

Professionally-Designated Graduate Programs

Background

Professionally-designated doctoral and master's degrees have emerged in recent years as a major point of innovation and competition for universities. Professional degrees can represent important innovations as universities respond to societal needs to prepare a highly-skilled professional workforce. At the same time, the university is charged with assuring that students have successful learning experiences within these programs.

In keeping with both these opportunities and challenges, the following definitions and policies are proposed for professionally-designated graduate programs at UNC/Chapel Hill in order to clarify issues related to academic oversight and funding of these programs.

Definition

1. Professionally-designated graduate programs offer “stand-alone” (or terminal) degrees which are not considered to be part of a master's-doctoral sequence of study.
2. Training within these programs usually includes clinical or practicum experiences and/or a period of apprenticeship, either on or off campus.
3. With respect to final degree products, the master's thesis or doctoral dissertation are often replaced with a substitute option such as a capstone project, synthesis course, or associated documentation relating the field to needs in an area of practice rather than original research.
4. Most programs are accredited externally by discipline or professional accreditation bodies.

Academic Oversight

1. Oversight of admission policies, academic policies for matriculated students, and degree completion for these programs is consistent with Graduate School minimum guidelines and is overseen in collaboration between the Graduate School and the school or program that is offering these degrees. For purposes of admissions, funding and graduation, professionally-designated graduate programs (master's or doctoral) may be administered outside of the Graduate School, if desired (e.g., MBA, MAC, EdD).
2. All programs take part in the external program review process which is carried out jointly by the Graduate School and the Office of the Provost. Accreditation Reviews may be coordinated with this process, but they do not substitute for the university-based review.
3. When new professionally-designated graduate degree programs are established, the campus guidelines developed for program approval are coordinated through the Graduate School in conjunction with the Office of the Provost.

Funding Guidelines for programs administered within the Graduate School

1. Non-resident graduate students in professionally-designated graduate programs based within the Graduate School may qualify for a tuition remission at the graduate rate, provided that these students are TAs or RAs and receive a minimum stipend as required of all graduate students at UNC/Chapel Hill.
2. Resident and non-resident graduate students in professionally-designated graduate programs based within the Graduate School that have a separate program (or school)-based tuition rate may qualify for in-state tuition awards provided that they receive a minimum stipend as noted above. When the student stipend derives from state funds, the value of the in-state tuition award is set at the campus-wide graduate tuition rate ¹ and does not include program-based tuition supplements which can be provided from program or school-based resources.

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¹ The campus-wide graduate rate for in-state tuition is determined by a program's participation in campus-based tuition increases and may differ among individual schools.