

INFORMATION FOR PROPOSERS

EXPLANATION OF GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES

(SEN. DOC. NOS. 09-001, 09-018A, 09-023, 15-024)

A certificate program is a coherent set of courses representing a defined body of knowledge and skills. Certificates may represent a subset of the requirements for existing degree programs; may reflect a multidisciplinary perspective drawing coursework from more than one existing program; or may constitute a relatively free-standing area of focus with little formal connection to existing academic programs.

A graduate certificate program must consist of at least nine credits of coursework. An undergraduate certificate program must consist of at least fifteen credits of coursework (internships or other service learning projects may not be part of the fifteen-credit minimum). Certificates of fifteen but fewer than thirty credits will be considered through the academic program revision process. Certificates of thirty credits or greater will be considered through the academic program approval process.

Certificates are open to all students, at the relevant level of study, whether matriculating or non-matriculating, subject to availability of courses and unless otherwise restricted. If additional restrictions are to apply, they must be specified in detail in the certificate proposal and prominently displayed in all descriptions of the certificate program.

The Graduate Council and the Academic Matters Council shall develop guidelines for approval and review of graduate certificates (Sen. Doc. No. 15-049) and undergraduate certificates (Sen. Doc. No. 15-035) (go to www.umass.edu/senate/A-D and scroll down to Certificates – Review Processes), pertaining to the following issues, as well as other issues that come to the attention of the Councils:

- Specific admissions criteria and procedures, if any, for matriculated and/or non-matriculated students.
- Availability of component courses, and access to those courses for certificate students.
- Criteria for certificate program coherence.
- Explicit evaluation plan (such as numerical data on admissions, completions, availability of faculty and courses, student evaluations) for the purposes of review and continuation.

When a certificate has been approved by the Faculty Senate, the President's Office is then notified, but the certificate can be implemented without permission from the President's Office.

Completion of a certificate requires a GPA of 2.000 in the courses used to satisfy the requirements for an undergraduate certificate, and 3.000 for a graduate certificate, unless a higher requirement is approved as part of a certificate proposal. No more than one of these courses may have a grade of less than 2.000 for either an undergraduate or graduate certificate. The official transcript will provide evidence of completion of a certificate, and the Registrar will arrange for issuance of a certificate document, as well. A student who has completed the requirements for a certificate should contact the sponsoring department or program, which will notify the Registrar that the requirements have been met. Completion of a certificate may be posted to a student's transcript at any time. Once completed, a certificate remains on the student's transcript permanently.

Certificates will remain in force for five years following their approval. In the fourth year, the sponsoring department or program of each certificate shall file a renewal request with the Faculty Senate Office, describing the status of and activity within the certificate program according to guidelines established by the Academic Matters Council and the Graduate Council. Continuation of the certificate program for each additional five-year term will require the approval of the Faculty Senate upon the recommendation of the appropriate council. In the case of certificates involving agreements among the Five Colleges, the review process in the Five Colleges' agreement will govern. In the event that renewal is not approved, or a request for renewal is not filed, the certificate program will be phased out. Students who had started work on a certificate before it was phased out may complete the requirements of a certificate within two years of expiration of the certificate program, subject to the availability of courses.

Certain certificates may be designated as “transitional,” indicating that upon completion the coursework may be applied toward the requirements of an academic degree program.

- The certificate proposal must clearly identify what courses may be applied to what set(s) of program requirements;**
- This information must be prominently displayed in all descriptions of the certificate program;**
- Completion of a transitional certificate does not imply admission to the University or a specific academic program. Non-matriculating students who wish to apply transitional certificate coursework to a degree program must satisfy all relevant University admissions requirements and requirements for the specific program to which they seek to apply the coursework.**
- If a non-matriculating student completes the requirements for a transitional certificate, and is subsequently accepted for admission to the appropriate degree program, then the coursework specified as applicable to the program will be transferred notwithstanding general policies governing transfer of credit.**

Certificates approved prior to September 2008 remain in force. Changes consistent with the revised policy may be processed as program revisions at any time. Renewal of existing certificates will occur on a schedule to be developed by the Academic Matters Council and the Graduate Council and approved by the Faculty Senate.

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROPOSALS
(SEN. DOC. NO. 09-018A)

I. APPROVAL CRITERIA

- A. The proposed curriculum expresses a clear educational objective to be achieved in an efficient and well-defined manner.**
- B. The proposed sequence of course work must offer a clear and appropriate educational objective at the baccalaureate level.**
- C. A perceived need for such a certificate should exist. This provision might be defined in terms of either external markets (e.g., external demand for the skills associated with such a certificate) or internal academic needs (e.g., the need for a critical mass of students in a given discipline).**
- D. A certificate proposal may include a maximum of two experimental courses.**
- E. All proposals must present a schedule of course availability showing that the Certificate program can be completed within a reasonable period of time: A Certificate proposal relying on courses offered outside the sponsoring department or program must provide evidence of agreement by the unit(s) offering those courses.**
- F. No more than two courses used to satisfy the requirements for one certificate program may be applied toward another Certificate program.**

II. PERIODIC REVIEW CRITERIA (EVERY FIVE YEARS)

In general, Certificates will be evaluated according to the following measures:

- A. Statistics on completion of the Certificate program (i.e., number of students, matriculated and non-matriculated, time it took to complete the Certificate).**
- B. Availability of courses, student enrollment per course, faculty teaching the courses, student evaluations.**
- C. In accordance with University policy, any experimental course listed in the original Certificate proposal that has been taught at least three times needs to go through the permanent course approval process.**

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROPOSALS
(SEN. DOC. NO. 09-023)

I. APPROVAL CRITERIA

- A. The proposed curriculum must offer a clear and appropriate educational objective at the graduate level.**
- B. The proposed sequence of courses must express a clear educational objective to be achieved in an efficient and defined manner.**
- C. All courses must be graduate level (numbered 500 or higher) and taught by members of the Graduate Faculty.**
- D. A perceived need for such a certificate should exist. This provision might be defined in terms of either external markets (e.g., external demand for the skills associated with such a certificate) or internal academic needs (e.g., the need for a critical mass of students in a given discipline).**
- E. If the area of study for a certificate requires new courses, those courses must be approved by the Faculty Senate Course Approval process.**
- F. Proposals should be submitted following the Faculty Senate Program Approval Guidelines. Upon approval, the Graduate School will update its documentation and procedures to include the new certificate.**

II. PERIODIC REVIEW CRITERIA (EVERY FIVE YEARS)

In general, certificates will be evaluated according to the following measures:

- A. Statistics on completion of the certificate program (i.e., number of students, matriculated and non-matriculated, time it took to complete the certificate).**
- B. Availability of courses, student enrollment per course, faculty teaching the courses, student evaluations.**