

GaPSC Certificate Upgrade Criteria

In-field Upgrade Criteria for Degrees/Programs

The criteria listed below will be used to determine if advanced degree programs will be eligible for In-field certificate level upgrades. Programs deemed eligible will be listed in the GaPSC Web Advisor and associated with the field(s) of certification they “match” for the purposes of upgrading.

General Criteria

1. The name of the advanced degree program must match the name of a field of certification currently issued by the GaPSC. Advanced degree programs with names not clearly matched to a field of certification will not result in an In-Field upgrade unless they are listed in the GaPSC Web Advisor after having been reviewed and formally accepted by GaPSC staff. A web-based process for submitting programs for GaPSC review and acceptance will be made available through the Web Advisor.
2. Master’s of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) programs designed for initial preparation and certification in a field do not qualify for an In-Field upgrade for those who already hold a professional certificate. For instance, a M.A.T. in Early Childhood Education designed to result in a person’s first certification in the field is not an acceptable upgrade for an educator already certified in Early Childhood Education. If a candidate enrolled in a M. A. T. program should complete the requirements for certification and apply for a clear, renewable certificate before completion of the Master’s degree that educator could be awarded an In-Field upgrade upon completion of the M.A.T. because the educator did not hold a professional certificate before entering the M.A.T. program.
3. Educators holding certificate fields no longer issued by GaPSC cannot upgrade with advanced degree programs in those fields.

Field-specific Criteria/Rules

4. Early Childhood Education In-Field Upgrades:
 - a. An advanced degree program in Reading is acceptable for an In-Field upgrade if it is a program specifically targeted toward elementary teachers or a program approved by GaPSC for the P-12 Reading Specialist.
 - b. An advanced content (non-education) degree program in Science, Math, Language Arts, and Social Studies may be used to upgrade a certificate in early childhood education if the program is specifically targeted toward elementary teachers.
5. Middle Grades Education In-field Upgrades:
 - a. Middle Grades certified educators can upgrade with an advanced degree program in any concentration in which the educator is certified. The degree/program name on the transcript must include the name of the area of concentration.

- b. Advanced degree programs in the following content (non-education) area fields are acceptable for in-field upgrades:
 - i. for educators certified in Middle Grades Science: Biology, Earth/Space Science, Chemistry, and Physics;
 - ii. for educators certified in Middle Grades Social Studies: History, Geography, Political Science, and Economics;
 - iii. for educators certified in Middle Grades Language Arts certification: English;
 - iv. for educators certified in Middle Grades Reading: Reading; and
 - v. for educators certified in Middle Grades Mathematics: Mathematics.
 - c. Advanced degrees in “Secondary Education (6-12)” fields are not eligible for in-field upgrades for Middle Grades certified educators. For example, an advanced degree with the title Biology Education (6-12) or English Education (6-12) would not be considered an in-field certificate upgrade for Middle Grades Education as well as an advanced degree with the title Secondary Education with a concentration in Biology. Secondary Education (6-12) would be considered a new field option which, in order to result in an upgrade, would require passing GACE and the inclusion of the certificate field on the educator’s certificate.
6. Secondary Fields: Educators certified in single field subject areas can upgrade In-Field with a single field advanced degree program or a broad field advanced degree program. For instance, an educator holding a T4 in History (6-12) can upgrade In-Field with a Master’s degree in Secondary Social Studies Education, or an educator holding a T4 in Biology (6-12) can upgrade In-field with a Master’s degree in Secondary Science Education.
 7. Special Education: Advanced degree programs in Special Education are acceptable for In-Field upgrades for educators holding any special education certificate.
 8. Special Education: Advanced content (non-education) degree programs are acceptable for In-Field upgrades for any content concentration at the appropriate cognitive level for educators holding any special education certificate. For instance, a Special Educator who holds Middle Grades Science as a content concentration may upgrade by completing an advanced content (non-education) degree program in Science. A Special Educator who holds a content concentration at the P-5 cognitive level may upgrade with an advanced content (non-education) degree program that is targeted towards elementary teachers in Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts.
 9. For educators with the dual field of Special Education General Curriculum/Early Childhood, an advanced degree in either Special Education or Early Childhood Education would be considered an In-Field upgrade.

Criteria/Rules for Use in Determining if Programs with Names NOT Matching a Field of Certification are Acceptable for In-field Upgrades

The criteria listed below will be used by GaPSC staff members and, in the case of an appeal by members of the CURC, for reviewing program requests by individuals or IHEs made via the Web Advisor prior to enrollment in a program with a name not clearly matching a field of certification issued by the GaPSC.

1. The advanced degree program must be in a field closely related to a certification field held by the educator. The determination that a field is closely related will be made based upon the following factors:
 - a. The core courses in a degree program, as opposed to electives, must include a minimum of 18 semester hours (or the equivalent) in content or content pedagogy coursework in a field of study related to a field of certification held by the educator.
 - b. Certification field subject area specialties will be accepted; a few examples are creative writing, geology, astronomy, statistics, and African American studies (a more comprehensive list will be developed).
 - c. If necessary, GaPSC staff will review GaPSC Educator Preparation Rules to determine if fields of study are related to fields of certification. For instance, GaPSC Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.25 *Mathematics Education* includes explicit references to the subject area specialties of calculus, geometry, trigonometry, and statistics; therefore, these fields would be considered closely related to the GaPSC certification field of Mathematics.
 - d. The advanced degree program must contain content coursework closely related to the appropriate P-12 curriculum and it should be focused on the educational needs of students in the educator's certification field. This statement is not meant to preclude advanced degree programs in content fields offered outside the College/School/Department of Education designed to expand and enhance content knowledge in a particular field.
2. When determining the certificate level to be granted, GaPSC staff will follow the equivalency requirements specified in GaPSC Rule 505-2-.02 CLASSIFICATION – CATEGORY, TITLE, TYPE, FIELD, LEVEL, paragraph (e) sections (iv), (v), and (vi). For instance, completion of a Master's degree program in Fine Arts (M.F.A.) will result in a level 6.