University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Background

This document supersedes all other guidelines, policies, and procedures concerning certificates. All Certificate Programs that award academic credit, regardless of intended audience, are governed within the Graduate School. Language formerly used to identify big "C" Certificates and little "c" certificates is no longer valid. Certificates composed of non-academic-credit-bearing courses are not covered by these guidelines.

Definition

A Certificate Program is a formal program of courses and other related experiences in a field of specialization. In some disciplines, a Certificate is akin to a professional credential, while in others, a Certificate is recognition of competence in a given skill, practice, or field of study.

Like an academic degree, a Certificate Program is offered by a host academic school, department, or curriculum and is related to an academic area of study. It carries academic credit. The campus encourages interdisciplinary and inter-institutional Certificate Programs where appropriate.

Certificate Programs are intended for matriculated, degree-seeking students in graduate programs or in one of the professional schools for undergraduate students, or for non-degree-seeking students at UNC-Chapel Hill whose objective is the development of specialization in the field of the certificate program. These programs signify accomplishment, specialization, and achievement.

Coursework and Other Program Requirements

A *minimum* of 9 credit hours of coursework is required for a Certificate Program. All courses counting toward a Certificate Program are courses approved by regular procedures, and together they must form a coherent program of study. The courses may be part of an academic degree program; however, courses may also be created specifically for the Certificate.

Additionally, non-course activities are expected to be part of a Certificate Program. For example, co-curricular activities such as attendance at lectures, seminars, discussion groups and seminar series, creation of a portfolio, and completing a practicum, field study, or research requirements may be appropriate to include in the Certificate.

Certificate Programs will necessarily vary in the scope of the credential depending on the discipline and audience. All Certificates awarded after successful completion in a Certificate Program will result in an official remark on the student academic transcript.

Guidelines

1. Certificate Programs must be offered by an academic school, department, or curriculum. They may be administered by campus units (e.g., centers, institutes) that do not offer degrees or courses for academic credit, but must have an academic home.

2. All proposals to create Certificate Programs should use the *Certificate Program Application Form* as a guide. Sponsors should consult with their home academic School and the Graduate School early in the planning process to discuss the necessary procedures and required documentation.

3. All units participating in a Certificate Program must approve the proposal to establish the Certificate and, as appropriate, provide letters of support. Proposers are encouraged to be collaborative in their planning. Reviewers will want to ensure that all participating and impacted units are aware of the program and their commitments to it, including resource implications.

4. Certificate Programs may be developed at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Only the Professional Schools may create Certificate Programs for undergraduates (the College of Arts and Sciences will not support undergraduate Certificate Programs). Most Certificates will be titled "Graduate Certificate in…."

5. The Administrative Board of the home school should be the first step in approving the proposal to establish the new Certificate Program. Upon approval, sponsors should then incorporate any feedback and transmit the proposal to the Graduate School.

6. The Administrative Board of the Graduate School will provide final approval for new Certificate Program proposals.

7. Pre-baccalaureate professional Certificate Programs will follow the process outlined in these guidelines, including review and approval by the home Administrative Board and the Graduate School.

8. The Graduate School is charged with maintaining a listing of all approved Certificate Programs and notifying affected academic and administrative offices when Certificates are approved, changed, or discontinued.

    a. Once Certificate Programs are approved, the Office of the University Registrar will include the Certificates on the list of approved official transcript remarks. They will also communicate with affected offices about implementation procedures, including assigned codes/plans and other settings in the student information system to facilitate campus reporting and student account charges. Certificates for degree-seeking students will involve assigning students to two 'plans' while maintaining their degree 'program'; non-degree-seeking students will have a stand-alone 'program' specific to the Certificate. The University Registrar will also update transcripts accordingly upon notification of Certificate completion.

b. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will report changes in the list of active Certificate Programs to UNC General Administration, and maintain internal documentation for accreditation purposes.

9. All approved Certificate Programs must be reviewed on a five-year schedule.

a. The Administrative Board of the Graduate School will perform the review based on a Certificate Program self-study of up to five pages that reports on enrollments, faculty involved, goals, strengths, weaknesses, student learning outcomes, resource utilization, and future plans.

b. If the Administrative Board of the Graduate School notes any concerns, they will be transmitted to the Office of the Provost.

Administrative Considerations

1) Admissions

Matriculated, degree-seeking students who wish to pursue a Certificate Program must be admitted to the Certificate Program by the unit which offers it. There is no need to admit the students to the University as they have already been admitted through their degree programs.

Non-degree-seeking students must be admitted to the University through the stand-alone admissions process used by the unit offering the Certificate Program. The application process will be handled within the Certificate Program and follow established procedures within each unit. Tuition considerations must be taken into account when establishing Certificates for non-degree-seeking students.

2) Course Credit Transfer Guidelines

Students intending to earn both a degree and Certificate credential – consecutively or concurrently – must ensure they meet all admissions and enrollment requirements for both programs. Course credit transfer guidelines will apply, as only a limited amount of coursework can apply to both credentials. Please see the *Graduate School Handbook* and relevant undergraduate documents, including the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, for course transfer policies.

3) Tuition and Financial Aid Eligibility

Established University tuition and fees across schools will apply for coursework in Certificate Programs. Proposals should address the tuition rates that will apply, including on and off campus rates as appropriate. If new tuition rates are to be established, they must be identified and approved as part of the proposal application process.

The Office of Scholarships and Student Aid will determine if students participating in Certificate Programs are eligible for financial aid using their own guidelines and federal policies. To be eligible for financial aid, Certificate Programs must first be approved through the US Department of Education and listed on the Federal Program Participation Agreement. Financial aid may not be awarded to any student in any Certificate Program without prior

approval. General requirements for financial aid eligibility are that a Certificate leads to "gainful employment" and is the equivalent of at least one full-time year of enrollment. Most Certificates will not be aid eligible.

4) Completion Clearance

Certificate Programs will be responsible for tracking their students' progress toward completion of Certificate requirements. Students should be clear on the requirements they need to complete and should have access to advisors or Program directors to plan their course of study.

Program directors will track and identify the students who are eligible to receive the Certificate transcript remark and provide their names and PID numbers to the Office of the University Registrar, via the Graduate School as appropriate, no more than once a semester or summer term, following deadlines established by the University Registrar (generally the same as for degrees to be posted in May, August, and December). Non-degree-seeking students in Certificate Programs will receive an official document with the University seal showing completion of the Certificate. Recipients will not be listed in any University-wide document, such as the May or December Commencement Program.

5) Enrollment Funding

Enrollment funding at UNC-Chapel Hill follows the UNC system student credit hour funding model for course enrollments. As part of the annual budget process, the Provost distributes enrollment funds campus-wide based on enrollment growth figures and the campus priorities for growth and investment. Each Dean may include a request for new programs in their annual budget proposals or the campus biennial budget process. Each school participating in a new Certificate Program should identify the impact on their enrollment and the participation level of their faculty.

Faculty and staff beginning development of new Certificate Programs should ensure the new program can be absorbed into existing courses and workload, or they should work with their Deans to ensure the proposed Certificate is a priority for inclusion in the upcoming budget planning cycle to obtain start-up funding and enrollment growth funds.