



SUBJECT	Tuition Laddering for Graduate Certificate Program Students entering affiliated Master’s Degree Programs
SUBMITTED TO	Finance Committee
MEETING DATE	September 8, 2021
SESSION	Recommended session criteria from Board Meetings Policy: OPEN
REQUEST	<p>Action requested - Approval</p> <p>IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Finance Committee, with authority delegated by the Board of Governors, approves a new tuition assessment rule applicable to domestic and international tuition rates for current and future Senate-approved laddering arrangement between a Graduate Certificate and affiliated Master’s Degree program, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. accepting tuition fees paid for a completed Graduate Certificate program as equivalent to one third of an affiliated master’s program’s minimum program fee when laddering occurs from a completed Graduate Certificate program into an affiliated master’s program*; or, ii. in the case of specialized master’s programs that have a minimum number of instalments not divisible by three, accepting tuition fees paid for a completed Graduate Certificate program as equivalent to the nearest number of installments whose combined fees most closely aligns to the Graduate Certificate fees, rounded up or down to the nearest whole number of installments*; iii. notwithstanding the above, the following programs with Senate-approved laddering arrangements are excluded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. those with tuition laddering arrangements previously approved by the Board with a different scheme, such as those in the Faculty of Education; and, b. the High Performance Coaching and Technical Leadership Graduate Certificate and its affiliated Master’s program; <p>and,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. this rule applies to new and continuing students who began their studies on or after September 2021 and choose to exercise the laddering option. <p><i>* Students who do not complete the master’s program requirement within the minimum number of instalments (academic terms) will be required to pay Board-approved continuing fees.</i></p>
LEAD EXECUTIVES	Ananya Mukherjee Reed, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Okanagan Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Vancouver
SUPPORTED BY	Simon Bates, Associate Provost Teaching & Learning, UBC Vancouver Pam Ratner, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Faculty Planning, UBC Vancouver Bradley Wuetherick, Associate Provost, Academic Programs, Teaching & Learning, UBC Okanagan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With increasing interest in laddering arrangements from Faculties, including several new Graduate Certificates in the early stages of development at the UBC Vancouver campus, the Administration recommends that the Board of Governors approve a new tuition assessment rule for “fee-laddering” to permit students to ladder from a completed Graduate Certificate program into an affiliated master’s program with a corresponding reduction in tuition.

There currently are no Board-approved principles or guidelines for the establishment of tuition when a student ladders from one program to another and very few programs that have Board-approved pathways. Laddering can be defined, in the academic setting, as the application of credit earned as a part of a completed Course of Study towards a different Course of Study. Laddering is only permitted between pre-approved affiliated programs and as approved by Senate. The concept of laddering is important as it allows a student who has completed a credential such as a Graduate Certificate, and who then plans to continue into an affiliated master's program to 'ladder' some program credits, reducing the amount of time and credits required to complete the master's program.

The proposed tuition assessment rule supports the following strategies in UBC's strategic plan:

- [Strategy 1: Great People](#) – The mechanism provides flexibility to help recruit and attract great students.
- [Strategy 15: Student Experience](#) – by ensuring a mechanism exists to support students seeking to continue their studies, to experiment, and to study at their own pace.

The proposal has been reviewed by the Associate Deans, Academic and Deans at the UBC Vancouver campus, shared with the Deans at the UBC Okanagan campus, and discussed in detail with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in Vancouver, and with the College of Graduate Studies in the Okanagan. As part of the consultation undertaken, Faculties were made aware of any potential budget impact.

The Administration also met with student leaders from the UBC Alma Mater Society, the Graduate Students Society and the Students' Union Okanagan of UBC. They were provided with a copy of the proposal and given an opportunity to ask questions or propose revisions. Student governments were generally very supportive of the proposal and their suggestions and edits were incorporated into the current version of the proposal. However, as there are currently no Graduate Certificates offered at the UBCO campus, the President of the SUO felt unable to comment without knowing whether this would be the best approach for future programs at UBCO. A letter of support from the AMS is appended to this proposal.

Table 1 Proposed Tuition Assessment Rule by Program Type

Program Type	Graduate Certificate Fees Applicable to Master's Program	NOTE: Students who do not complete the master's program requirement within the minimum number of instalments (academic terms) will be required to pay Board-approved continuing fees.
Affiliated Master's Program (fee divisible by 3)	One third of an affiliated master's program's minimum program fee	
Specialized Master's Programs where the minimum number of instalments is not divisible by three	Number of minimum instalments assessed to credit the tuition paid for an initial affiliated graduate certification to be divided by three (comparable to the one-third rule described above) and rounded up or down to the nearest whole number of instalments, in consultation with the Faculty or School offering the relevant program, and considerate of all the academic components included in the program	

For example, the Graduate Certificate of Mine Waste Management in the Faculty of Applied Science was created to include a laddering option into the existing Master of Engineering in Mining Engineering (there are two students starting in the Master's program in September 2021 who recently graduated from the Graduate Certificate program). The rationale for seeking this approval is to allow students such as these to benefit from this tuition assessment rule.

This tuition assessment rule will apply to all Senate-approved laddering affiliations with the exclusion of:

- Those with tuition laddering arrangements previously approved by the Board with a different scheme, such as those in the Faculty of Education (found [here](#) and [here](#)) ; and,
- High Performance Coaching and Technical Leadership and its affiliated Master's program, where the Graduate Certificate is required to complete the Master's program.

The above programs are delivered by the Faculty of Education which the Administration consulted in developing this proposal.

The Administration proposes that, when laddering occurs, tuition fees paid for a completed Graduate Certificate program be accepted as equivalent to payment of one-third of an affiliated master's program's minimum program fee. Students who do not complete the master's program requirement within the minimum number of instalments (academic terms) will be required to pay the Board-approved continuing fees. This tuition assessment rule would apply to both domestic and international students.

There are currently 12-specialized master's programs that have a minimum number of instalments that is not divisible by three (i.e., four or five minimum instalments are assessed). Of these 12 master programs, none has a laddering arrangement at this time. Should a laddering arrangement be approved by Senate for one of these programs, the the number of minimum instalments assessed to credit the tuition paid for an initial affiliated graduate certification be divided by three (comparable to the one-third rule described above) and rounded up or down to the nearest whole number of instalments, in consultation with the Faculty or School offering the relevant program, and considerate of all the academic components included in the program.

This proposed mechanism is simple, fair, easily communicated, and relatively easy to administer because it is a general rule for all existing and future programs.

There are currently no approved Graduate Certificate programs at UBC Okanagan.

APPENDICES

1. Proposal: Tuition-Laddering for Graduate Certificate Programs into affiliated Master's Degree Programs
2. Letter of support from the AMS

Proposal: Tuition-Laddering for Graduate Certificate Programs into affiliated Master's Degree Programs¹

The Administration recommends that the Board approve a new tuition assessment rule for “fee-laddering” to permit students to ladder from a completed Graduate Certificate program into an affiliated master’s program with a corresponding reduction in tuition.

Graduate certificates represent a valuable credential for students by offering flexibility for those that might not have time for, need for, or interest in, a full degree program, for those that already have a degree, or for those that are not yet ready or able to commit to a full degree. Benefits of offering Graduate Certificates include increasing the number and diversity of students able to pursue graduate studies (since cohorts are typically bigger and many offer flexible pathways for completion such as online or blended modes of delivery as well as part-time status so that people may complete their studies alongside work and other commitments) and enabling the opportunity to “ladder” from one program to another thereby diversifying the master’s cohort and facilitating more interprofessional education. Increasingly, Faculties are exploring opportunities to create transferable credentials from an existing or a future master’s program, in addition to providing the option of a Graduate Certificate as a standalone credential.

Laddering can be defined as the application of credit earned as a part of a completed Course of Study towards a different Course of Study. The concept of laddering is important as it allows a student who has completed a credential, such as a Graduate Certificate, and who then plans to continue into an affiliated master’s program to ‘ladder’ in those program credits, thus reducing the amount of time and credits required to complete the master’s program. Laddering is only permitted between pre-approved programs and as approved by Senate. A key element of laddering is the ability to recognize the tuition paid by the student in completing the Graduate Certificate and reducing the additional cost to complete a master’s program. To facilitate graduate certificate fee ‘laddering’ into a master’s degree program with a program fee, a new mechanism for tuition assessment is required.

There currently are no Board-approved principles or guidelines for the establishment of tuition when a student ladders from one program to another and very few programs that have Board-approved pathways. In developing this proposal, the administration consulted the following Board dockets from the Faculty of Education: <http://bog2.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2014/05/4.6e> 2014.06 FeeLaddering-Graduate-Certificates.pdf and <http://bog2.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2014/05/4.6f> 2014.06 Adult-Education.pdf (both approved June 2, 2014).

The administration proposes that the paid tuition fees for a completed Graduate Certificate program be accepted as equivalent to having paid one third of an affiliated master program’s minimum program fee. Students who do not complete the program requirement within the minimum number of instalments will pay the approved continuing fees. The majority of UBC-Vancouver master’s degree programs are structured as having three or six minimum tuition instalments for full-time enrolment, or nine instalments for part-time enrolment. Rather than having tuition assessed on a per-credit basis, the majority UBC master’s programs have a tuition schedule based on a minimum number of instalments and a continuing fee, which is assessed if the program is not completed by an established number of

¹ A Master’s program includes research-based, course-based, and professional programs.

instalments (academic terms) or a minimum program fee, for the duration of a student's enrolment. These programs can be course-based or require the completion of a project or thesis. A credit-based assessment mechanism rests on the notion of hours of instruction; however, master's programs typically involve significant engagement with supervisors and supervisory committee members, the use of university resources, including libraries and librarians' contributions to students' information literacy, ethics review boards, labs and equipment, workshops related to academic success, teaching development, academic integrity and professional skills, and many other resources. Students may take more courses than required by the program if needed to complete their thesis research or project, or for general interest.

The proposed mechanism for tuition assessment for laddering would reduce the master's program fee schedule by reducing the number of minimum instalments owing by one third. Currently, there are 12 specialized master's programs that have a minimum number of instalments that is not divisible by 3 (e.g., 4 or 5 instalments). In such instances, the administration proposes that the number of minimum instalments assessed to credit the tuition paid for an initial affiliated graduate certification be divided by 3 and rounded up or down to the nearest whole number of instalments, in consultation with the Faculty or School offering the relevant program, and considerate of all the academic components included in the program. This mechanism is simple, fair, easily communicated, and relatively easy to administer because it is a general rule for all existing and future programs.

The proposed mechanism for the assessment of tuition for laddering from completed graduate certificates to affiliated master's programs would not be applicable to instances where a student sought to transfer credits from an incomplete Graduate Certificate program, nor would it be applicable to programs completed at institutions other than UBC. When a student seeks to transfer credits (e.g., 1 or 2 applicable courses) it is at the discretion of the receiving academic program to determine whether the student would be exempt from completing any required courses for the master's program (thus potentially saving the student time) but there would be no reduction in tuition.

The following principles have been developed to support the proposed mechanism:

- The approach must balance fairness for students with the financial sustainability of the programs;
- The approach must be equitable and transparent for prospective students - it should not create financial barriers;
- The approach must be administratively efficient and complement the current tuition allocation model rules and accounting practices.

The following guidelines have been developed to support the tuition assessment rule:

- Students may transfer up to 12 credits (or up to 40% of the total number of credits) needed for completion of a master's degree (whichever is more) provided that:
 - The admission criteria for the graduate certificates are the same as for the affiliated master's degree programs.
 - Students will be required to apply and be accepted into the affiliated master's program. Students will be required to pay the application fee for the master's program.
 - The Graduate Certificate programs offer the same, or comparable, courses that comprise part of the master's program requirements. It is at the discretion of the receiving Faculty or School to determine which courses students would be exempt from completing.

- The passing grades for the Graduate Certificate programs are the same as for the master's programs.
- The Graduate Certificate programs must have been completed, in their entirety, within five years of commencement of the affiliated master's programs for the laddering tuition mechanism to be applicable. The institution provides no guarantee of the availability of the affiliated master's program.
- The tuition instalment plan assessment is based on the established rate at the time of commencement of the affiliated master's program, not at the time of completion of the graduate certificate program.
- Students who enrol in and commence a master's degree program before completing the affiliated Graduate Certificate program will not be granted a reduction in the tuition instalment schedule for the master's program. Only those students who have completed and passed the affiliated Graduate Certificate program are eligible to take advantage of the laddering option.
- A student cannot retroactively receive a bursary for the tuition assessed during the certificate – a student would only receive a loan or bursary, if eligible, with consideration of the amount of tuition and other academic and non-academic expenses incurred during the period of enrolment in the master's program.
- Where a student is: (a) currently enrolled in a master's program that has an affiliated, "ladderable" Graduate Certificate, (b) has not been previously enrolled in or completed the affiliated Graduate Certificate, (c) withdraws from the master's program before completion of the requirements of the degree, and (d) requests that the affiliated Graduate Certificate be conferred, the decision about whether to grant the Graduate Certificate would be made by the receiving program upon determination that all program requirements were met. Where a student would be required to complete one or two additional courses, they would be assessed the approved per-credit rate for those courses (i.e., no tuition discount would be applied).



RE: Tuition-Laddering for Graduate Certificate Programs into affiliated Master's Degree Program

Dear members of the UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC Vancouver in response to the request for feedback from the Vice President Students Office sent on July 22nd, 2021 on the new tuition assessment rule for “fee-laddering”.

“Laddering” can be defined as the application of credit earned as a part of a completed course of study towards a different course of study. The proposed tuition assessment would permit students to ladder from a completed Graduate Certificate program into an affiliated master’s program with a corresponding reduction in tuition fees. The proposal states that the paid tuition fees for a completed Graduate Certificate program be accepted as equivalent to having paid one-third of an affiliated master program’s minimum program fee.

The Alma Mater Society is strongly in favour of this proposed mechanism as it promotes a financially sustainable opportunity to access Master’s level graduate education. It offers a great incentive for students to continue higher education and allows the University to tap into potential learners out there. The Alma Mater Society also supports the principles behind this proposal and approach to be equitable and transparent for prospective students by further creating a low-barrier transition. Overall, the Alma Mater Society fully supports the tuition laddering proposal.

The Alma Mater Society appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on this (and other) proposal(s). We hope to see this continue and look forward to working with UBC to make education accessible and affordable to UBC students across all levels.

Sincerely,

Eshana Bhangu

Vice President, Academic and University Affairs
Alma Mater Society