

**EXPLANATION OF**  
**GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES**  
**(SEN. DOC. NO. 09-001)**

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 certificate program must consist of at least fifteen credits of coursework. Certificates of fifteen but fewer than thirty credits will be considered through the program revision process (**FORMS QR AND RR** – [http://www.umass.edu/senate/guide/computerized\\_forms.htm](http://www.umass.edu/senate/guide/computerized_forms.htm)). Certificates of thirty credits or greater will be considered through the academic program approval process (**FORMS QP AND RP** – [http://www.umass.edu/senate/guide/computerized\\_forms.htm](http://www.umass.edu/senate/guide/computerized_forms.htm)).

Certificates are open to all students, undergraduate and graduate, 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 and undergraduate certificates, respectively, 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.

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 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 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.