Program Delivery How-to: Credentialling, Pathways, and Modes of Delivery

2023-2024 Program Innovation Workshop Series

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The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta (Districts 5 and 6).

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, attendees will understand:

- Various credential structures offered at UCalgary (e.g., laddered, stand-alone),
- Available modes of program delivery (e.g., face-to-face, blended, online) and the advantages of each, and
- What factors to consider when determining which structure and modality makes the most sense for your program.

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Credential Overview

- Credit credentials must align with the Alberta Credential Framework (ACF)
  - ACF is based on the Canada Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF)
- At the University of Calgary, we can offer:
  - Certificates
  - Diplomas
  - Degrees
- Credentials may be either:
  - Stand-alone (i.e., direct entry to that program); or
  - Laddered (i.e., entry though a laddered certificate and/or diploma pathway)

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Certificates

Credential	Levels	Standard Units	Typical Duration	UCalgary Examples
Certificate	Post-bachelor's	12-32 units	8-15 months (2-3 semesters)	• N/A
	Graduate	12 units (minimum)	1 year or less	• Graduate Certificate in Educational Research • Graduate Certificate in Fundamental Data Science and Analytics • Graduate Certificate in Precision Health
	Post-Master's	12 units (minimum)	1 year or less	• N/A
	Post-Doctoral	12 units (minimum)	1 year or less	• Post-doctoral Certificate in Radiation Oncology

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Diplomas

Credential	Levels	Standard Units	Typical Duration	UCalgary Examples
Diploma	Graduate	18 units (minimum)	1-2 years	• Graduate Diploma in Educational Research • Graduate Diploma in Data Science and Analytics • Graduate Diploma in Precision Health
	Post-Master's	18 units (minimum)	1-2 years	• N/A
	Post-Doctoral	Varies	1.5 years or less	• Post-doctoral Diploma in Radiation Oncology

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Degrees

Credential	Levels	Standard Units	Typical Duration	UCalgary Examples
Degree	Bachelor's	120 units	6-8 semesters (3-4 years)	• Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) • Bachelor of Science (BSc) • Bachelor of Arts (BA) • Bachelor of Design in City Innovation (BDCI)
	Master's	Varies	1-2 years	• Master of Science (MSc) • Master of Arts (MA) • Master of Data Science and Analytics (MDSA) • Master of Education (MEd)
	Doctoral	Varies	3-6 years	• Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) • Doctor of Design (DDes) • Doctor of Education (EdD)

Factors to Consider

- Determining the appropriate credential type, consider:
  - Target audience
    - E.g., High school graduates, degree-holders, working professionals, other
  - Research-based or professional program
  - Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
    - How many? What level are they at? What do students need to know?
  - Number of units each credential type requires
    - How many courses/units would it take to meet PLOs?
  - Accreditation requirements (if applicable)
  - Resources
    - What financial, infrastructure, and human resources do you need (and/or already have) to offer the program?

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Structure

- There are up to three components within a program:
  - Credential
  - Area of Study
  - Specialization

Credential	Area of Study	Specialization
Master of Education	Educational Research	Adult Learning
Graduate Certificate	Advanced Nursing Practice I	Oncology Nursing
Graduate Certificate	Network Security	N/A

Requires approval from the Ministry of Advanced Education

Requires internal UCalgary approval

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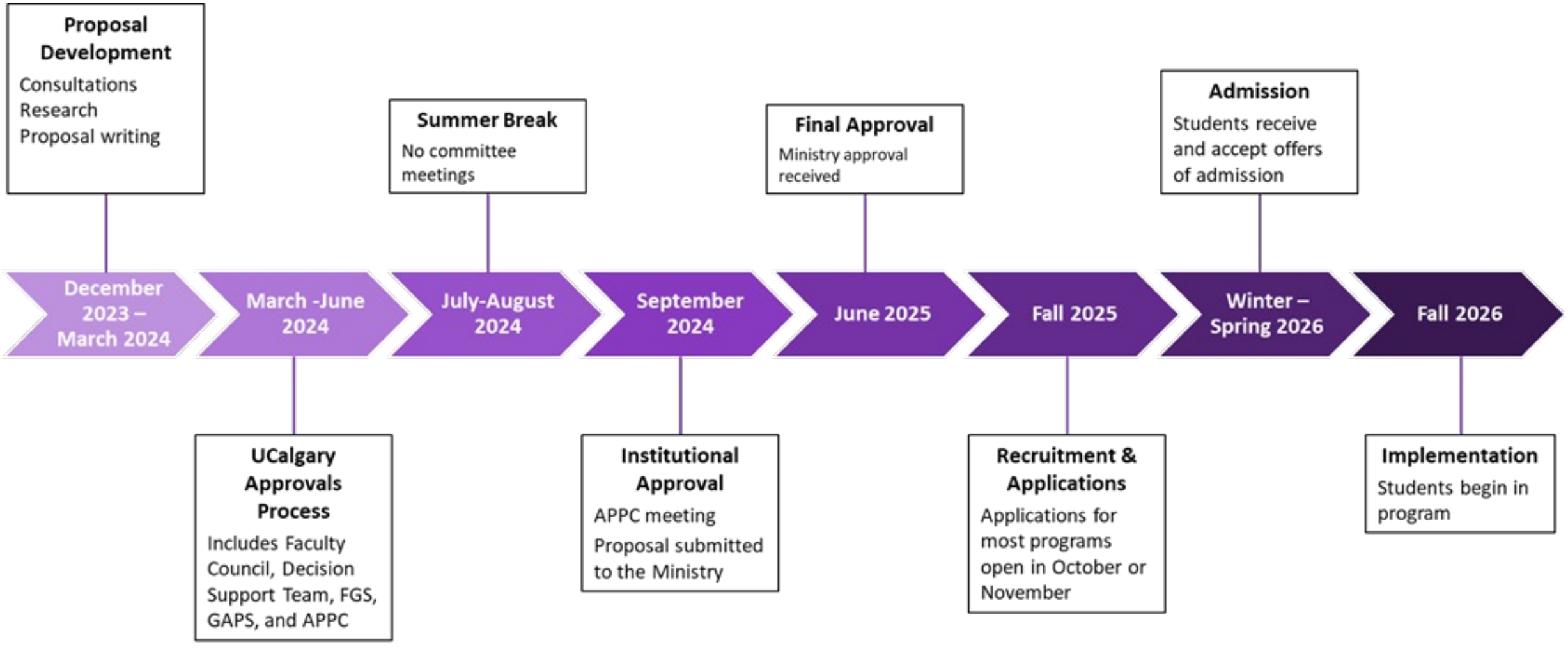
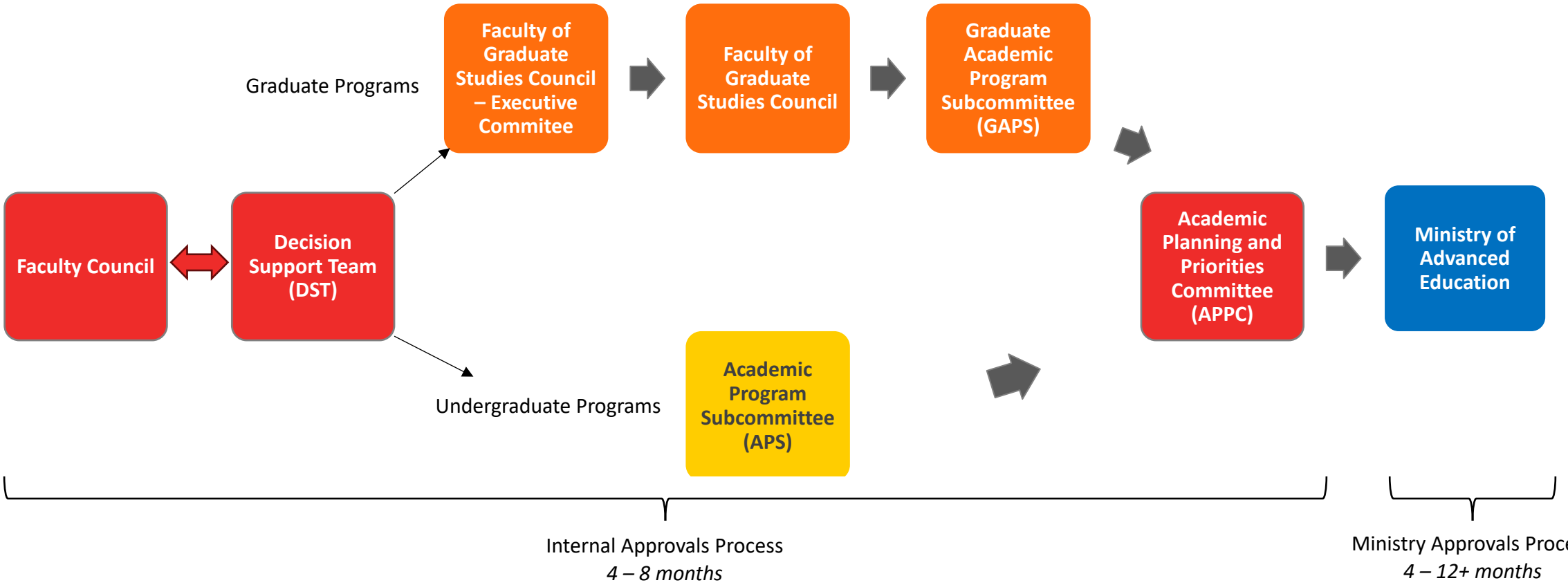

Proposal Development
Consultations
Research
Proposal writing
December 2023 – March 2024
March -June 2024
UCalgary Approvals Process
Includes Faculty Council, Decision Support Team, FGS, GAPS, and APPC
July-August 2024
Summer Break
No committee meetings
September 2024
Institutional Approval
APPC meeting
Proposal submitted to the Ministry
June 2025
Final Approval
Ministry approval received
Fall 2025
Recruitment & Applications
Applications for most programs open in October or November
Winter – Spring 2026
Admission
Students receive and accept offers of admission
Fall 2026
Implementation
Students begin in program

Approvals Process



Entrance and Progression

- Consider how students may enter and progress through the credential
  - Direct Entry
  - Laddering

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Direct-entry

- Direct-entry
  - Traditional way of entering and completing a program
  - Student applies to the credential (degree, certificate, diploma), is accepted, completes the requirements, graduates

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Laddering

- Laddering
  - Laddering is the progression of a student through successive credentials, carrying forward the course credit earned in each preceding credential.
  - Students completing successive credentials through a laddered pathway (e.g., a graduate certificate, then a graduate diploma, and lastly a course-based Master's) will receive a separate parchment for each credential they complete.
  - Only approved graduate-level certificates, diplomas, and course-based Master's degrees can be completed through a laddered pathway.
  - Students are required to apply for admission for each credential in the laddered pathway. This includes paying a non-refundable application fee and admission deposit for each credential. Students are also required to apply to graduate from each credential before admission to their subsequent one can be finalized.

Laddering Models

- Certificate – Diploma – Master's

Graduate Certificate
12 units

12 units normally consisting of four 3-unit courses

Graduate Diploma
24 units

Eight 3-unit courses consisting of:

- 12 units **of laddering credit** from the graduate certificate
- 12 units of new coursework

Master's Degree
36 units

36 units consisting of:

- 24 units of **laddering credit** from the graduate diploma
- 12 units of new coursework

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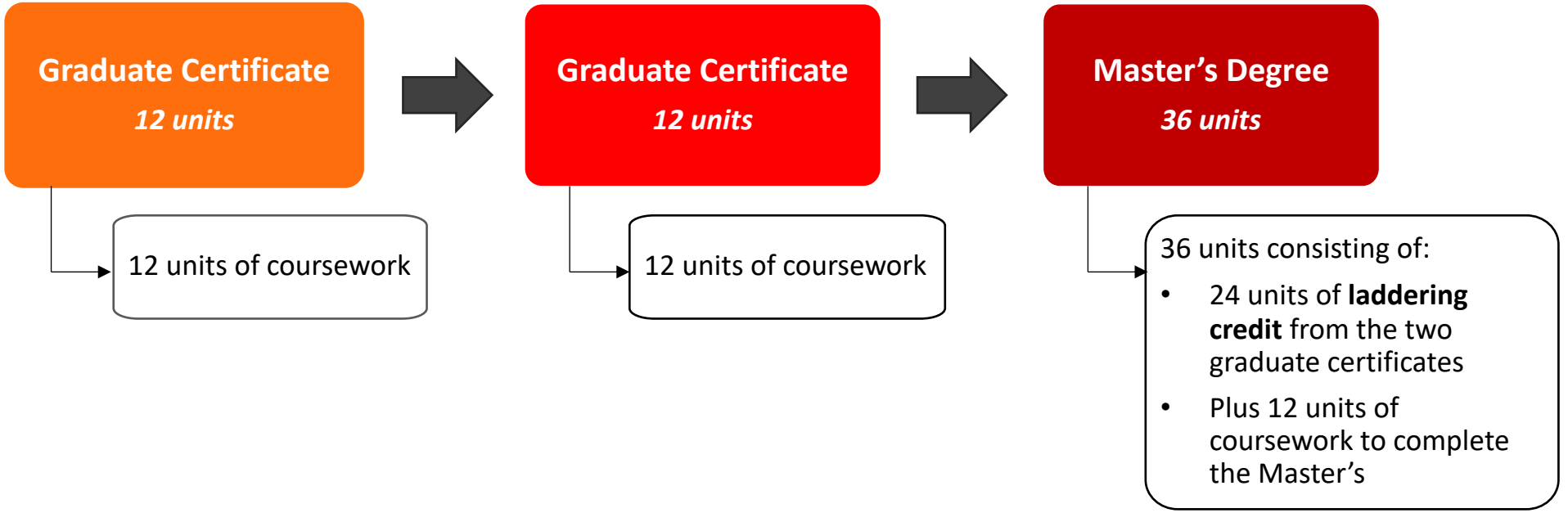
Laddering Models

- UCalgary programs that use the Certificate – Diploma – Master's model:
  - Master of Education
  - Master of Data Science and Analytics
  - Master of Precision Health
  - Master of Quantum Computing

Laddering Models

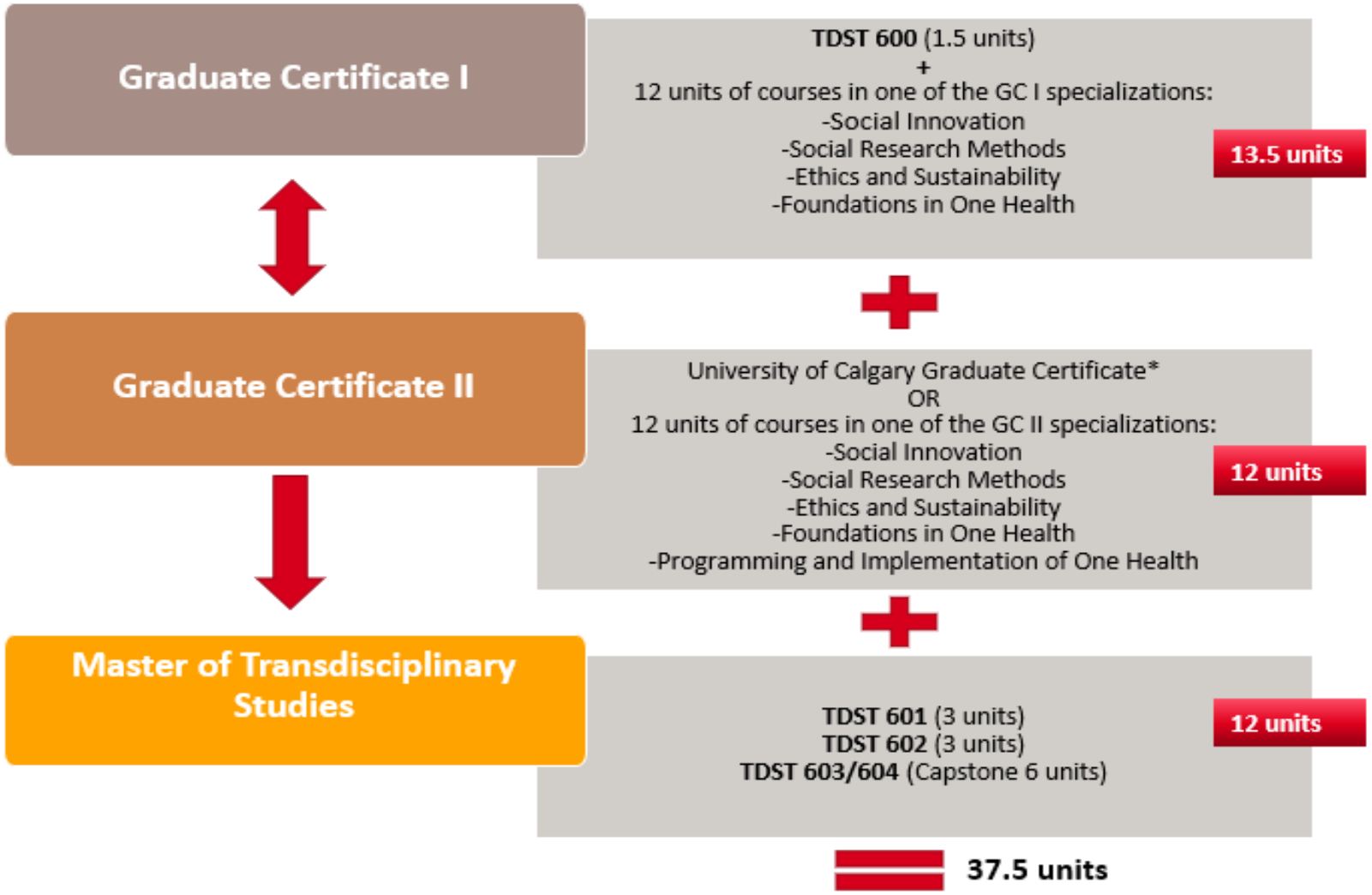
- Certificate – Certificate – Master's



Laddering Models

- UCalgary programs that use the Certificate – Certificate – Master's model:
  - Master of Social Work (course-based)
  - Master of Nursing (course-based)
  - Master of Information Security and Privacy
  - Master of Transdisciplinary Studies (awaiting Ministry approval)

Example: Transdisciplinary Studies Program



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Laddering: Opportunities and Challenges

Possible Opportunities

- Increased flexibility
  - Students can balance education with work and other commitments
- Potentially expand recruitment pool for master's degree
- Offer new pathway to (graduate) degree
- Expand accessibility of (graduate) education
- Students get one or more credentials that recognize their work without needing to commit to a full degree
- Students may have the opportunity for career progression earlier than if they were in a degree program
  - Focus on a specific area within a wider profession/discipline (e.g., oncology nursing)

Possible Challenges

- May be more challenging to get high student engagement due to :
  - Possible lack of identity with a larger program or cohort
  - Students at the university for a shorter time
- Supporting students of a potentially different demographic than traditional programs
- Building awareness of the new credentials(s) and/or pathway
  - Prospective student awareness
  - Industry recognition of the credential / its value to the labour market
- Finding a schedule for courses that works best for target audience
- Non-laddered certificates may not appeal to as many students as laddered – particularly if that field/discipline has many non-credit education options available

Defining Modes of Delivery

- **In-Person**: All instructional content for a course will be delivered in an in-person format. These courses are expected to have all GFC hours scheduled and assigned to space. This includes all assessments and supervised academic activity. Instructional methods may include traditional, problem-based learning, active learning, collaborative learning and flipped classroom approaches.

- **Blended Learning**: Blended learning methods include both in-class and web-based components of instruction. GFC hours should be met by using a combination of in person and online instruction. A component of a course may be taught a scheduled number of hours per week in-person and then the remaining hours online using instructor lead discussion, online work and/or other methods of online facilitated instruction.

- **Web-Based Instruction:** To be used for courses taught entirely online with no in-person component including assessments. Web-Based Courses may be taught synchronously, asynchronously or hybrid as indicated in the class notes and scheduling details.

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Reflective Questions for Mode of Delivery

Modality	What mode of delivery makes the most sense for students and instructors?
Course Design	How many new courses will be designed for the program, and in what modalities?
Instructional and Administrative Staffing	How many instructors, TAs, instructional designers, and administrative staff are required to support the delivery of the program?
Funding	What type of funding has been allocated to the program, and what constraints or conditions are associated with the funding?
Definitions	Have we clarified what constitutes face-to-face, online, blended, or hybrid modality?
Consistency	How much of the program will be offered in-person, online, or blended? How will this impact students and instructors?
Target Demographics of Learners	Who are the anticipated students for the proposed program, and what are their needs in terms of program modality? How and at what stage are students (future/current) being consulted?

Considerations for Program Modality

Consideration	Target Audience	Intention	Meeting Needs	Flexibility	Resource Requirements	Program Delivery	Logistical Planning	Switch Challenges	Opportunities
In-Person	Local, traditional students, those seeking on-campus experiences	Community-focused, seeking social interaction and hands-on experiences	Personalized attention, real-time feedback, hands-on activities	Structured, less flexibility in schedule or content	Classroom space, equipment, faculty, support staff	Face-to-face instruction, hands-on activities, group projects	Focus on physical space, scheduling, class sizes	Disruption to routine, reliance on physical infrastructure	Rich in-person interactions, hands-on learning, community building
Online	Global, working professionals, adult learners, those with scheduling constraints	Flexible, accessible to remote or busy individuals, emphasis on convenience	Flexibility, accessibility, asynchronous learning, multimedia resources	Highly flexible, adaptable to different learning styles and paces	Learning management system, online tools, faculty training, tech support	Asynchronous and synchronous learning, discussion boards, virtual meetings	Emphasis on tech infrastructure, online tools, faculty training	Technical issues, learning curve for online tools	Global reach, accessibility, innovative teaching methods
Blended	Varied, including local and remote students, professionals seeking upskilling	Offers benefits of both online and in-person, appealing to a wider range	Tailored approach, combines benefits of in-person and online, caters to diverse needs	Balanced, intentional mix of in-person and online components	Both physical and online resources, faculty for both modalities, tech support	Mix of in-person and online activities, scheduled classes, self-paced components	Balancing physical and online components, coordinating schedules	Balancing both modalities, managing student expectations	Customized learning experiences, flexibility, innovative approaches

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Program Design and Modality: Take-Aways

Modality decisions are central to ideation and program design

Online and blended courses require significant time, planning, and resources to design and deliver

Adequate instructional support and staffing are essential for sustainable program design

QUESTIONS

Resources

- Alberta Credentials Framework (ACF)
  - https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/5ac5c687-2824-4bf0-92e5-9ac5303a94b0/resource/5c13293e-fe73-4119-b16b-f8975ee0cb2f/download/ae-alberta-credential-framework-2023.pdf
- Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF)
  - https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/95/QA-Statement-2007.en.pdf
- Conversation Starters for New Online Academic Program Design
  - https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/Resources/Curriculum/22-TAY-Conversation-Starters-for-New-Online-Academic-Program-Design.pdf

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