degrees that requires students to “Earn a minimum of 15 of the last 18 hours through Eastern Kentucky University.” The same proposals recommended for the baccalaureate degrees will also be adopted for the associate degrees. That is (1) the residency requirement is abolished and (2) academic departments/colleges will determine the minimum residency requirements for the major coursework in the associate degree programs.