

School of Integrative Health / NDMU

Academic Policy and Procedures

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Subject: Earning Multiple Certificates or Degrees

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1. Purpose

This policy outlines the conditions under which students can earn more than one certificate, degree, or combination of the two from the School of Integrative Health (SOIH) at NDMU.

2. Policy

Students are eligible to earn multiple degrees or certificates at SOIH; however, there are some restrictions (see below).

2.1 Admission Requirements

Students must apply for and be admitted to each degree or certificate program for which they wish to earn an SOIH credential in advance of completing the final academic requirements for the degree/credential. Retroactive admission is not permitted.

2.2 Use of Duplicate Credits

The use of duplicate credits (i.e., credits from one or more courses used to meet requirements in multiple degrees or certificates) is permitted; however, when duplicate credits are used, the following additional requirements must be met. (Note: New applicants, alumni, or current students interested in earning more than one certificate, degree, or combination of the two from SOIH must check with the Admissions Department [muih-admissions@muih.ndm.edu] to make sure the specific mix of academic awards is permitted under this policy).

2.2.1 Use of Duplicate Credits Between Multiple Academic Degrees (i.e., Master's and Doctoral Degrees)

The following rules apply when a student wishes to earn two master's degrees; a master's degree and doctoral degree; or two doctoral degrees.

- a. The minimum independent credits for the combined awards must meet the formula of 30 credits for each master's degree, 30 credits for each post-master's doctoral degree, and 60 credits for each baccalaureate-to-doctorate degree.
- b. If earning two master's degrees, a minimum of 60 independent (i.e., non-duplicate) credits must be completed (see example 1 below).
- c. If earning a master's degree and a post-master's doctoral degree, a minimum of 60 independent (i.e., non-duplicate) credits must be completed.
- d. Other combinations are possible (e.g., master's degree and baccalaureate-to-doctorate degree; post-master's doctoral degree and baccalaureate-to-doctorate degree). In each case, the combination must meet the formula listed above in section 2.2.1a.
- e. Regardless of the number of credits earned, students may not earn two degrees at the same level (e.g., two master's degrees) if one degree is a subset of the other (i.e., all the courses in the first degree are also included in the second degree). Exceptions are made if, while completing the more substantial degree, the shorter degree allows the student to become licensed or certified in the field (see example 2 below).

Example 1: A student wishes to enroll in two master's degrees at SOIH. One program is 36 credits. The second program is 40 credits. The two programs share 12 credits of coursework. The total number of credits for the two programs is 76 credits; however, since 12 credits are duplicated, the total number of independent credits is 64 credits ($76-12=64$). Since 64 credits exceeds the required minimum number of credits to earn two master's degree (i.e., 60 credits), and one degree is not a subset of another, the student would be allowed to enroll in the two degrees.

Example 2: The Master of Acupuncture degree is a subset of the Master of Acupuncture with a Chinese Herbal Medicine Specialization degree. Normally, this would mean that a student could not earn both degrees; however, because the Master of Acupuncture degree allows a student to become licensed to practice acupuncture, the Master of Acupuncture degree may be granted to a student who is progressing towards a Master of Acupuncture with a Chinese Herbal Medicine Specialization Medicine degree.

2.2.2 Use of Duplicate Credits Between Multiple Certificates

Certificates, unlike degrees, are intentionally designed to be "stackable" (i.e., to serve as building blocks towards a career skill set). One form of stacking is "horizontal stacking," which involves the earning of multiple certificates that complement one another. The policy for duplicate credits between multiple certificates is designed to allow for horizontal stacking while making sure sufficient independent and unique learning and credits have been earned to justify the multiple awards.

- a. If earning two certificates, a minimum of 24 independent (i.e., non-duplicate) credits must be completed (see example 3 below).
- b. If earning more than two certificates, the total number of independent credits must equal the number of certificates multiplied by 12 credits (e.g., 3 certificates requires 36 independent credits, 4 certificates requires 48 independent credits, etc.)

Example 3: A student wishes to enroll in two certificate programs at SOIH. One certificate is 12 credits. The second certificate is 15 credits. The two certificates share 6 credits of coursework. The total number of credits for the two certificates is 27 credits; however, since 6 credits are duplicated, the total number

of independent credits is 21 credits ($27-6=21$). Since 21 credits does not meet the required minimum number of independent credits to earn two certificates (i.e., 24 credits), the student would not be allowed to enroll in the two certificates.

2.2.3 Use of Duplicate Credits Between Combinations of Certificates and Degrees

Two forms of credential stacking involve a combination of certificates and degrees.

“Vertical stacking”, or a “progressive stack”, usually begins with a certificate program that progresses to a master’s degree in the same core discipline. In these cases, the certificate program’s courses are also part of a master’s degree; all or part of the certificate is in essence embedded in a master’s degree. Students enrolled in the certificate program may choose to also pursue the master’s degree, and the courses taken in the certificate apply toward the master’s degree. The additional courses that are part of the master’s degree are then “stacked on top” of the certificate courses to make up the master’s degree.

- a. Vertical stacks are designed intentionally to build on one another; therefore, the progressive stacking of a certificate into a degree in the same discipline is allowed regardless of the number of duplicate credits (see example 4 below).

“Value added stacking”, or a “supplemental stack”, occurs when a certificate is earned to complement a primary degree. For example, a student with a Master of Arts in Health and Wellness Coaching may wish to supplement their learning with a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Workplace Wellness.

- b. Value added stacking, where a certificate in a second area is used to supplement a primary degree, must meet the following requirement for independent credits. The minimum independent credits for the combined awards must meet the formula of 12 credits for each certificate, 30 credits for each master’s degree, 30 credits for each post-master’s doctoral degree, and 60 credits for each baccalaureate-to-doctorate degree (see example 5 below).

Example 4: A student has completed a 12-credit Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (PBC) in Herbal Studies. The PBC represents the first 12 credits of the Master of Science in Clinical Herbal Medicine. Since the PBC is part of a vertical stack within herbal medicine, the student can earn both the PBC and Master of Science regardless of the total number of independent credits.

Example 5: A student has completed a 30-credit master’s degree at SOIH. They want to supplement their degree with a certificate from another area. Since this is an example of “value added stacking”, the certificate plus degree must represent at least 42 independent credits (30 for the master’s plus 12 for the certificate). If there is a 13-credit certificate program that duplicates 3 credits from the master’s degree, the total number of independent credits would be $30 \text{ (master’s)} + 13 \text{ (certificate)} - 3 \text{ (duplicate)} = 40$ independent credits. Since the total credits is less than 42, the student would not be able to matriculate into the certificate program.

2.3 Areas of Concentration (AOCs) Within a Single Degree

AOCs within a single academic degree do not represent unique degrees. Students are not permitted to enroll in multiple AOCs within a single program.

2.4 Concurrent Enrollment in Multiple Degrees and Certificates

Students may concurrently enroll in multiple certificate programs, a master’s degree and a certificate program, or a doctoral degree and a certificate program; however, in all combinations other than multiple certificate programs, the student may not begin both programs in the same trimester and must be in Good Academic Standing to be eligible for admission into the second program.

Students are not permitted to concurrently enroll in multiple master's degrees, multiple doctoral degrees, or a master's degree and a doctoral degree. This restriction is in students' best interest and intended to ensure students' success as graduate degrees require a significant degree of rigor and time commitment. Students interested in pursuing multiple master's and doctoral degrees are advised to do so at different times.

3. Approval and Revisions

Approved by Dean, School of Integrative Health, Christina Sax, PhD (August 2025).
Conversion of policy from Maryland University of Integrative Health