

Guidelines for Creating Certificates with the Intent to Create Stackable Master's Degrees

As more programs are considering certificates and stackable certificates that lead to Master's degree completion I wanted to share some information to assist with their development; the information is consistent with discussions among the Chancellor's Council on Graduate Studies (CCGS) and ODHE/HLC practices

- ODHE and HLC view approved Master's degrees as meeting the rigor associated with graduate education
- This includes the cohesive and carefully reasoned curriculum that is synthesized into an advanced degree consistent with the expectation of mastery of the field
- The minimum number of credit hours in a graduate degree is 30 credit hours
- Certificates vary greatly by design and those with less than 21 hours do not require state approval
- In these offerings, rigor and cohesiveness consistent with the expectation of graduate education are not externally evaluated
- Keep this in mind when considering how ODHE and HLC will view your program
- Regardless of whether we are creating new degrees (this will require state approval) or using existing degrees, we should be developing these offerings consistent with ODHE and HLC practices


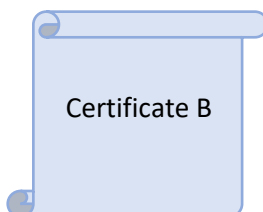



New Programs

- The certificates that stack to a degree must be consistent with the rigor of a master's degree AND there must be a direct path to the master's degree without earning the certificates

Existing Programs

- Certificates and stackable-to-degree options should not be forced
- If they do not fit your program, they do not fit your program
- Rigor and mastery of the content necessary for the advanced degree must be clearly evident and cannot be sacrificed
- The ideal way to determine certificates is to deconstruct the existing degree/curriculum

WRONG WAY TO THINK OF STACKABLES (like a buffet)

 Certificate A	 Certificate B	 Certificate C	 Certificate D	 Certificate E
9 Hours Content Area 1	9 Hours Content Area 2	9 Hours Content Area 3	9 Hours Content Area 4	12 Hours Content Area 5

Master's (30 hours) can be achieved by:

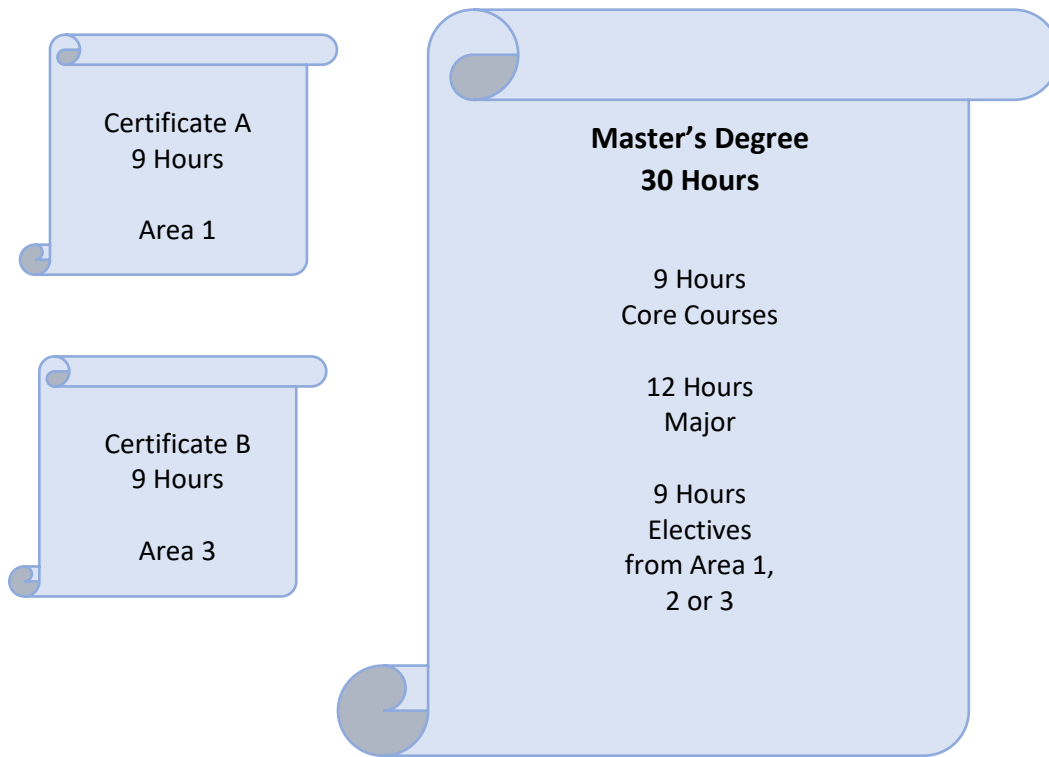
- Any 3, 9-hour certificates + 3 additional credit hours
- Any 2, 9-hour certificates + 12-hr certificate
- Any combination, therein

WHY IS THIS WRONG?

- Where is the guarantee of rigor and connection? / Where is the synthesis for mastery of the field? / Does a Master's (direct pathway without certificate completion) exist? If it exists, is it meaningful/appropriate?

CORRECT WAY TO THINK OF STACKABLES (deconstruct the Master's degree)

-Approach them as deconstructing the Master's degree into MEANINGFUL parcels of content mastery and remember a direct path to the degree must be an option



-Master's degree is 30 hours with 9 core hours, 12 major (specialization) hours and 9 relevant electives

-The student would earn one certificate in the process of earning the Master's degree, provided the electives were either all taken in Area 1 or Area 3; if the electives taken were a mix between the three content areas, an additional certificate would not be earned

-Bundling core and/or specialization courses could be done if it made sense to do so

-As such, some degrees may be able to be earned by stacking multiple certificates, whereas others may require additional coursework that is not bundled

Rationale

-This may at first seem counter-intuitive to building stacking options – but this ensures the rigor expected by ODHE and HLC, as well as UA

-Students starting degrees and experiencing either a change of heart or circumstances can have an option to earn a certificate

-Develop these in a way that supports non-traditional students seeking the certificate for career promotion, while leaving the door open for a return at a later date

SUPPORTING CERTIFICATE ENROLLMENT AS OF 4/1/2022 (Current students only)

Graduate School is waiving application fee and application process for currently enrolled graduate students (in a degree-seeking program) when adding certificate(s) to their current plan of study