

505-2-.33 CERTIFICATE UPGRADE

(1) Purpose. Educator certificate level upgrade requirements will lead educators to complete advanced degree programs closely aligned with their fields of certification, with institutions and programs meeting specified levels of accreditation, state approval, or quality assurances. A grandfathering timeline is included to maintain the certificate level of currently certified educators and to protect the interests of certified educators currently enrolled in advanced degree programs. This rule applies only to the process of upgrading an existing certificate for a Georgia Educator. See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.01 GEORGIA EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION](#) for the definition of Georgia Educator. For the purposes of issuing an initial Georgia certificate or permit the criteria specified in GaPSC Rule [505-2-.02 CLASSIFICATION](#) applies.

(2) Requirements. Valid level four (4) or higher Georgia teaching, service or leadership certificates with the following titles may be upgraded: Standard Professional, Performance-Based Professional, Advanced Professional, Lead Professional, Life or Induction (with the exception of those Induction certificates attained through Pathway Four [4]). See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.02 CLASSIFICATION](#) for information related to upgrades of certificate levels one (1) and two (2). A certificate level upgrade may be earned by successfully completing an eligible advanced degree program from an eligible institution of higher education. There are two types of eligible advanced degree programs: In-Field programs and New Field programs. Higher education institution eligibility requirements follow each option.

(a) In-Field Degree Programs: A certificate level upgrade may be earned through successful completion of an advanced degree program in a GaPSC certification field that is currently offered (See [All Certification Fields Chart](#)) and is held by the educator. Educators may earn upgrades through the completion of education degree programs (examples include but are not limited to M.Ed., Ed.S. and Ed.D.) or through the completion of content degree programs at the Master's degree level or higher (examples include but are not limited to M.A., M.S. and Ph.D.).

1. In-Field programs eligible for certificate level upgrades may be completed with Georgia institutions or with out-of-state institutions meeting the criteria described below:

(i) Georgia institutions must meet at least one of the following criteria:

(I) The institution's educator preparation provider (EPP) is approved by the GaPSC at the time the individual is admitted to the program; or

(II) The institution holds a Carnegie Classification of Research University-Very High Research Activity (RU/VH) or Research University-High Research Activity (RU/H) at the time the individual is admitted to the program. For more information on the Carnegie Classification system, [click here](#).

(ii) Out-of-state institutions must meet at least one of the following criteria:

(I) The EPP is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education ([NCATE](#)), or the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation ([CAEP](#)) at the time the individual is admitted to the program; or

(II) The EPP has at least one program currently accredited by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) at the time the individual is admitted to the program; or

(III) The institution holds a Carnegie Classification of Research University-Very High Research Activity ([RU/VH](#)) or Research University-High Research Activity ([RU/H](#)) at the time the individual is admitted to the program.

2. An educator who completes an advanced degree in a field in which he or she is not certified, and which does not meet the requirements outlined below for New Field degree programs, may become eligible for an In-Field upgrade by qualifying to add the field to his or her certificate, as outlined in GaPSC Rule [505-2-.34 ADD A FIELD](#). If an educator in this situation applies to upgrade his or her certificate prior to adding the field in which the advanced degree was earned, the request will be put on hold pending addition of the field.

3. An upgrade that is earned by completion of an advanced degree that is in-field with any certificate field other than an Educational Leadership field will be applied to the general level of the certificate. An upgrade that is earned by completion of an advanced degree that is in-field with an Educational Leadership certificate field will be applied to the leader level of the educator's certificate unless the certificate has not previously been assigned a leader level. If there is no previously assigned leader level, the upgrade will be applied to the general level. For more information on general and leader levels, see GaPSC Rule [505-2-.02 CLASSIFICATION](#).

(b) New Field Degree Programs: A certificate level upgrade may be earned through successful completion of a state-approved advanced degree program that leads to initial certification in a GaPSC certification field in which the educator had not previously completed a state-approved program. In order to qualify for a certificate level upgrade, educators must successfully complete the degree program, pass all appropriate Georgia content assessments, meet all certification requirements and add the new field to their certificate.

1. Program approval requirements:

(i) Programs offered by Georgia institutions leading to a new field of certification must be approved by the GaPSC.

(ii) Programs offered by out-of-state institutions and leading to a new field of certification must be approved by the home state agency equivalent to the GaPSC.

(iii) Programs offered by out-of-state-institutions must also meet at least one of the criteria listed below:

(I) The EPP of an out-of-state institution must hold accreditation by [NCATE](#), [TEAC](#) or [CAEP](#) at the time the educator is admitted to the program; or

(II) The out-of-state institution must hold a Carnegie Classification of [RU/VH](#) or [RU/H](#) at the time the educator is admitted to the program; or

(III) If the educator is completing a program to add the field of School Counseling, the out-of-state institution must be accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) at the time the educator is admitted to the program.

2. Georgia-certified educators who complete in-state or out-of-state—programs leading to certification in a new field must pass the GACE content assessment or other GaPSC-approved content assessment for that field with the following exceptions:

(i) This requirement does not apply to fields in which there is no GaPSC-approved content assessment; and

(ii) Georgia-certified educators who completed out-of-state programs leading to certification in a new field prior to October 15, 2011, may exempt the content assessment requirement if they were required to pass an acceptable out-of-state content assessment in order to become certified in that field in another state.

3. An upgrade that is earned by completion of a degree that leads to certification in any field other than Educational Leadership fields will be applied to the general level of the certificate. As outlined in O.C.G.A. 20-2-212, an upgrade that is earned by completion of a degree that leads to certification in an Educational Leadership field will result in the assignment of a leader level to the certificate, and will not change the general level, unless the leadership degree earned meets one of the following exemption criteria:

(i) The leadership degree was awarded prior to July 1, 2010; or

(ii) The educator enrolled in the leadership preparation program on or before April 1, 2009, and was awarded one of the following leadership degrees by the dates indicated:

(I) A master's level [level five (5)] leadership degree prior to July 1, 2012;

(II) An education specialist level [level six (6)] leadership degree prior to July 1, 2013; or

(III) A doctoral level [level seven (7)] leadership degree prior to July 1, 2014.

(3) Exceptions.

(a) Pre-existing Georgia certificate levels: All certificate levels in place on December 15, 2010 will remain intact.

(b) A grandfathering period is provided to protect the interests of educators actively pursuing an advanced degree at or near the original effective date of this rule (December 15, 2010). In order to upgrade a certificate under previous upgrade requirements, educators must meet two conditions: they must have been enrolled in an advanced degree program at a GaPSC-accepted accredited institution (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.31 GaPSC-ACCEPTED ACCREDITATION FOR CERTIFICATION PURPOSES](#)) by July 15, 2011; and they must complete the same program – with the same degree objective and major and at the same institution – by the date specified in item 1, 2 or 3 below. Note: the term “enrolled” is defined as admitted to a program and actively participating in course work.

1. Master's degree programs started on or before July 15, 2011, must have been completed by December 15, 2014.

2. Specialist degree programs started on or before July 15, 2011, must have been completed by December 15, 2014.

3. Doctoral degree programs started on or before July 15, 2011, must have been completed by December 15, 2016.

(c) Educators enrolled in advanced degree programs in the certification fields of Teacher Leadership, Instructional Technology and Curriculum and Instruction at GaPSC-accepted accredited institutions (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.31 GaPSC-ACCEPTED ACCREDITATION FOR CERTIFICATION PURPOSES](#)) may upgrade their certificates under previous upgrade requirements if they were enrolled in the program by January 15, 2013, and if they completed the same program – with the same degree objective and major and at the same institution – by the date specified in item 1 or 2 below. Note: “enrolled” is defined as admitted to a program and actively participating in course work.

1. Master’s or specialist degree programs in the fields of Teacher Leadership, Instructional Technology and Curriculum and Instruction started on or before January 15, 2013, must have been completed by September 1, 2015.

2. Doctoral degree programs in the fields of Teacher Leadership, Instructional Technology and Curriculum and Instruction started on or before January 15, 2013, must be completed by September 1, 2017.

(d) An educator who earned initial Georgia certification through interstate reciprocity and was enrolled in an advanced degree program at the time the initial Georgia certificate was issued may upgrade his or her certificate without meeting all the requirements outlined in Section (2) above, subject to the following conditions:

1. The educator must complete the same advanced degree program – with the same degree objective and major and at the same institution – in which he or she was enrolled at the time the initial Georgia certificate was issued. Note: “enrolled” is defined as admitted to a program and actively participating in course work;

2. The degree must be completed within the following timeframes:

(i) A master’s or educational specialist degree must be completed within three (3) years of the date on which the initial Georgia certificate was issued; or

(ii) A doctoral degree must be completed within five (5) years of the date on which the initial Georgia certificate was issued;

3. The degree must be completed at an institution that held a GaPSC-accepted accreditation at the time the educator was admitted to the program (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.31 GaPSC-ACCEPTED ACCREDITATION FOR CERTIFICATION PURPOSES](#)); and

4. The provisions outlined in this section apply only to certificate level upgrades, not to the addition of a new field based on completion of a program. In order to add a field to an existing certificate, all Georgia educators must meet the requirements outlined in Rule [505-2-.34 ADD A FIELD](#) and other rules specific to the field to be added.

(4) Eligibility Requirements. Educators holding a Georgia level four (4) or higher Non-Renewable Professional, Permit or Induction Pathway Four (4) certificate are not eligible to upgrade until conversion to the renewable Professional certificate (or for Induction Pathway 4, conversion to another Induction Pathway). Initial issuance of the Non-Renewable Professional, Induction, and Permit certificates will be as specified in GaPSC Rule [505-2-.02 CLASSIFICATION](#).

(a) Educators holding one of the following discontinued certificates that are valid on the effective date of this rule are not eligible to upgrade until conversion to the Professional certificate: Clinical Practice, Core-Academic, Intern, Non-Renewable Non-Professional, and One Year Supervised Practicum.

Authority O.C.G.A. 20-2-200