

GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIALLY RECORDED UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES

1. **Rationale:** Many Departments and Programs at Washington State University (WSU) have found it useful to group undergraduate course offerings within a single department or across several departments under the heading of a “certificate.” Such certificates generally represent a body of coursework that demonstrates proficiency in a subset of skills or knowledge that have useful application in a variety of professions. Currently, certificates are informally recognized within a Department or Program simply with the issuance of a document that recognizes a student’s participation in a number of specified educational experiences. Because there is increasing interest among faculty at WSU in developing certificates as an alternative to degrees, particularly in the more applied academic areas and in curricula designed for distance delivery, the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) was asked to develop university-wide guidelines for officially recorded undergraduate certificates. As noted in the recently approved guidelines for certificates at the graduate level, it is important for the academic integrity of all WSU Departments and Programs that informal certificates of attendance are distinguished from more formal certificates of academic achievement. Thus, for *official recognition* of certificate completion, the AAC recommends that Departments and Programs develop new certificates or reconfigure existing certificates to conform to the following guidelines for Officially Recorded Undergraduate Certificates. These guidelines are designed to assure that students have a sustained educational experience in undergraduate courses that may be applied toward, but are not in themselves sufficient for, completion of a degree. Students who successfully complete requirements for an Officially Recorded Undergraduate Certificate may apply to have their participation recorded on their transcript.

2. **Definition:** An “officially recorded undergraduate certificate” is a document issued by WSU, displaying the WSU seal and president’s signature, that may be issued to students who have completed a course of study that meets the guidelines outlined below and has been approved by the Faculty Senate. Officially recorded undergraduate certificates also can be documented on the academic transcript. Unofficial certificates may not be placed on transcripts and will not carry the official WSU logo.

3. Guidelines

3.1. Admission standards: Any currently enrolled undergraduate or graduate degree-seeking student is automatically eligible to enroll in any undergraduate certificate program. Other students must meet the existing admission standards for non-degree seeking students.

3.2. Credit hours

3.2.1. Absolute number: minimum 15 credit hours/certificate, with the exact number specified by the Department or Program offering the certificate.

3.2.2. Transfer credits: The maximum number of credit hours earned at other institutions that may apply towards a particular WSU certificate shall not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total number of credit hours required for the certificate. Acceptance of particular courses from other institutions for WSU certificate credit will be at the discretion of the Department or Program offering the certificate.

3.3. Pass/Fail option: The number of credit hours that may be taken for a Pass/Fail (or S/F) grade shall not exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total number of credit hours required for the certificate. The minimum number of letter-graded (A, B, C, D, F) credit hours for any undergraduate certificate shall be 12.

3.4. GPA requirement for completion: The minimum cumulative GPA based on all graded coursework required to earn the certificate is 2.0. Courses may be repeated according to the existing rules for undergraduate degree programs.

4. Accumulation of credits towards undergraduate degree: Credit hours earned in a WSU undergraduate certificate program may be applied toward a WSU undergraduate degree as general elective credit. Particular courses may also fulfill specific requirements of particular degree programs if they are required for that degree program.

5. Documentation on the transcript: Successful completion of a certificate program may be noted on the official academic transcript. The notation will include the total number of credit hours required by the certificate program.

6. Preparation of a undergraduate certificate proposal shall include:

- Description of the certificate's emphasis or scope of study, and rationale for offering it
- Justification for the particular number of credit hours and courses proposed
- Only courses that have already been approved via the usual process

7. Administrative costs: Currently, Departments and Programs handle the costs of tracking students' progress toward certificate completion, and issuing the certificates. Ultimately, it may be most efficient to integrate this administrative process into that already conducted by the registrar's office for tracking GER and major requirements for each student. However, the cost of adding this capability to the DARs report and transcript, maintaining the system as certificate programs are added and changed, and generating the certificates is currently prohibitive. Thus the AAC, in consultation with the registrar's office, recommends that each Department/Program track students' progress in each of the certificate programs it offers, and submit a list of students who have earned each certificate to the registrar's office each semester. In this case, the registrar's office would add certificate notations to transcripts and generate the certificates; the cost of adding these capabilities is estimated to be \$50/certificate. It is recommended that students wishing to have a certificate issued to them and to have the notation appear on their transcript pay this fee.

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To qualify as a formal graduate certificate program the program must conform to existing Graduate School policies outlined for master's degree programs including the following:

1. Graduate certificate programs must have admissions standards that are similar to related graduate degree programs. This includes standardized testing (e.g. GRE, GMAT), prerequisite or foundation coursework, or any other admission requirement appropriate to the classes included in the programs.
2. Graduate certificate programs must use approved undergraduate or graduate coursework, with no more than one-third of the coursework being at the undergraduate level.
3. Students must be admitted to the Graduate School (as UND-G, NADC, or regular graduate student status) have completed all appropriate prerequisite classes to take graduate coursework.
4. Per Graduate School policy, students pursuing a graduate certificate may only accumulate 6-to-9 credits (depending on degree) toward a graduate degree. If a special certificate status is created, students under this status may accumulate only 6-to-9 credits toward a graduate degree.
5. There is assessment of student learning. Any course graded S/F cannot be used toward major or supporting work for any master's program.
6. Requirements regarding critical mass would apply.
7. The program must have a GPA requirement for completion and coursework must be graded. The academic standards must conform to Graduate School policy.