

# STACKED DEGREES



The Graduate School's newest initiative will expand access to graduate education and facilitate the creation of interdisciplinary degrees across the University. Stacked Degrees are low stakes “on-ramps” that provide a transcribed credential, allowing students to earn graduate certificates incrementally, ultimately adding them up to equal a master's degree.

We expect this initiative to attract students who might not otherwise attend the UW or pursue graduate education. We also expect the policy to facilitate the creation of interdisciplinary degrees due to the modular nature of stackable certificates, allowing for multiple combinations of disciplines and specialities. “Stackable” graduate certificates differ from previous graduate certificates which were a secondary program of study, similar to an undergraduate minor, for students who were already matriculated into a degree program.

To propose a Stacked Degree, the department granting the degree will go through the [established degree proposal process](#), such that the stacked degree will be approved by the Graduate School Council, the Board of Regents, and NWCCU. This will ensure content validity, a cohesive program of study, and a meaningful synthetic experience for every stacked degree. Additionally, Stacked Degrees will need to meet the same minimum requirements for master's degrees as outlined in [Memo 46](#). Once launched, students will be able to apply to and matriculate into certificate programs as a primary program of study.

## FAQ

### Q Can students combine any graduate certificates they wish to create a master's degree?

No, Stacked Degrees will be approved as “bundles” of certificates with a culminating experience, like any other graduate credential, to ensure a coherent and rigorous program of study.

### Q Can academic units propose one graduate certificate at a time and then propose the Stacked Degree later after each certificate has launched?

Yes, this will allow units to test prospective student interest gradually and will have the added advantage of not burdening faculty with the task of envisioning and proposing a full degree program at once. Stacked Degrees can also be proposed all at one time, that is, a proposal with both the degree and the component certificates.

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Contact [Kima Cargill](#), Associate Dean of Academic Affairs with questions.



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## Q Can students still earn graduate certificates as a secondary program of study like they do now?

Yes!

## Q Are Stacked Degrees master's degrees and Ph.D.'s?

Stacked degrees can be master's degrees or [practice doctorates](#), but not the Ph.D.

## Q Can Stacked Degrees be tuition-based or fee-based?

Stacked degrees will be just like other graduate degrees which can either be tuition-based or fee-based.

## Q How are these different from the Continuum College PCE certificates?

C2 Professional and Continuing Education certificates are for the general public and do not go through the same approval process as University of Washington degrees. Students pursuing graduate certificates and/or stacked degrees must apply to a program, meet [Memo 3](#) admissions requirements and will be matriculated graduate students.



## Q Can international students enroll in Stackable Certificates?

Prospective international students may be eligible for F-1 visas for approved graduate certificates. The Graduate School's Office of Academic Affairs will be working with International Student Services (UW Seattle and UW Bothell), International Student and Scholar Services (UW Tacoma), and faculty who want to develop graduate certificates available to F-1 visa holders.

F-1 status students in graduate certificate programs must maintain full-time enrollment of ten credits or more. F-1 status students are not eligible for all remote graduate certificates or stacked degrees. The program of study must have an in-person component.

In order to be eligible for F-1 students to apply for post-completion optional practical training (OPT) after completion of certificate programs, students must have maintained full time enrollment for three consecutive quarters and have not been granted post-completion OPT at a higher or the same level of education.

## Q Will students enrolled in stackable certificates be eligible for financial aid?

Stackable graduate certificates may be eligible for financial aid if the certificate leads to "gainful employment" and certain other requirements, and is approved by the U.S. Department of Education. The UW Office of Student Financial Aid is exploring federal rules governing certificates and assessing the resources necessary to manage aid for them. Faculty who want to develop graduate certificates eligible for financial aid should work with the Graduate School's Office of Academic Affairs who will be partnering with the Office of Student Financial Aid as we develop procedures and policies for this new type of curriculum.

## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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