Guidelines for For-Credit Certificate Programs

I. General Information for All Certificate Types

II. Undergraduate Certificates

III. Graduate/Professional Student Certificates

IV. Capstone Certificates

V. Program Review Guidelines for Certificates

(Policy history: Original guidelines adopted in May 1997; Revised, October 2000; Revised and adopted by UAPC, April 19, 2012; Administrative revision 04.17.2014)

I. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ALL CERTIFICATE TYPES

DEFINITION: A certificate program is a designated set of for-credit courses focused upon a specific topic or theme. Certificates give students the opportunity to pursue a subject of interest in a formalized way and to have completion of the course of study recognized by the awarding of the certificate. After approval, the for-credit certificate is documented on the student’s UW-Madison transcript and becomes part of the official student record. Certificates add opportunities for flexibility not available in majors and degrees.

CATEGORIES: Certificate programs fall into several categories that are tied to the student’s status.

Undergraduate Certificates: Available to degree-seeking UW-Madison undergraduates; are offered at an undergraduate level of content and intensity are designed to complement undergraduate degree/majors; 12-21 credits. May be open to University Special (non-degree seeking) students who hold a bachelor’s degree if provisions for these students are planned and approved by program faculty, school/college academic planning council and University Academic Planning Council.

Graduate and Professional Student Certificates: Available to degree-seeking graduate and professional students (GRAD, LAW, MED, PHARM, VMED “careers” and any careers that may be added at the post-baccalaureate level); designed to complement graduate or professional programs of study; usually 9-12 credits.

Capstone Certificates (Post-baccalaureate level): For University Special (non-degree seeking) students who hold a bachelor’s degree or equivalent; at least 9 graduate/professional level credits (rarely more than 16 credits); designed to "cap off" undergraduate educational experience or to
offer a focused professionally oriented educational experience. Students apply, are admitted, and enroll as prescribed by the capstone certificate program.

Not-for-credit Certificates: Offered by various units; not formally approved through this process; based on not-for-credit activity; may carry continuing education units (CEUs); not posted to the UW-Madison student transcript. Consult the Division of Continuing Studies. Policy guidelines for Non-Credit Certificates were approved in June 2011.


TRENDS IN CERTIFICATE AWARDS: http://apir.wisc.edu/students-degrees.htm.

RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS
Originally certificates were intended to be a resource neutral approach to recognize a course of study that a student would complete along the way to completing their degree and major. Over time, certificates have become more prominent in the program array, more complex in their design, and often require devoted resources or put resource demands on other units. Faculty who propose certificates should plan for resources that support instruction, student services, compliance with state and federal regulation, and other demands. Faculty should understand how the certificate offering is related to degree and major offerings. For undergraduate certificates, faculty should design the certificate so that it does not extend time to degree. Certificates may not be subdivided into options or other sub-plans.

APPROVAL OVERVIEW
Specific details about the approval process are provided in the guidelines for each certificate category. All certificates require approval by the program faculty who are sponsoring the certificate program (most often a department). Subsequently, the school/college that houses the certificate considers the certificate for approval. After school/college approval, the dean forwards the proposal to the provost. The Graduate Faculty Executive Committee will consider graduate/professional and Capstone certificates. Continuing Studies will be consulted on certificates that serve University Special students. For all categories of certificates, the provost will seek a recommendation for approval from the University Academic Planning Council. All certificates must be accompanied by statements of support or concurrence from departments or academic units that provide courses and from schools/colleges/divisions that may have overlapping interests with the certificate. Refer to the detailed guidelines for the specific category of certificate.

SUNSET PROVISIONS
Certificate programs that meet all three of the following three conditions may be discontinued at the discretion of the provost:

a. The sponsoring unit and the program faculty are unresponsive to requests from the Office of the Provost for information about the status of the certificate program.

b. No student has had the certificate recorded to their official student record and their transcript for three consecutive years.

c. The certificate program has not completed a review five years after implementation or the regular 10 year program review in a reasonable time.
These conditions signal insufficient interest by faculty and students to continue the program and provide a mechanism to discontinue a program when program faculty have left the university or are not otherwise available to formally request a discontinuation.

HISTORY
In the late 1970s, UW-Madison faculty first established guidelines for certificate programs when certificates were formalized and noted on the transcript. In the mid- to late-1990s there was an expansion of faculty interest and Capstone certificates were created as a new category. In 1997 the UAPC and the GFEC established guidelines for planning, approval, and offering of certificate programs. Those guidelines were expanded and updated in 2011.

Why certificates and not minors: In the mid-1980s, an ad hoc committee studied the value of certificates versus minors. They concluded that certificates better fit the intentions of this non-major type of offering. Certificates offer more flexibility because they can be attached to any degree, unlike minors, which are traditionally offered in association with specific degrees. Given that certificates are established, and given that some certificates functionally act as minors, it now seems redundant to add minors. (Minors are available only in association with teacher certification programs within the School of Education and in association with research doctoral degrees.)

ACCREDITATION CONSIDERATIONS
UW-Madison’s accreditation status does not currently allow for the awarding of pre-baccalaureate level certificates or degrees.

Certificates that meet all four of the following conditions require approval by the Higher Learning Commission (as of 2008 and 2010):

• Half or more of the courses are associated only with the certificate and are not also associated with any degree program or available to degree-seeking students (Interpretation: courses created just for the certificate and outside the subject areas that are available to degree-seeking students; for example, establishing a Nursing certificate if there is no Nursing degree program),
• Certificate curricular requirements are comprised of credit bearing courses,
• The certificate is free-standing and does not require that students be degree-seeking students,
• Students in the program are to be eligible for federal financial aid (under Title IV).

COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS
In some cases, certificate programs may be subject to federal US Department of Education regulations that differ from regulations associated with majors and degrees. For example, certificate programs available to University Special students designed to prepare students for specific occupations must comply with “gainful employment” regulations promulgated by the US Department of Education (effective October 1, 2011). Consult the director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research (www.apir.wisc.edu).

Adopted by the UAPC, 4/19/2013; Administrative revision 4/172014, Page 3 of 23
III. GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL STUDENT CERTIFICATES

Graduate/professional certificate programs are intended for all degree-seeking graduate and professional students (technically, those in the following careers: GRAD, MED, LAW, VMED, PHARM and any additional degree-seeking post-bachelors careers that may be added). Graduate students are admitted to their degree program through the Graduate School. Professional students are admitted directly to professional programs in the Law School (LLM, JD, SJD), School of Medicine and Public Health (MPH, MD, DPT, MPAS), Pharmacy (Pharm.D.), and Veterinary Medicine (DVM).

GUIDELINES AND STIPULATIONS FOR NEW GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATES

Proposals for new certificates must originate from and be prepared by members of the faculty. Proposals provide a description of the purpose of the certificate, details of the curriculum, provisions for the advising, oversight, and how the stipulations associated with certificates will be met.

1. Certificate name. Also specify the sponsoring unit(s) and program faculty—Identify which academic department and which school(s)/college(s) will be the sponsoring unit for the certificate. This unit is the academic home that is responsible for student progress, governance, staff, and resources that support the certificate. Include a name for the initial faculty director of the certificate program. Provide a list of the key program faculty.

2. Timeline for implementation.

3. Supporting letters/memos – Append to the packet memos or letters of support or concurrence from other academic units that will have overlapping interest. Letters/memos should be included for each department and school/college that is supplying participating faculty and courses beyond the sponsoring unit. If there are other units that offer programs with very similar names or content, communications should be included that signal concurrence with the proposal.

4. Governance – Describe how the certificate program will be governed. If the sponsoring unit is a school/college or a department then governance will be more straightforward than if the sponsoring unit is a center or other unit. Will it be part of a regular department? Will it have an executive committee? How will program faculty be identified? What will be the process for the transition of the faculty program director and succession planning? Who will appoint the faculty program director and to whom will the faculty program director report?

5. Purpose, rationale, justification – What is the purpose of the certificate program? How does it align with the mission of the sponsoring unit(s)? What gap in the program array is it intended to fill? How is designed to complement students’ major program of study? What is the evidence that there is a societal and student demand for the certificate program experiences?

6. Curriculum – Describe the certificate curriculum (9-12 credits). Provide a description of the proposed course sequence and anticipated progression and program length. Are the courses all approved? If not, where are they in the proposal process? Are the courses offered on a regular
basis? Have all departments that offer certificate courses provided a memo stating that they have space in the courses and that they will communicate with the certificate faculty program director about plans for changing course offerings?

The curriculum plan should account for the following stipulations:

a) The certificate should require 9 to 12 credits of graduate-level course work (courses numbered 300 or above).
b) The proposal should specify if courses approved for Credit/No Credit grading may be included in the curriculum.
c) Courses taken pass/fail or audit may not be included in the curriculum and may not be counted towards the completion of the certificate.
d) The course requirements for the certificate program must be defined discretely enough so that the requirements can be easily checked and so that exceptions are rarely needed.
e) Core courses to be included in the certificate are approved by the school/college curriculum committee when the proposal is advanced. The certificate may not be implemented until the core courses are approved by the University Curriculum Committee. Special topics courses are not acceptable as core courses in graduate/professional certificate programs.
f) Courses that are offered as special topics courses should be used sparingly, given that they add to the administrative overhead of the program. Ideally, special topics courses are only included in certificate curricula when all instances of the special topics course satisfy the certificate requirement.
g) A process should be developed for considering exceptions and substitutions; the certificate should be designed so that exceptions are rarely required. Any substitution or exception that is made should be generalized to certificate requirements and available to all students. Resources allotted to the program must be appropriate to handle the one-on-one advising required to allow exceptions. If the program does not allow exceptions and substitutions, that should be specified.
h) Requirements may be waived by prior course work but at least half (50%) of certificate credits must be earned while enrolled at UW-Madison as a degree-seeking graduate/professional student. Consistent with other policy, credits earned in distance-delivered UW-Madison courses also count as credits earned in residence.

7. Overlap limits – Describe any limits on overlap with closely related majors, research doctoral minors, or other certificate programs. Students may not earn a certificate if they are also earning a post-baccalaureate major/degree or research doctoral minor with the same name.

8. Assessment and program review – Specify the major learning goals associated with the certificate program? How do the curricular requirements relate to the learning goals? Provide an assessment plan that demonstrates how the program faculty will regularly evaluate student learning and how the goals are being met. Provide a statement in the proposal that the sponsoring unit understands that there is a requirement for program review five years after implementation and regularly thereafter.
(Note: Consideration of certificates for approval by UAPC may be delayed if reviews of other academic programs in the same department or unit are past-due.)
Assessment and program review planning should account for the following stipulations:

a) An active plan for assessment of student learning is required. At least one assessment activity must be conducted annually. Evidence related to student learning and program effectiveness should be used as the basis for curricular changes.

b) Program review is required at the five year mark and at least once a decade after that (every 5 years for L&S certificate programs).

c) Low-enrollment certificate programs (fewer than 5 certificates in 5 years) will be subject to review. Note that the faculty program director is responsible for the reporting of which students have completed certificate requirements to the school/college dean’s office and the Registrar’s Office. Certificates completed by students but not reported are not included in certificate counts, nor are they recorded on the student’s transcript.

9. Admission to the graduate/professional certificate program - Describe how students will gain admission to the certificate program. Describe who will make admissions decisions and how the admissions process will be managed.

Admissions planning should consider the following stipulation:

a) The admission process should provide a provision for students to gain consent from their degree/major program to participate in the certificate program.

b) The certificate program faculty are responsible for the admission process and for knowing which students are participating in the certificate. In keeping with this stipulation, the faculty program director will need to stay current with Registrar’s Office practices associated with identifying which students have declared or are admitted to a certificate program.

10. Enrollment - What are the projections for enrollment and for annual numbers of students who complete the certificate? Is there available capacity in the core courses? What are contingency plans for enrollments that are much higher or lower than projected?

11. Student progress, and certificate completion – Describe plans for monitoring student progress. Describe plans for certificate completion and for communicating with the Registrar’s Office about who has completed the certificate. Planning should account for following stipulations:

a) The faculty program director is responsible for tracking who is in the certificate program and for remaining conversant in Registrar’s Office practices relative to this consideration.

b) Students who participate in certificate programs should be in good academic standing according to the standards set by their degree/major requirements. Typically a minimum average 3.0 GPA must be earned on course work attempted for the certificate programs.

c) It is a requirement that the certificate faculty program director or designee report which students have completed the certificate requirements to the Registrar’s Office. This is the only way that the Registrar’s Office knows that the certificate should be placed on the formal student record.
d) The certificate will be posted to the student’s record when the certificate program faculty/staff report to the Registrar’s Office that the student has completed the requirements. After that, the certificate will appear on the transcript.

e) Certificates are not awarded retroactively to graduated students who completed all of the certificate before the certificate was approved.

12. Advising and exceptions/substitutions – Describe how students will be advised and how the resource load of the additional advising will be met. Describe ways that the proposed certificate will connect with the requirements of majors that might be coupled with frequently. How will exceptions to the specified curriculum be accommodated? Who will a student consult? Who will have sign-off authority on exceptions? Do the individuals or offices have the capacity to add this workload? Does the program have the resources to support all aspects of advising and student support? How will interactions with the school/college dean’s office, the Graduate School, and with the Registrar’s Office be managed?

13. Resources and Ongoing Commitment – Given all the considerations above, what resources are allocated to the program? Who is responsible for resource support of the certificate program (department chair? dean? other?) Is there sufficient capacity in the curriculum and in academic support services to meet the additional workload imposed by the certificate program? Is there a source of new funding? If the funding is from reallocation what activities will be reduced as a result? If the program requires new capital resources (for example computer labs) or additions to the Library collections, a supporting letter should demonstrate that the appropriate unit can provide the resources.

Planning for an ongoing commitment should address the following considerations:

a) Units offering certificates are expected to be proactive about checking on course offerings that are included in the curriculum.

b) The certificate program is responsible for maintaining regular contact with the Registrar’s Office, the school/college dean’s office, and the Graduate School. This includes providing information for official University publications such as the Graduate Catalog in the format requested by University Communications. In addition, more detailed, accurate, and formally approved information should be provided through a certificate program web site.

c) Units maintain certificate requirements so that they are up-to-date and see to it that curriculum changes are approved through the appropriate school/college academic planning council or curriculum committee. The school/college curriculum committee will notify the Graduate School and the Office of the Registrar about curricular changes to the certificate according to standard practice. Any changes in requirements will be effective no sooner than the fall semester after approval.

d) The certificate program faculty are responsible for seeking appropriate governance approval for suspending admissions or discontinuing the certificate program.
APPROVAL PROCESS

1. Program faculty in the sponsoring unit will prepare a proposal according to the guidelines described above. Faculty are advised to consult with their dean and dean’s office, with the Graduate School, and with the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research in the planning stages.

2. The proposal should be approved by the sponsoring department(s)/unit(s). The department chair or equivalent academic leader forwards the proposal to the dean’s office for consideration.

3. The school/college academic planning council (or equivalent) reviews the proposal. After approval by the school(s)/college(s), the dean’s office forwards the proposal, attachments, and cover letter of support to the provost (copy to the director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research as well as the assistant dean of Academic Assessment and Funding in the Graduate School).

4. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research will coordinate with the Graduate School to review the proposal for alignment with the guidelines and to assure that all supporting documentation is provided.

5. The Graduate School will schedule the proposal for consideration by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee. Upon approval by GFEC, the director of APIR will consult with the provost and schedule the proposal for consideration at a University Academic Planning Council meeting.

6. The UAPC will review the proposal and recommend consideration to the provost. The provost will formally announce the approval of a new certificate program to University constituencies.

7. The school/college dean’s offices and the program faculty will consult with the Office of the Registrar to implement the program. A certificate program will typically be implemented in the fall semester following governance approval.
V. PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Regular review of academic programs is a responsibility of the program faculty. Certificates are to be reviewed five years after implementation and every ten years thereafter (every five years thereafter in Letters and Science). The review is initiated and overseen by the school/college dean’s office, as are other program reviews. The Office of the Provost will provide annual reports to the schools/colleges about which programs are due for review. A certificate review may stand alone or be combined with the review of an appropriate major, department, center, or other unit.

PROGRAM REVIEW AND SELF-STUDY GUIDELINES: Reviews of certificates are ideally conducted as an abbreviated review of an academic major/degree). All program reviews begin with a self-study (completed by program faculty) and the focus of a certificate self-study will typically include the following elements:

1. Program Description and Context – includes program requirements, mission, learning goals, and relationship with other units
2. Demonstration of Need and Recruitment/Outreach – includes populations targeted, data to demonstrate need, and efforts to recruit/inform students
3. Program Administration and Resources – includes description of administrative and advising processes as well as a description and evaluation of fiscal model (if appropriate)
4. Faculty/Staff Participants – includes list of participating faculty, instructional staff, administrative staff with their role and department affiliation noted
5. Student Enrollment – includes total number of students enrolled/declared in the program compared to program enrollment goals as well as average length of program completion
6. Curricular Offerings and Enrollment Levels – includes courses actually offered or for which students received program credit, by semester and enrollment data for "core" (introductory) and/or "capstone" courses
7. Program Completion – number of certificates awarded annually (as recorded by the Office of the Registrar); and placement of “graduates” (if appropriate).
8. Recommendations – includes recommendation and proposals for curricular changes or administrative improvements
9. Assessment – includes the assessment plan and a summary of annually conducted assessment activities, including an analysis of the extent to which the program is meeting the specified goals. This assessment evidence should form the basis for any proposals for curricular changes.

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS: The school/college dean’s office will follow established procedures for review and final reporting of the self-study. In the absence of school/college-specific guidelines, certificate program faculty and dean’s offices should refer to University guidelines. All program reviews include a review committee (formed by the school/college) and for certificate reviews should typically include at least three faculty members, including a member from the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) for graduate/professional and capstone certificates (who serves as a member not as chair).

For details on program review policy, see http://apir.wisc.edu/programreview.htm.