

# Wichita State University

## Academic Affairs Committee

### Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificate Programs

**DEFINITION:** Undergraduate certificates are awarded by departments and colleges to recognize accomplishment in a cluster of related courses on a topic, skill, theme, or method, as defined by the appropriate faculty. They serve as the student's record of coherent academic accomplishment. They are not degrees, concentrations, minors<sup>1</sup>, or certification programs.<sup>2</sup>

**POTENTIAL STUDENTS** include:

- students seeking skills or knowledge in a focused area for which we have no degree, major, minor, or concentration.
- students who desire interdisciplinary course work to complement their degree program.

**COURSE WORK:** Undergraduate certificate programs typically consist of 4 to 6 undergraduate courses (12 to 18 credit hours). Significant departures from this range will require justification in the proposal. No more than 1/3 of the required course work should be S/U graded. Transfer hours are usually not acceptable for certificate programs.

**MANAGEMENT:** An undergraduate certificate program may be housed in a single department, or may be interdepartmental, or even inter-college. In both cases, the certificate program is proposed and managed by faculty having an interest in the certificate program. Normally one faculty member serves as certificate program coordinator.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Undergraduate students seeking to enroll in courses for a certificate program must be admitted to Wichita State University. They may be in either degree or non degree status. International students may enroll in certificate programs but must maintain compliance with their visa requirements. Students should contact the coordinator of the certificate program or the department chair where the certificate is offered to inform them of their interest in enrolling in the program. Certificate programs may have a separate admission process.

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<sup>1</sup> Minors and concentrations are usually embedded within existing degree programs; certificate programs may, but are not usually embedded within existing degree programs. Certificate programs are targeted at specific audiences, often persons seeking specialized information for a job. Upon completion of the certificate program, the certificate serves as a credential that bolsters employability as a job applicant or improves chances of advancement within a current job.

<sup>2</sup> Certification is a process that assures that students meet certain standards within their program of study. These standards are usually specified by an external board. For example, teacher certification standards are set by the Kansas State Board of Education and are implemented in part, through the content of various courses. Students who take the appropriate courses and meet other required standards become certified to teach in the State of Kansas.

**DEGREE OVERLAP:** Students may usually use certificate course work toward an eventual degree. Exceptions should be noted in the certificate program proposal.

**COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS:** A cumulative graduate grade point average of at least 2.00 for all courses comprising the certificate program and no grades below C. Each certificate program should offer a sequence of courses that allows completion of the program requirements in a defined amount of time.

**APPROVAL PROCESS:** Proposals for new undergraduate certificate programs should be processed by way of the curriculum routing form to the Academic Affairs Committee before final approval by the Provost and Senior Vice President. The proposal shall contain:

- the title of the proposed certificate program
- program objectives
- demonstration of need
- a detailed description and rationale for the curriculum
- a plan for offering a sequence of courses that allows completion of the program requirements in a defined amount of time
- exceptional circumstances that favor the development of the proposed certificate program
- organization of the program, including identification of
  1. Faculty associated with the certificate program, normally those who expect to teach courses in the certificate program curriculum
  2. A coordinator responsible for management of the certificate program, for advising students, etc.
- Statements of support from chairs and deans whose programs and faculty are involved in the proposed certificate program. Colleges and departments may have procedures for faculty approval that must be respected as well. Statements from representatives of any program, department, or college on which the proposed certificate program will have an impact.
- An assessment plan for the program must be included. The plan should include how the quality of the program will be monitored. The plan should also include narrative on how continuation and duration of the program will be determined.
- Prior to submitting a proposal for a certificate program, it is the responsibility of the originating unit to consult with the Offices of Academic Affairs and Financial Aid to determine whether the proposed program is a gainful employment program, as defined by U.S. Department of Education Program Integrity regulations (i.e., a program that is at least one year in length, leads to a certificate or other non-degree recognized credential, and prepares student for gainful employment in a recognized occupation). A certificate program that is eligible for federal financial aid and is determined to be a gainful employment program must comply with disclosure and reporting requirements. Federal regulations require a university to disclose, inter alia, the following information about the program on the university's website and in materials promoting the certificate program:
  - Tuition and fees;
  - Costs of books, supplies, room and board;

- On-time graduation rate for students completing the program;
- Job placement rates; and
- The median loan debt incurred by students who completed the program.
- Curriculum routing sheet with the appropriate departmental, college and university signatures.

**CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:**

Principles for assessing the academic quality of proposals:

- A demonstrated need must exist.
- Course work should offer clear educational objectives at the undergraduate level.
- Course work comprising the certificate program must be an integrated and organized sequence of study
- Deans, chairs, and other administrators will address resource issues in their statement of support.

**RECOGNITION:** Students completing an undergraduate certificate program will receive an appropriately worded certificate. Notation will be made on the student's transcript when a certificate has been awarded.

**PROMOTION:** Approved undergraduate certificate programs will be listed in the *Undergraduate Catalog* (print and web versions), and Schedule of Courses. Departments may choose to promote their programs through other venues.

**DURATION AND REVIEW:** Undergraduate certificate program will exist as long as the department or college assessment data support a need for the program.

**QUALITY:**

- The courses offered for undergraduate credit must be taught by faculty with expertise in the area of the certificate offering and appropriate advanced degrees.
- Students must maintain at least a 2.00 grade point in the certificate classes to qualify for the certificate at the end of the program.
- Undergraduate certificate programs are initially approved through a process defined and monitored by the Academic Affairs Committee and are periodically reviewed at an interval of approximately three years.

Revised and Endorsed by the Faculty Senate on October 22, 2012