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# Dual and Joint Graduate Degrees: Conceptual Theory and Administrative Practice

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## Why?

Joint and dual graduate degree programs enable **students**, **faculty members** and **universities** to benefit from the expanded opportunities available among the participating programs and institutions

## How?

Formal structures are embodied in **similar administrative mechanisms that articulate and coordinate the academic components of the collaboration** to meet the needs and requirements of all the participants

# Conceptual Structure (“Theory”)

Joint/Dual degrees are not fundamentally different from other kinds of degrees

(e.g., international partnerships, domestic multi-university collaborations, dual programs within a single university, standard single-program degrees)

Generally no need to invent a separate model for international joint/dual degrees – they are **conceptually and structurally similar** to other degrees

Therefore, they can be **implemented using existing policies** and practices



# 1. Two primary building blocks in the U.S. context

## (i) Coursework component

Long history of advanced graduate coursework in US  
Provides breadth and overall content

## (ii) Experiential component

Often aimed at research/creative scholarship  
(thesis/dissertation)

Provides depth and integration

Other major form is in professional programs (report on  
an applied project, internship or service experience)

In the U.S. and elsewhere, the **relative weight** of primary components **can vary**

Thesis-only  $\leftarrow \rightarrow$  Coursework-only



## 2. Secondary building blocks

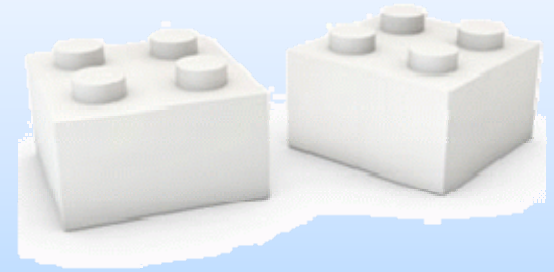
Vary by field and purpose, and may include:

- minor disciplinary concentration
- methodology and techniques
- clinical experience
- thematic elective courses, etc.

Individual programs usually **encode primary and secondary components within the formal requirements** for the major and the degree

Requirements scaled by degree:

- doctorate = most extensive
- master's = moderate
- graduate certificates = least extensive





# Administrative Practice (“Application”)

University of Arizona (UA) “dual” and “joint” terminology closely follows CGS definitions

## Dual degrees

Formal programs that result in **two degrees**

Internal dual: typically some overlap, so total units reduced within pre-approved guidelines

Degrees already exist, thus we approve internally without Board authorization

Follow same logic between institutions: students accepted & meet requirements for each degree, at least 50% of each must be unique, transfer coursework from other university

Create MOU with partner university to accept transfer work, charge regular tuition, and follow usual policies/procedures



# Joint degrees

Formal programs resulting in a **single degree, but with two majors**

Internal: often accomplish same goal via interdisciplinary majors/minors & graduate certificates

Essentially new degrees, requiring full internal and Board approval

No joint degrees with foreign universities but **we do offer joint programs**

Cooperative, share resources with another university, e.g., UA Transcultural German Ph.D. program with Leipzig University

Our students spend one year at Leipzig and German students spend one year at UA; students receive only one degree from their home institution





## Some fine print:

Students cannot ‘invent’ their own dual degree programs, but **may take a concurrent or second degree** (student enrolls in two programs, either simultaneously or sequentially)

No requirement for a formal program that links the two degrees, e.g., student may earn an MBA and then decide to become a teacher and earn an M.Ed.

If some course work can legitimately apply to both degrees, students may **‘double count’ up to 20%** of the required coursework

i.e., 6 hrs for a 30 hour master’s degree

**A second Ph.D. requires Graduate College approval**

Recent changes to Graduate College Policy allow students with foreign Ph.D.s to apply for a second U.S. Ph.D.



## Discussion Points

### Strategy for these international collaborations:

First **develop clear internal guidelines** for collaborative programs within University

Try to **maintain consistency** among policies for internal and external dual/second degrees

As much as possible, **use existing programs and policies**, avoiding many stumbling blocks

Charge regular tuition, use usual transfer credit policies, follow own policies on double-counting of credit; similarly let the partner institution control their own degree

## Re-assess position on theses/dissertations

Natural evolution as research has become increasingly interdisciplinary and collaborative

Single-authored study is no longer the only accepted model

We allow students working together in labs to submit shared dissertations/papers with each student identifying their own unique contributions

## After accepting that model, it became clear that **one thesis/dissertation for two degrees can be justified**

Student must clearly identify the unique contribution to each degree and that the work has sufficient breadth for both degrees

## **Special members** from other universities can already serve on student committees

Committee members from two UA departments or from a UA department and another university became an easy extension

## Another avenue: extend Accelerated Master's programs

Top students simultaneously finish undergrad degree & work toward master's degree

Extending this to international students may be a way to deal with admission of 3-year bachelor's degrees

## In Closing:

International dual degrees **expand the collaborative work** we already have within our university and with other universities

Certificates and dual degrees also **help further collaboration issues**

e.g., ‘informal’ research collaborations that fly ‘under the radar,’ presenting all sorts of potential liability problems. These can include students on campus and in labs informally, paying no tuition yet using resources. By offering something of value such as an additional degree or certificate, we can bring them into the system.

Overall, avoid rigid bureaucracy, **operate creatively within existing policies/guidelines** for dual degrees, certificates and programs

Makes it easier to encourage and accommodate international collaborations and partnerships

