

Memo To: All UH-Downtown PS Holders
From: Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Academic Programs and Credentials

UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.35
Issue No. 5
Effective Date: 08/15/2022
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1. PURPOSE

This Policy Statement (PS) describes the elements of degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. At the undergraduate level, this includes undergraduate academic degree programs (bachelor's degrees, including majors and minors, and certificates), as well as the policy and procedures for simultaneously awarding students two undergraduate degrees or two undergraduate majors within the same degree. At the graduate level, this includes certificates, Accelerated Pathway degrees, graduate degrees, dual degrees and multiple certificates within a graduate degree.

This policy works in concert with PS 03.A.12 to define curriculum and the processes for approval. Those wishing to propose new curricula or curricular changes should refer to both this policy and PS 03.A.12 when considering changes.

In the event that updates to this policy may negatively affect student progress for those enrolled prior to the policy effective date, the Provost may, in consultation with program leadership, allow exceptions based on the previous policy language.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Academic Program:** an integrated course of study in one or more academic disciplines. A program may or may not lead to an academic degree (e.g. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Science), and may or may not require the declaration of a specialization (i.e. major, minor, track/concentration).
- 2.2 **Academic Degree:** Certification by the Board of Regents of successful completion of all requirements of a baccalaureate, masters, or doctoral academic program. Academic programs leading to an academic degree are called degree programs.
- 2.3 **Bachelor's Degree** (a.k.a. Baccalaureate Degree or Undergraduate Degree): An academic degree in undergraduate studies. Examples of such degrees include the Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA).
- 2.4 **Major:** A specific program of study within a degree representing a discipline, field

of study, or a designated combination of fields that form the unique area of knowledge or skill for a bachelor's degree in which students concentrate and in which the university is authorized to grant degrees. Examples of majors include English, History, Chemistry, Finance, Accounting, Criminal Justice, and Computer Science.

- 2.5 **Concentration:** A coherent group of courses within an academic degree, representing a sub-specialization or emphasis in a field available to students seeking a degree in that field, and assessed under the parent degree. Concentrations may be offered at the undergraduate, graduate, or professional level. Concentrations must be declared and are transcribed.
- 2.6 **Tracks:** The term “track” is a useful word referring to groups of courses for informal discussion, but the term “track” has no official standing as academic nomenclature.
- 2.7 **Minor:** A coherent group of courses in an academic discipline or cross-disciplinary field demonstrating a secondary interest or competence of a student seeking a bachelor's degree. In most UHD degree programs, minors are optional. Minors are awarded in conjunction with a bachelor's degree. Students and advisors should consult the catalog for descriptions of minors in the various fields.
- 2.8 **Certificate:** A separately transcribed, required or optional component of an academic program consisting of several courses that fulfills a relatively narrow, targeted academic outcome. Certificates may be awarded separately from other degrees and may admit current or external degree-seekers. Certificates are considered to be aligned with existing program(s) when at least 50% of their coursework serves existing program(s).
- 2.9 **Undergraduate Certificate:** A certificate constituted by 9 to 30 undergraduate academic credit hours (SCHs) housed in one or more disciplines of study or academic departments. Any undergraduate certificate with 21 or more credit hours must be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).
- 2.10 **Badge:** Badges are signifiers of non-credential achievement earned while seeking an academic credential. Badges are not degrees or degree programs, nor are they transcribed as such.
- 2.11 **Academic Home:** A student's academic home of record is the degree or other credential designated by the student as primary.
- 2.12 **Primary and Secondary Major or Curriculum:** The student information system associates students with a primary degree and a primary major, called a curriculum, associated with the college that offers the major. For students who complete an additional degree or major, these programs are labeled by the information system as

secondary degrees or secondary majors.

- 2.13 **Simultaneous Majors:** Two or more majors within the same degree (e.g. both a Bachelor of Arts) pursued simultaneously.
- 2.14 **Simultaneous Degrees:** Two or more different degrees at the same level pursued simultaneously (e.g. a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science). The degree named on the diploma will be the declared primary degree (see 4.4.1 below).
- 2.15 **Subsequent Degree:** A subsequently earned academic degree that is awarded to a UHD student who already possesses one UHD degree of the same level.
- 2.16 **Pre-major:** The major degree program which a student intends to complete, as selected by the student on the Texas Common Application, by applying for a UHD major either online or with an advisor to declare a major, or by communicating to an academic advisor or college advisor the student's intended degree.
- 2.17 **Filing a Degree Plan:** For purposes of complying with the requirement of HB 3025, a student confirms their intent to pursue a particular major and receives an electronic degree audit from the university's degree audit system either from an advisor or through self-service in the university's student information system. Prior to Fall 2014, students applied to colleges, which filed a degree plan for the major of interest.
- 2.18 **Electronic Audit System:** An online application linked to the university's student information system that electronically checks the student's academic record for completion of degree requirements.
- 2.19 **Semester Credit Hour (SCH):** SCHs are defined in PS 03.A.30.
- 2.20 **Master's Degree (a.k.a Graduate Degree):** A post-baccalaureate academic degree.
- 2.21 **Dual Degree (Graduate):** A combined degree program at the graduate level, where courses across both programs are designed to complement, not overlap with, the additional degree.
- 2.22 **Accelerated Pathway Degree Program:** A combined undergraduate/graduate degree program in which graduate courses are designated to count toward conferral of both an undergraduate degree and a graduate degree.
- 2.23 **Graduate Certificate:** A certificate constituted by 9 to 36 post-baccalaureate academic credit hours (i.e., graduate SCHs) housed in one or more disciplines of study or academic departments. Any graduate certificate with 16 or more credit hours must be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

3. POLICY

- 3.1 A bachelor's degree contains a minimum of 120 semester credit hours (SCHs), comprised of the 42 SCHs of university-approved core curriculum, plus required courses, prescribed electives, and free electives (if available). Bachelor's degrees may vary in the allocation of hours. Bachelor's degrees requiring more than 120 SCHs must be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- 3.2 Minors typically require some lower division and some upper-division courses and total between 15 and 18 hours. Student may use a combination of required or elective courses in their major to achieve a minor. Courses counting toward a major may be applied toward a minor, and vice versa, unless specifically prohibited in the program description. Students may not earn a minor that bears the same name as their major.
- 3.3 Courses counting toward a certificate may be applied to a major and/or a minor, or vice versa. Certificate requirements can be fulfilled by a combination of mandatory courses (certificate's core) and electives. Both core and elective courses must match the focus area of the certificate.

At least 70% of certificate's credit hour requirements must be fulfilled by certificate's core. Typically, certificates with fewer than 18 credit hours may have at most one mandatory course that is also mandatory for another certificate. Certificates with 18 or more credit hours may have at most two such courses. Deviations from these requirements may be considered in light of best practices and credentialing guidelines.
- 3.4 Students may petition to pursue two majors simultaneously. See 4.4 below.
- 3.5 Badges must be awarded alongside an academic credential, typically an undergraduate or graduate degree. Badges must contain well-defined criteria for achievement and process for awarding.
 - Badges call attention to excellence or emphasis achieved in some aspect of a student's school-related activity, but do not serve as academic credentials. For example, a badge might be awarded for significant community engagement.
 - Students are not admitted into, nor must they formally declare, a badge. Processing and awarding of badges is performed by the persons or group managing the badge and may be issued through electronic means, such as online career portfolio services.
- 3.6 A master's degree must contain a minimum of 30 hours of graduate level SCHs.
- 3.7 Dual degrees at the graduate level allow for two master's degree programs to coordinate in order to offer a path for students to achieve two complementary, not

overlapping, degrees. Courses in one degree program may count toward the second degree program, provided:

- For sharing hours across graduate programs, the rule applied depends on the program with the fewest hours.
- For master's programs with 30 graduate hours, no more than 9 hours are to be shared.
- For master's programs with 36 graduate hours, no more than 12 hours are to be shared.
- Dual degree programs at the graduate level must be pre-established between programs, following the normal curricular process as outlined in PS 3.A.12.
- Students enrolling in dual degree programs at the graduate level must have full admission to both degree programs.

3.8 An Accelerated Pathway Degree program allows an accelerated track for completion of a master's degree in conjunction with a bachelor's degree. Graduate hours may count both toward an undergraduate degree and graduate degree, in concert with the following requirements:

- Graduate courses used to fill undergraduate degree requirements should be the introductory-level courses and should not be the same as current undergrad courses. These must be designed as full graduate courses as 4000-level courses may not be cross listed with 5000-level courses.
- Accelerated Pathway degree programs must consider the appropriate number of hours of graduate credits that will count toward the undergraduate degree (i.e., joint credits). Joint credits may not exceed 12 hours. These joint credits must be required hours for the graduate degree. If the combination of undergraduate hours plus graduate hours required is less than 150, consult with the provost's office to determine whether this is feasible according to current THECB rules.
- Programs should have rigorous eligibility requirements for students who can participate and take graduate courses as undergraduates.
- Undergraduate students should not take graduate credits until they have completed at least 90 undergraduate hours.
- There must be a specific Accelerated Pathway degree plan on file; these should not simply be "electives" in the undergrad program, because students need to apply to get into the Accelerated Pathway. It is expected the department housing the Accelerated Pathway program will approve each student's Accelerated Pathway plan in consultation with program advisors.
- Accelerated Pathway programs must be pre-negotiated, following the curricular process as outlined in PS 3.A.12.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Declaring a Major

To avoid enrollment in excessive hours and to speed degree completion, students should select and declare a suitable major as early as possible. Upon admission to UHD, students who meet college requirements may declare a major.

- 4.1.1 Students may apply for a major through the UHD website or with the assistance of an advisor. Students may seek counseling about the selection of a major with the assistance of an academic advisor member in their academic home of record or UHD faculty.
- 4.1.2 Students can select pre-majors when they cannot declare a desired major immediately upon admission because they must meet additional college requirements.
- 4.1.3 To ensure timely completion of a degree and comply with [HB 3025](#), all UHD first time in college students must declare a major no later than the semester after they complete 45 SCHs. A student who fails to meet college requirements for a major in this semester must confirm their major of interest with an academic advisor. The advisor will file a degree plan by assisting the student to run an electronic degree audit, listing the requirements necessary to complete the major of interest.
- 4.1.4 To ensure timely completion of a degree and comply with [HB 3025](#), all UHD transfer students with more than 45 SCHs must declare a major no later than their second regular semester of enrollment at UHD. A student who fails to meet college requirements for a major in this semester must confirm their degree of interest with an academic advisor. The advisor will file a degree plan by assisting the student to run an electronic degree audit, listing the requirements necessary to complete the major of interest.
- 4.1.5 Undeclared students who have completed 90 or more SCHs, have not been accepted into a UHD college, are on probation or suspension, or who do not meet college requirements for their major of interest must meet with an advisor to decide on and apply for a major. A student will select a major for which he or she qualifies that allows the student to graduate in a timely fashion and avoids undertaking excessive hours. The advisor will file a degree plan by assisting the student to run an electronic degree audit, listing the requirements necessary to complete the major of interest. A student subsequently may change majors if they successfully satisfy all college requirements to declare.

4.2 Declaring a Minor

Students selecting a minor should consult with the academic advisor in their college or faculty member who assists them with their major degree program. The advisor will file a degree plan by assisting the student to run an electronic degree audit, listing the requirements necessary to complete the major and minor of interest. The college advisor or advising office will enter the selected minor in UHD's student information system.

4.2.1 After applying for graduation, a student who fails to meet the requirements for the minor through their current registered courses may choose to drop a minor in order to qualify for graduation in that semester.

4.3 Declaring an Undergraduate Certificate

Students pursuing an undergraduate certificate should consult with the academic advisor in their college or faculty member who assists them with their major degree program. The advisor will file a degree plan by assisting the student to run an electronic degree audit, listing the requirements necessary to complete the certificate of interest. The college advisor or advising office will enter the selected certificate in UHD's student information system.

A student seeking another degree alongside the certificate may graduate without the certificate by dropping it, unless the certificate is a requirement of the degree in which the student is seeking to graduate.

4.4 Simultaneous Majors and Simultaneous Degrees

Undergraduates may pursue two majors simultaneously, which may lead to a single degree (a BS with majors in Criminal Justice and Computer Science) or two degrees (a BA in Communication Studies and History).

Students wishing to graduate with two majors within the same degree (e.g. both B.A. degrees) or with two different degrees must officially declare each major, must be admitted into each major, and must satisfy all the requirements of each major as well as those set forth in this policy. Students with simultaneous majors may use the advising and student services provided by both colleges. Decisions about admission to programs, honors, course credit, program specific fees, and other program specific items are based independently on the criteria for each major and college.

4.4.1 Students declaring simultaneous majors or degrees must indicate which degree or major will be considered primary and which will be secondary. The primary degree will serve as the academic home of record, and the dean or appropriate designee of the college housing the primary degree will be responsible for monitoring students' compliance with all university rules and regulations.

- 4.4.2 The state has imposed a limit of 120 hours for all degrees (except in cases where the university has received permission for additional hours). For more information [See Texas Education Code \(TEC\), Chapter 61, Subchapter §61.0515](#). Students working towards simultaneous majors may be charged out-of-state tuition for any excess hours as defined by the state of Texas.
- 4.4.3 The degree plans for the majors in both the primary and the secondary majors will be housed in electronic form accessible to advisors and administrators in both major fields.
- 4.4.4 Both majors or degrees will be awarded on the transcripts of students who are certified with simultaneous majors or degrees.
- 4.4.5 Failure to Complete Requirements for Both
- 4.4.5.1 A student may elect to stop pursuing simultaneous degrees or majors at any time before certification for graduation. The student must notify in writing the dean(s) or designee(s) of this decision.
- 4.4.5.2 If a certifying official determines that a student has not met all requirements for one of the simultaneous degrees or majors, that official must notify the certifying official of the other college. The official in the college housing the student's primary degree or major will notify the student. The student will choose among: 1) certification in only the successfully completed degree or major; 2) changing the yet-to-be-completed major or degree program to a declared minor, if such a minor exists; or 3) delaying any certification until such time as requirements for both degrees or majors are met.
- 4.5 Subsequent Bachelor's Degree (After Conferral of a UHD Bachelor's Degree)
- Returning post-baccalaureate UHD graduates earning a subsequent bachelor's degree must:
- Meet the general and specific requirements for each degree.
 - Take at least 30 unique hours, including 18 hours needed for the major, in residency for each bachelor's degree conferred by the university, with a minimum of 18 of the unique hours in each program being upper-level and applicable to the upper-level requirements of the degree.
- 4.6 Additional Undergraduate or Graduate Certificate
- To qualify for a second (or third) certificate, a candidate must:
- Meet the general and specific requirements for each certificate.

- Take at least 6 unique hours needed for each additional certificate

4.7 Multiple Graduate Degrees

Students are permitted to utilize the credit transfer policy for graduate degrees (see UHD Graduate Catalog - Transfer Credit) to transfer hours from a previously earned, or concurrently enrolled, UHD graduate degree to count towards a subsequent or simultaneous graduate degree.

If a program does not have an established dual degree plan but wishes to accept more transfer hours than enabled under the Graduate Catalog, the college and program leadership must seek approval through the normal chain of curricular approvals for that program, as described in 03.A.12.

4.8 Dual Graduate Degrees

Formally-established dual degrees follow the policies herein, specifically related to planning pre-degree, admission to both programs, and following the catalog degree plan. Dual degree programs contain pre-scripted course overlaps that are proposed and approved through the normal curricular process.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs &

Provost Review: Every five years on or before July 1, or as necessary.

Signed original on file in the Office of Human Resources

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 05/28/13

Issue #2: 11/20/14

Issue #3: 6/22/15

Issue #4: 05/23/2018

7. REFERENCES

[Texas Legislation HB 3025](#)

[Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §61.0515](#)