

Credential Overlap

Last Modified April 15, 2025

Effective Fall 2025

I. SCOPE

This regulation establishes guidelines for credit overlaps occurring between multiple degrees or credentials being pursued at the University of Pittsburgh. All schools and regional campuses are required to adhere to this regulation. Any exceptions to this regulation must be approved by the Office of the Provost and posted in the University Catalog.

II. TERMINOLOGY

The University of Pittsburgh offers a variety of pathways for students to pursue multiple credentials during their time of enrollment. Broadly, these pathways fall into three categories:

Concurrent pathways include all situations in which multiple types of degrees or credentials are conferred or awarded at the same time. Example concurrent pathways include the pursuit of:

- A major alongside a minor or certificate
- Dual majors within a single degree
- Multiple degrees within or across schools or campuses

Sequential pathways include all situations in which one degree or credential at the University of Pittsburgh is conferred or awarded prior to another, often related, credential earned at the University of Pittsburgh. Example sequential pathways include the pursuit of:

- A second bachelor's degree conferred after a prior bachelor's degree
- A bachelor's degree conferred before a Master's or Doctoral degree
- A Master's degree conferred before a Doctoral degree
- Graduate microcredentials that stack into a graduate certificate
- Graduate certificates that stack into a Master's or Doctoral degree

Accelerated pathways provide mechanisms for students to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees along an accelerated timeline by allowing structured overlap of degree requirements.

III. REGULATION

In all situations where a student pursues multiple academic degrees or credentials at the University of Pittsburgh, the student must complete all approved requirements for each degree or credential. In situations where degrees are offered by multiple schools or campuses, this includes any additional requirements specified by the respective schools or campuses.

Concurrent Pathways

Credit Overlap in Concurrent Pathways. Credit overlap between degrees or credentials completed at the same academic career level via a concurrent pathway is permissible. Certification of degree or credential completion should be contingent upon the learning outcomes attained by a student rather than the order in which courses were taken and/or the intent to complete a given degree or credential was declared.

Two Independent Degree Programs Simultaneously. Students may pursue two independent degrees simultaneously in two different schools or campuses within the University or two different departments within the same school. Students desiring to enroll in two degree programs must be admitted into both programs and must satisfy the degree requirements of both programs.

The same examination, thesis, or dissertation cannot be used to fulfill requirements for two independent degrees. It is the responsibility of the dean or deans, if two schools or campuses are involved, to ensure that this regulation is enforced.

Dual, Joint, and Cooperative Programs. Dual, joint, and cooperative degree programs result in two degrees being awarded concurrently. Dual programs exist within a single school; joint programs exist between two or more schools or campuses at the University of Pittsburgh; cooperative programs are administered jointly by the University of Pittsburgh and another domestic or international institution.

Requirements for these programs include all or most of the requirements of two distinct academic degree programs. These requirements must be specified in an academic planning proposal agreed to by both of the entities (programs, schools/campuses, or institutions) awarding the degrees. Any degree that can be awarded by the University of Pittsburgh as part of a dual, joint, or cooperative program must also be offered as a stand-alone degree.

Proposals for Dual, Joint, or Concurrent degree programs must be approved by the Office of the Provost. The same examination or thesis may be used to fulfill requirements of both degrees only if so specified in the approved documents formally establishing the program. The Office of the Provost will evaluate whether the rationale and mechanism for such sharing of requirements is reasonable.

Students are not required to be admitted at the same time to both academic programs offering the dual, joint, or cooperative degrees. However, both degrees are typically conferred at the same time.

Sequential Pathways

Credit Overlap in Sequential Pathways. Credit overlap between degrees or credentials completed at the same academic career level via a sequential pathway is permissible. Certification of degree or credential completion should be contingent upon the learning outcomes attained by a student rather than the order in which courses were taken and/or the intent to complete a given degree or credential was declared.

Counting Graduate Courses Toward the Undergraduate Degree. Undergraduate students with sufficient preparation are permitted to enroll in graduate courses following procedures determined by each school. The graduate credits earned may be counted toward the undergraduate degree if approved by the student's school. These may not be counted as credits toward a graduate degree except as noted below.

Counting Graduate Courses Earned as a University of Pittsburgh Undergraduate Toward a Graduate Degree. Undergraduate students within their final year of study who are enrolled full-time to complete requirements for the baccalaureate degree and who intend to continue study toward an advanced degree may be permitted to register for graduate courses which will later apply toward a graduate degree. The student must obtain written permission from the school of proposed graduate study that the courses may count when and if the student is admitted into the graduate degree program. This privilege should not be granted if the proposed total credit load exceeds the normal full-time undergraduate credit limit. Although these credits will appear as part of the undergraduate record, they will not count toward fulfilling undergraduate degree requirements.

Accelerated Pathways

Early Admissions Program. Exceptionally able undergraduate University of Pittsburgh students may be admitted to a graduate program if their graduate and undergraduate schools have approved early admission as a permitted option, have established standards and procedures, and provided the student needs no more than 24 credits to complete the baccalaureate degree. Credits earned while enrolled in the graduate program may also be counted toward fulfilling undergraduate degree requirements.

Accelerated Bachelors/Graduate Programs. Accelerated Bachelors/Graduate (for example, “4+1”) programs allow students to complete two sequential degrees on an accelerated timeline. Students enrolled in an Accelerated Bachelors/Graduate program may, in their final year of undergraduate study, take a limited amount of graduate coursework that satisfies both undergraduate and graduate requirements. Typically, no more than 40% of the credits towards the graduate degree may be taken during the final year of undergraduate study. Accelerated Bachelors/Graduate programs must not change the requirements of either the Bachelors or graduate degree and must be approved by the Office of the Provost.