



Ohio Administrative Code Rule 3341-3-89 Graduate Academic Designations.

Effective: June 24, 2026

(A) Policy statement and purpose

This policy defines and distinguishes transcriptable and non-transcriptable graduate-level academic designations and credentials, and establishes criteria for their development and implementation. It ensures consistency, academic rigor, and alignment with institutional goals and with applicable guidelines of the Ohio department of higher education (ODHE) and the chancellor's council on graduate studies (CCGS).

(B) Policy and definitions

(1) Transcriptable designations

(a) Graduate certificate

A graduate certificate is a credential awarded upon completion of a defined set of courses on a specific topic.

(i) Types of certificates

(a) Standalone: may be pursued independently of a master's specialist, or doctoral degree program.

(b) Concurrent: may be pursued as part of a master's specialist, or doctoral degree program. Some certificates may only be completed with a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree program.

Some, but not all, certificates are available in both standalone and concurrent formats.

(ii) Credit guidelines

Certificates require a defined set of graduate courses. Although the number of credit hours may vary, a general minimum is nine credit hours. Programs are strongly encouraged to ensure certificates maintain academic rigor, align with degree pathways, and support stackability (see paragraph (B)(1)(a)(iii) of this policy). Programs choosing to offer higher-credit certificates may require additional approvals (e.g., ODHE, CCGS).

(iii) Stackability



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Certificates may be intentionally designed to serve as building blocks toward a master's degree in a given field.

Two or more certificates may be stacked to fulfill the requirements of a master's degree. In this case, the curriculum must follow an integrative design. Rather than a collection of unrelated courses, the certificates should represent cohesive, meaningful areas of content mastery.

(b) Specializations

A specialization is a significant, transcriptable subdivision within an approved graduate degree program. It is not a standalone graduate credential. It reflects a focused area of study that builds upon the program's core curriculum and represents a student's in-depth preparation in a distinct subfield of the discipline.

(i) Credit hour requirements

Specializations must consist of a defined number of credit hours. A recommended guideline is approximately one-third of the total credit hours required for the degree.

(ii) Common core requirement

All specializations within a degree program must share a common core curriculum to ensure programmatic cohesion. A recommended guideline is nine credit hours.

(iii) Differentiation from the field of study

Specializations must be distinct from the field of study. The rationale for the specialization must be documented, and students must be informed of its academic and professional value.

If a proposed specialization shares no curricular elements with the major, it is more appropriate to propose a new program.

(2) Non-transcriptable designations

Focus such as concentrations, areas of emphasis, and cognates are non-transcriptable advising tools used to guide course selection.