

Policies for Executive, Accelerated, and Professional Programs

These titles generally should not be used unless there is a “regular” program with which the new program contrasts in meaningful ways. We should avoid using these adjectives indiscriminately, just to get an edge in the market, or they will cease to have any meaning.

Executive programs should:

- Be aimed at executives (i.e., high-level, managerial professionals in the field).
- Require that students have at least three years (preferably more) of experience in the relevant field.
- Involve a cohort model in which a group of students goes through the program together.
- Have special features that make them “top of the line” and offer students an especially rich and distinctive learning experience (e.g., teaching by top faculty, projects implemented in the students’ work settings).

Accelerated programs should:

- Be aimed at working professionals, although not necessarily high-level ones.
- Be time-compressed or speeded up compared to the regular programs for part-time students (e.g., they should involve night and weekend classes that make it possible for part-time students to progress almost as rapidly as full-time students).
- Involve a cohort model, but need not have content different from that of the regular program available to part-time students.

Professional programs can be defined or labeled as such for various reasons:

- Some programs (e.g., the Professional MBA) are so labeled because the students enrolled are working professionals and because the term sounds more impressive than “part-time.”
- The term “professional” may be used in other cases to help distinguish a practitioner degree from an academic degree (e.g., to distinguish the Professional Psychology Psy.D. program, a practitioner clinical psychology degree, from the more research-oriented Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, or to distinguish an applied, business-oriented master’s degree from an academic one).

Although it may be possible to invoke such terms in program descriptions (so long as they are used appropriately and accurately), **including these terms as part of a program’s title cannot be self-determined or ad hoc.** As with all academic programs, executive, accelerated, or professional programs (whether new or being established as a version of an existing program) must be approved by the appropriate department(s), Dean, and Academic Affairs prior to public announcement of the program, acceptance of applications, or student enrollment in the program. Approval by the Board of Trustees is not required, unless a new degree is being created. After school review processes are complete, a Master Program Data form, signed by the department/program and school, must be submitted to the office of the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies and Academic Affairs. As with all Master Program Data forms, the justification for the program, admissions criteria, and curricular requirements for completion of the program must be clearly articulated, noting where these vary from current versions of the program, if any. Additionally, the submission must explain how the program meets the conditions of the appropriate program category, as described above.