

## Graduate School Policy 1.3: Companion Document

### 1. Graduate Programs and Credentials

Note: Text in boxes/italics refer to Graduate School [Policy 1.3](#).

*A graduate degree program or graduate certificate program ... must have at least one, but may have multiple, transcribed credentials associated with it. Each unique credential must correspond to a program of study with distinct academic outcomes. The overarching graduate program title will be assigned to any curriculum or credential associated with that program.*

*The credential title will include indication of the overarching graduate program designation (e.g., Master of Arts (Classics); Master of Science (Chemistry); Master of Business Administration; Doctor of Philosophy (Immunology); Graduate Certificate in...), and may include an additional area of specialization.*

*For example, a unit with multiple graduate programs and the associated credentials:*

<i>Academic Unit</i>	<i>[e.g., Foster School of Business]</i>
↳ <i>Graduate program A</i>	<i>[e.g., Doctor of Philosophy (Business Administration)]</i>
↳ <i>Credential A1</i>	<i>[e.g., Doctor of Philosophy (Business Administration)]</i>
↳ <i>Graduate program B</i>	<i>[e.g., Master of Science in Information Systems]</i>
↳ <i>Credential B1</i>	<i>[e.g., Master of Science in Information Systems]</i>
↳ <i>Graduate Program C</i>	<i>[e.g., Master of Business Administration]</i>
↳ <i>Credential C1</i>	<i>[e.g., Master of Business Administration]</i>
↳ <i>Credential C2</i>	<i>[e.g., Master of Business Administration (Information Systems)]</i>
↳ <i>Credential C3</i>	<i>[e.g., Master of Business Administration (Environmental Management)]</i>
↳ <i>Graduate program D</i>	<i>[e.g., Graduate Certificate in...]</i>
↳ <i>Credential D1</i>	<i>[e.g., Graduate Certificate in...]</i>
↳ <i>etc.</i>	

Policy 1.3 is based on the hierarchy of: *academic unit->graduate program->credential*.

The graduate faculty of an academic unit (for example a department, school, college, or interdisciplinary group) can be approved to offer one or more graduate degree programs or graduate certificate programs. Each graduate program results in a student receiving a transcribed credential in the form of a graduate degree or graduate certificate.

A graduate program may also be approved to offer multiple transcribed credentials under a single graduate program, where each credential reflects a distinct area of academic specialization. Note that a

distinct mode of delivery (e.g., evening program, online program, etc.) does not designate a distinct degree option unless the academic focus and outcome are distinct and the academic focus is reflected on the transcript.<sup>1</sup> These transcribed specializations are normally referred to as degree options. For example, the *Master of Business Administration* shown above has transcribed degree options in *Information Systems* and *Environmental Management*.

A graduate program may also have focus areas or areas of specialization that are not transcribed. The decision to create a transcribed credential based on an area of specialization is at the discretion of the graduate faculty of the academic unit offering the graduate program.

The graduate degree program title is normally equivalent to the type of degree plus the general area of study, e.g. Master of Arts (Classics), Master of Science (Chemistry), Doctor of Philosophy (Immunology); or equivalent to the full degree title for a “designated” degree such as the Master of Supply Chain Management, Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, etc. For a graduate certificate program, the program title is normally the full certificate title. The credential, i.e. that which is reflected on the student transcript, will always include the graduate program title associated with the overarching graduate program. The credential may also include additional information such as the academic focus area of a degree option. The credential title may be abbreviated on the transcript or in university systems.

In certain cases, a unit may have multiple graduate programs that share a degree title designation (e.g., two Master of Arts or two Master of Science programs). In these cases, the distinct graduate programs will have a common degree title designation on the diploma, but will share less than 50% of academic content/outcomes and will have distinct credentials on the transcript. For example: Master of Education (Curriculum & Instruction); Master of Education (Educational Psychology); Master of Education (Educational Leadership & Policy Studies); etc. are each considered individual graduate degree programs for the purposes of Policy 1.3 and the processes it defines.

When a graduate program has multiple credentials associated with it, these are normally referred to as degree options or graduate certificate options. Each unique credential will have a specific academic focus reflected in a distinct set of requirements and outcomes. The degree option or graduate certificate option will reveal its academic focus area in the transcript title that also includes the graduate program title. For example: Master of Business Administration (Information Systems). When a credential and a graduate program have a one-to-one relationship, the credential is not normally referred to as a degree option. A degree option is only granted in coordination with completion of the full set of graduate degree or graduate certificate requirements (i.e., additional degree options cannot be awarded after conferral of the graduate degree).

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<sup>1</sup> Distinct modes of delivery may require a separate degree code with duplicate credential title; however, a distinct degree option requires a different academic focus and unique transcribed credential.

## 2. Examples of Mapping Graduate Programs and Credentials to Academic Units

Specific examples mapped to the hierarchy of **Academic Unit/Graduate Program/Credential** are below. The credential is listed in all caps as it appears on the student transcript. Note that for most programs, the graduate program title and diploma title are the same.

Academic Unit:	Foster School of Business				
Graduate Program:	Master of Science in Information Systems	Master of Business Administration			Doctor of Philosophy (Business Administration)
Diploma title:	Master of Science in Information Systems	Master of Business Administration			Doctor of Philosophy
Credential title:	MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS	MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (INFORMATION SYSTEMS)	MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT)	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION)

Academic Unit:	Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering				
Graduate Program:	Master of Science	Master of Science in Civil Engineering	Master of Science in Engineering (Civil Engineering)	Master of Supply Chain Transportation and Logistics	Doctor of Philosophy (Civil Engineering)
Diploma title:	Master of Science	Master of Science in Civil Engineering	Master of Science in Engineering	Master of Supply Chain Transportation and Logistics	Doctor of Philosophy
Credential title:	MASTER OF SCIENCE (CIVIL ENGINEERING)	MASTER OF SCIENCE IN CIVIL ENGINEERING	MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ENGINEERING (CIVIL)	MASTER OF SUPPLY CHAIN TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (CIVIL ENGINEERING)

Academic Unit:	Department of Comparative Literature, Cinema & Media				
Graduate Program:	Master of Arts (Comparative Literature)	Doctor of Philosophy (Comparative Literature)			Graduate Certificate in Cinema & Media Studies
Diploma title:	Master of Arts	Doctor of Philosophy			n/a
Credential title:	MASTER OF ARTS (COMPARATIVE LITERATURE)	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (COMPARATIVE LITERATURE)	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (COMPARATIVE LIT: THEORY & CRITICISM)	DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (COMPARATIVE LIT: TEXTUAL STUDIES)	GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN CINEMA & MEDIA STUDIES

Academic Unit:	College of Education [select MEd programs only]				
Graduate Program:	Master of Education (Curriculum & Instruction)	Master of Education (Educational Psychology)	Master of Education (Educational Leadership & Policy Studies)	Master of Education (School Psychology)	Master of Education (Special Education)
Diploma title:	Master of Education	Master of Education	Master of Education	Master of Education	Master of Education
Credential title:	MASTER OF EDUCATION (CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION)	MASTER OF EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)	MASTER OF EDUCATION (EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP & POLICY STUDIES)	MASTER OF EDUCATION (SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY)	MASTER OF EDUCATION (SPECIAL EDUCATION)

**3. Graduate Program and Graduate Credential Review and Approval Process**

*All programs of study under an approved graduate degree program or graduate certificate program must share a set of common elements. These common elements define core components of the overarching graduate program. The graduate faculty of the academic unit authorized to offer the graduate program must define these common elements and how they relate program outcomes when creating or when significantly changing a graduate program or the program of study leading to a distinct credential under that program.*

For approval process details see: <http://grad.uw.edu/for-faculty-and-staff/creatingmodifying-programs/>

- a) Creating a new graduate degree program or graduate certificate program (i.e., new degree or graduate certificate) requires:

Review and endorsement by academic unit; dean’s office; chancellor’s office (UWB and UWT); Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs & Planning; Graduate School Council. Review and approval by Board of Regents.

- b) Creating a new credential under an existing graduate program (e.g., new degree option or graduate certificate option), when “common elements” are defined by quantifiable credits/coursework, requires:

Review and endorsement by academic unit; dean’s office; chancellor’s office (UWB and UWT).  
Review and approval by Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs & Planning.

- c) Creating a new credential under an existing graduate program (e.g., new degree option or graduate certificate option), when “common elements” are defined by learning outcomes or shared competencies, requires:

Review and endorsement by academic unit; dean’s office; chancellor’s office (UWB and UWT);  
Graduate School Council. Review and approval by Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs & Planning.

If an existing graduate program does not yet have defined common elements, these must be articulated as part of the proposal process for any new credential under the existing program.

#### 4. Common Elements

As described in the Graduate School Policy 1.3, when multiple credentials are associated with a single graduate program, the curriculum for each credential must have significant overlap with all other credentials associated with the overarching graduate program.

*For a graduate certificate program, the shared common elements must constitute a minimum of 9 course credits.*

Graduate certificate programs require a minimum of 15 credits, as described in Policy 1.3.

A graduate certificate program must define the shared common elements according to coursework (9 credits) and may not use shared learning outcomes or shared competencies to define common elements. This requirement is independent from the Graduate School requirements regarding graded coursework or 500-level coursework.

*For a master’s degree program, the common elements included in all credentials associated with the graduate degree program must constitute a minimum of 50% of the program of study, as evidenced by one or more of the following:*

- (a) shared course or credit requirements;*
- (b) shared learning outcomes;*
- (c) shared competencies.*

*The common elements may be defined by any portion of the program of study with the exception of: 600 Independent Study or Research; 700 Master’s Thesis. The common elements need not contain the coursework used to fulfill the Graduate School minimum requirements (graded coursework; 500-level coursework; transfer credit; etc.). Likewise, transfer or other credit may be applied to any portion of the degree requirements, independent of their inclusion as part of the common elements, if otherwise deemed acceptable by the program and the Graduate School.*

The graduate faculty of the degree-offering unit must define a set of common elements that will be a component of all credentials (degrees and degree options) under an approved graduate program (MA, MS, PhD, MBA, etc.). The common elements must be defined to apply equally to all credentials associated with the degree program. Graduate School minimum requirements (18 graded credits, credits at the 500 level, etc.) may be defined by any portion of the program of study, such that these Graduate School minimum requirements may or may not be part of the common elements portion of the degree. Similarly, transfer credit, advanced standing credit, graduate non-matriculated (GNM) coursework, or similar may be applied to the common elements portion of the degree, as deemed acceptable to the program and the Graduate School.

For doctoral programs, dissertation credits (800) may not be included in the definition of the common elements, so that the common elements are measured by coursework portion of the degree requirements.

The fact that common elements must constitute 50% of any credential associated with the degree program has the following implications:

- 1) Any graduate credential must articulate a minimum of 50% of the curriculum as common elements (defined by coursework, outcomes, or competencies).
- 2) If credentials have different total credit requirements from each other, the shared common elements can be no smaller than half the total of the largest option. For example, if the common elements entail 20 credits, no credential under the approved degree program can require more than 40 credits.
- 3) If a proposed program of study leading to a new credential does not include the set of common elements of an existing graduate program in that unit, it will be treated as a new graduate program with full review and final approval by the Board of Regents. This includes new graduate programs that match an existing graduate program in terms of degree level and type (e.g., Master of Arts, Master of Science). Thus, an academic unit may have multiple graduate programs where the diploma title is the same (Master of Arts, Master of Science), while each transcribed credential will be unique. In these cases, the unit should articulate a distinct descriptor for each of the different graduate programs that have the degree level and type in common.

## 5. Example Scenarios

Different scenarios showing a possible distribution of common elements under a single graduate degree program:

### Scenario A: Common Elements = 20 credits

“General” degree credential: common elements = 20 credits; electives = 16 credits; total = 36 credits;

Common Elements (20 credits)	Electives (16 credits)
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Degree option #1: common elements = 20 credits; degree option requirements = 16 credits; total = 36 credits

Common Elements (20 credits)	Option requirements (16 credits)
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Degree option #2: common elements = 20 credits; degree option requirements = 12 credits; total = 36 credits

Common Elements (20 credits)	Option requirements (12 credits)	Electives (4 credits)
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Degree option #3: common elements = 20 credits; option requirements = 20 credits; total = 40 credits

Common Elements (20 credits)	Option requirements (20 credits)
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**Scenario B: Common Elements = 36 credits** [#1 could be practicum; #2 applied program with project; #3 thesis]

Degree option #1: common elements = 36 credits; option requirements = 16 credits; total = 72 credits

Common Elements (36 credits)	Option requirements (16 credits)	Additional reqt's (20 credits)
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Degree option #2: common elements = 36 credits; option requirements = 12 credits; total = 58 credits

Common Elements (36 credits)	Option reqt's (12 credits)	Additional reqt's (10 credits)
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Degree option #3 [thesis]: common elements = 36 credits; option requirements = 16 credits; total = 51 credits

Common Elements (36 credits)	Option requirements (16 credits)	Add'l reqt's (9 credits)
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*Version: June 2019; updated January 2023 to refer to Policy 1.3 throughout.*