

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

UNIVERSITY SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

September 19, 2014

**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROPOSALS**  
Academic Credit Applied Toward Dual and Joint Graduate Credentials

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Guidance Document addresses situations where a Columbia faculty offers an academic program where successful completion results in the receipt of more than one credential (i.e., degree or certificate), either within its own faculty, with another Columbia faculty, or in partnership with an external institution. There are often unwritten practices where this situation has arisen, but also differences in understanding and assumption as to what would be acceptable.

This Guidance Document represents an effort of the Committee on Education to summarize our collective experience in evaluating degree and certificate proposals. Our objective is to help faculty and administrators prepare successful proposals.

Accordingly, the document clarifies and provides guidance and transparency for future proposals involving multiple credentials, in the interests of academic rigor, policy consistency, and institutional integrity and reputation. This document is intended as *guidance* drawn from past programs, and is not to be construed as “strict rules”. Not every conceivable credential combination will be addressed. Nonetheless, proposed programs that fall outside of these guidelines may expect heightened scrutiny.

This Guidance Document applies only to new proposals received after unanimous passage by the Committee on Education of the University Senate on September 19, 2014.

**PRINCIPLES**

The following general principles govern the Committee on Education’s review process:

- The single most important consideration is the overall quality of the proposed program. For dual and joint programs, this means that the whole must be sufficiently greater than the sum of the parts to justify the overlap in credits;
- The program of study for the second credential must represent significant work above and beyond what is required for the primary credential;
- The program of study for the second credential must be justifiable as a coherent program by itself, even if it is not offered as such by Columbia;
- The overall credit total for the primary credential and the second credential must be sufficient to justify awarding both for the body of work.

**SCOPE**

The Provost’s Office employs a clear nomenclature for multiple credentials: “dual degrees” refer to programs that lead to two degrees from Columbia schools, while “joint degrees” to refer to programs that lead to a degree from Columbia and one or more degrees from external partners.

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The scope of this Guidance covers three representative categories:

- Dual degrees conferred simultaneously in different courses of study;
- Joint degrees conferred in partnership with an external institution;
- Certificates earned in parallel with one or more degrees in the same course of study.

The following programs are excluded from this Guidance:

- Existing and active programs;
- Proposals pending before the Committee on Education as of September 19, 2014;
- Programs where an external accrediting body prescribes more stringent requirements;
- Combinations involving undergraduate degrees, e.g. 3-2 and 4-1, AILE (CC and Law);
- Intermediate degrees earned in a serial fashion toward a terminal degree, e.g. MA and PhD;
- Embedded certificates required as part of a degree program where both credentials are appropriately reflected in course work and credit totals, e.g. Master of Public Health.

## CRITERIA

Details for each category are provided below.

### Dual degrees conferred simultaneously in different courses of study

These degrees are typically dual degrees offered between two graduate faculties with some overlap in content. In general, courses cross-listed at both schools are presumed to be double-count eligible, although the respective faculties retain ultimate jurisdiction. The percentage of credits double-counted toward both degrees should not exceed 30%. The Committee may consider a lower percentage overlap to be appropriate in some situations.

Example: A student enrolls in the dual Master of Science (MS) in Journalism / Master of International Affairs (MIA) program. The MS on a stand-alone basis requires 30 credits, while the MIA on a stand-alone basis requires 54 credits, for a combined 84 credits. The dual degree requires 60 credits in total. Thus, 24 credits (or 29% on a stand-alone basis) are double-counted.

### Joint degrees conferred in partnership with an external institution

These degrees are typically joint degrees offered between one Columbia faculty and one external partner. Barnard College, Teachers College, UTS, and JTS, as Columbia affiliates, are not considered “external” partners. Joint degrees with external institutions are typically in the same field of study (e.g., joint MBA from Columbia Business School and London Business School, joint MA/MSc in world history from GSAS and London School of Economics.)

Due to differences in other institutions’ credit and point systems, this will focus on credits earned at Columbia. The credits earned at Columbia for a joint degree with an external partner should be reduced by no more than 50%. The Committee may consider a lower percentage overlap to be appropriate in some situations.

Example: A student enrolls in the three-year joint Juris Doctor (JD) / Legum Magister (LLM) offered by Columbia Law School and one of the colleges of the University of London. The

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student spends the first two years at Columbia and the third year in London. The student earns at least 61 credits toward the 83 credits required for the JD at Columbia. Thus, this represents a reduction of 22 credits (or 27%) than if it were earned on a stand-alone basis.

*Certificates earned in parallel with one or more degrees in the same course of study*

These courses of study include situations where students earn a non-degree certificate in parallel with one or more separate degrees. The certificate usually involves specialized training and supplements the degree(s). The Committee on Education endorses the existing rules provided by the Vice Provost for Academic Administration:<sup>1</sup>

“Programs leading to a statutory certificate require a minimum of 20 credits for students who are simultaneously studying for a degree at Columbia and 24 credits if they are not.”

The Committee on Education construes this as a “minimum of 20 *additional* credits” for students simultaneously studying for a degree.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://dp.vpaa.columbia.edu/new-certificate-programs>