

Guidelines for the Development of Graduate Certificate Programs

DEFINITION: Graduate certificates are awarded by departments, colleges, and the Graduate School to recognize graduate-level accomplishment in a cluster of related graduate 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, or certification programs.

CERTIFICATE TYPES: Two general types are recognized: 1) certificate programs designed primarily for graduate students currently enrolled in a degree program; 2) "free-standing" certificate programs for students who, for academic, personal, or professional reasons desire graduate level education, but who do not seek a graduate degree program.

COURSE WORK: Graduate certificate programs typically consist of 4 to 6 graduate 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: A 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 a steering committee of faculty having an interest in the certificate program. Normally one faculty member serves as certificate program coordinator and convener for the steering committee.

ELIGIBILITY: Students seeking graduate certificates must be admitted to Graduate School in a degree program or in non-degree A status. All Graduate School policies relative to admissions apply. Eligibility criteria particular to the proposed certificate program (course or degree prerequisites, TOEFL scores, language or tool requirements, etc.) should be defined in the certificate program proposal.

International students will not be issued an I-20 for certificate programs alone. They may obtain a certificate only while concurrently pursuing a graduate degree.

Students pursuing a graduate certificate must notify the program area (in a written memo) that they wish to complete the certificate. This notification must occur before half of the required hours are completed. Via the submitted Plan of Study, requests to complete the certificate are reviewed by the program faculty and the Dean of the Graduate School.

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

FINANCIAL AID: Students pursuing certificates who are not concurrently pursuing a degree program are not eligible for assistantships or graduate fellowships.

COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS: A cumulative graduate grade point average of at least 3.00 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.

COMPLETION PROCESS:

1. Notify the program area in writing of intent to complete the certificate.
2. In the semester the certificate requirements are met,
 - a. Prepare (with graduate advisor) and submit (to the Graduate School) a Plan of Study (for the certificate).
 - b. Submit an Application for Degree (for the certificate) with a \$15.00 filing fee to the Graduate School no later than the 20th day of fall or spring semester or the 10th day of a summer term.

APPROVAL PROCESS: Proposals for new certificate programs should be addressed to the dean of the Graduate School and should 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 steering committee of graduate faculty identified with the certificate program (Some subset of #1)
 3. A committee chair or 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 department 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.

Proposals that have been endorsed by faculty, chairs, and deans are referred to the Graduate Council for final approval. Normally one semester should be allowed for the approval process.

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 graduate 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 a certificate program will receive an appropriately worded certificate, which may use a common format or which may be designed by the certificate program faculty. It should contain minimally the title of the certificate program, a list of the courses completed for the certificate program, and appropriate signatures. It may NOT contain any language or symbol stating or implying that the certificate is a graduate degree.

Notation will be made on the student's transcript when a certificate has been awarded.

PROMOTION: Approved graduate certificate programs will be listed in the *Graduate Catalog* (print and web versions), Schedule of Courses, and advertised in a brochure on certificate programs to be published by the Graduate School. The Graduate School will assist departments or programs with reasonable costs associated with promoting certificate programs.

DURATION AND REVIEW: Certificate programs are normally approved for three years, after which they will be reviewed and recommended for continuation or discontinuation.

QUALITY:

- All WSU courses for graduate credit are taught by graduate faculty who have been reviewed for currency in their subject matter, scholarship or creative work, teaching experience appropriate to graduate programs.
- Students admitted to the Graduate School have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution, and have a minimum gpa of 2.75 in the last 60 hours of course work. Students expecting a graduate certificate must have a B (3.0) average in the certificate curriculum and no grade below C (2.0).
- Certificate programs are initially approved through a process defined and monitored by the Graduate Council and are periodically reviewed.

REFERENCES:

Wayne Patterson, "A Survey of Graduate Certificate Policies, Procedures, and Programs"
<http://www.cofc.edu/~wayne/gradcerts.html> (1997).

Stephen R. Welch and Peter D. Syverson, "Post-Baccalaureate Certificates: A First Look at Graduate Certificate Programs Offered by CGS Institutions"
<http://www.cgsnet.org/vcr/cctr710.htm#4> (1997)