

Brief Guide to Graduate Minors & Postbaccalaureate/Graduate Certificates
College of the Liberal Arts
July 13, 2020

For information on all graduate curricular proposal requirements, see

- [Overview of the Graduate Council Curricular Review Process](#)
- [GCAC-206 Graduate Curricular Proposal Requirements – Procedure and Guidelines](#)
- [Developing Graduate Program Proposals](#)

1. Overview

Graduate minors and postbaccalaureate/graduate certificates are additional tools to enhance the skills and knowledge of students already enrolled in an approved field of study. Their intention is to supplement the training and coursework already available in these approved fields of study. Both graduate minors and graduate certificates typically require between 6-15 credits for successful completion. Graduate minors are available at both the doctoral and master's level:

2. Declaring a Graduate Minor

For both doctoral and master's level program minors, to add a graduate minor to their graduate record, students must download and fill out the form found here: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/forms-and-documents/ges-owned-forms-and-documents/addgrminorpdf/>

3. Graduate Minors

a. Submission and Approval Process

All approved graduate programs (including dual-title programs) automatically have an associated minor. Individual departments and programs can define the required courses of which count for a doctoral and/or master's minor, or they can decide whether or not they want to determine the candidacy for minors on an individual case-by-case basis.

However, if you want to create a standalone graduate minor, programs would use the following form: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/forms-and-documents/to-be-sorted/graduate-council-program-option-or-minor-proposal-form/>

To propose a standalone graduate minor within the College of the Liberal Arts:

- 1) The academic program should first consult with the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education, and the College's Curriculum Coordinator.
- 2) A prospectus must be submitted to the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education. This prospectus will be circulated to ACGE. The intent of the prospectus is to alert other academic units of potential programs under development. [A template for the ACGE prospectus is available for download here.](#) ACGE members have 30 days following distribution of the prospectus to submit feedback to the proposers via the ACGE member who distributed it.

- 3) After obtaining internal approval, the program should submit the minor proposal to relevant units for consultation. Consultation should be requested from all units that may be interested in and or affected by the program. This would include any unit with a known interest in the subject area, any unit that the course offerings might affect, units that would be offering courses, and units with faculty involved in or teaching in the minor. Note this may include graduate programs at the Commonwealth Campuses. The Joint Curricular Committee and the Graduate School may request additional consultation if relevant units have not been consulted. Consultation must be completed and included in the proposal before it is submitted.
- 4) Minor proposals are then submitted the same way as program proposals, that is, materials must first be submitted to the Office of the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (105 Sparks) as Word or pdf files. All proposals require a full set of signatures on the program proposal form before materials can be forwarded to the graduate school.
- 5) After internal review and consultation, the proposal will be forwarded to the graduate school and ultimately the Graduate Council. As of March 2020, proposals may be submitted electronically as PDF attachments via email to the graduate school [Dean's office listserv](#) (rather than submitting them via paper to the Dean's office).

Proposals must include the items described at: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/graduate-curricular-proposals-procedure/#new>

b. Ph.D. minor requirements

The following criteria stand for Ph.D. minors (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-611-minor-research-doctorate>). (Minors for the professional doctorates have a separate policy (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-700-i-doctoral-minor-professional-doctorate/>)).

- A doctoral minor must require no fewer than 15 credits in a field related to, but different from, that of the student's primary/major graduate program. The majority of courses should be at the 500-level (at a minimum, 6 credits must be at the 500-level).
- A doctoral minor may be taken in one of the approved graduate degree programs offered at Penn State or in one of the stand-alone graduate minors approved by Graduate Council.
- A Ph.D. candidate is not required by the Graduate Council to have a minor field of study; however, a graduate program may require a candidate to add a minor field, or a student may elect a minor with the permission of the Ph.D. committee.
- A student seeking a minor must have the approval of the student's major of study, the minor program, and the Graduate School.
- A student may not pursue more than three minors at one time. If a student pursues more than one minor each minor must have a separate group of courses to support it (i.e., none of the courses may be applied to more than one minor's requirements).
- If the student received a master's minor (see below; Section 1.2) in the same field as is being proposed for a doctoral minor, the 15 credits taken must be above and beyond those used for the master's minor. However, credits earned in the master's program

over and above those applied to either the master's minor or major may be applied to a minor in the Ph.D. program.

- At least one faculty member from the minor field must be on the candidate's Ph.D. committee (see [GCAC-602 Ph.D. Committee Formation, Composition, and Review – Research Doctorate](#)).

Office requests to add a minor to a doctoral candidate's academic record must be submitted to Graduate Enrollment Services prior to establishing the Ph.D. committee and prior to scheduling the comprehensive examination.

c. Master's minor requirements

A minor in a research master's degree program (M.A. or M.S.) can be pursued in any existing graduate program or stand-alone graduate minor approved by Graduate Council (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-641-minor-research-masters/>). Note again that policies may differ for professional master's degree programs.

- A master's minor must require no fewer than 6 credits in a field related to, but different from, that of the student's graduate major program. A majority of courses should be at the 500 level, at a minimum, 3 credits must be at the 500 level.
- A minor may be taken in one of the approved graduate degree programs offered at Penn State, or in one of the stand-alone graduate minors approved by Graduate Council.
- An M.A. or M.S. degree candidate is not required by Graduate Council to have a minor field of study. A department or committee in charge of a major program may require a candidate to complete work in a minor field, or the minor may be elected with the permission of the student's committee.

4. Graduate Certificates

Whereas graduate minors exist as an option for current graduate students in good standing in an existing graduate program, certificate programs are often ideally suited for individuals who may not have the time, financial resources, or need to complete a master's degree. While the Graduate School provides oversight to insure that these are compliant with relevant policies, the content and quality of graduate minors and graduate certificates are the responsibility of the offering college (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-and-staff/postbaccalaureate-and-graduate-certificate-advising/>).

a. Submission Process

To propose a graduate certificate within the College of the Liberal Arts, an academic program should first consult with the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education, and the College's Curriculum Coordinator. An ACGE prospectus is NOT required for a graduate certificate. After obtaining internal approval, the program should submit the

Postbaccalaureate/Graduate certificate proposal in the Curriculum Review & Consultation System (CRCS) (<https://curriculum.psu.edu>). In CRCS, at Step 5 Request Consultation, use the File Upload tool to attach the proposed Bulletin listen for the certificate. The certificate will be routed to the college/school administrator for graduate education (e.g., the Associate Dean of Graduate Research) for approval, after which it will be forwarded to the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School for final release.

A Graduate Certificate Assessment Plan must also be uploaded with all certificates. The certificate learning objectives, curriculum map, and annual assessment plan should be in compliance with University guidelines. For questions please contact the Learning Outcomes Assessment Office at 814-863-8721 or Loa@psu.edu.

b. Requirements

Graduate Council stipulates the follow criteria regarding postbaccalaureate/graduate credit certificates (refer to [GCAC-212 Postbaccalaureate Credit Certificate Programs](#)):

- A baccalaureate degree is required for admission into the certificate program;
- Postbaccalaureate credit certificates may contain all undergraduate-level courses (below the 500 level), all graduate-level courses at the 500 or 800 level, or a mix of undergraduate-level and graduate-level courses at the 500 or 800 level. (Note that while 600-level courses are graduate-level courses, graduate research and thesis-related courses may not be part of the certificate program);
- If the certificate program includes at least one graduate-level course at the 500 or 800 level, the certificate must be a postbaccalaureate certificate (i.e., in cannot be an undergraduate certificate), and all courses must be at the 400 level or higher.
- If a certificate program includes at least one course below the 400 level, the certificate must be an undergraduate certificate.

Postbaccalaureate/graduate certificate program descriptions must adhere to the following standard format for inclusion in the Graduate Bulletin:

- Name of the postbaccalaureate or graduate certificate program and number of credits;
- Unit and college/school offering the certificate;
- Person in charge of the certificate program and contact information;
- Brief description of the certificate program including purpose and objectives (maximum of 1000 characters, including spaces)
- Specific requirements for admission into the certificate program, as applicable;
- List of existing, permanent courses included in the certificate program, including course designation (abbreviation and number), title, and number of credits;
- Effective seminar and expiration seminar (note the 5-year sunset clause) of the postbaccalaureate or graduate certificate program.

Whether a course in the postbaccalaureate/graduate credit certificate will be accepted as applicable toward a Penn State graduate degree (pending whether the student is ultimately accepted into a graduate program) will depend on the criteria for the graduate program as defined by the graduate degree program and the Graduate Council. The academic unit

proposing the postbaccalaureate/graduate credit certificate program must clearly specify the relationship between the coursework in the certificate program and any relevant graduate degree program, including in all marketing materials. The latter must be explicit in conveying that up to a maximum of 15 credits of coursework taken in nondegree status can count towards a graduate degree, but that admission into a graduate program, and credit towards a graduate degree for specific courses taken in nondegree status, is up to the graduate program and is not guaranteed based on acceptance into or completion of the certificate program.

For more information about Graduate School policies concerning Postbaccalaureate/Graduate certificate programs consult the following link: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-212-postbaccalaureate-credit-certificate-programs/>