

Proposed Policies and Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs

A. Introduction

Graduate certificate programs may be created within the structure of the Graduate School. Students may be awarded these certificates upon completion of a well-defined program of course work. The graduate certificate is not defined as a degree by the Graduate School, rather, it is a focused collection of courses that, when completed, affords the student some record of coherent academic accomplishment in a given discipline or set of related disciplines. However, the graduate certificate is not viewed as a guaranteed means of entry into a graduate degree program. While the courses comprising a graduate certificate may be used as evidence in support of a student's application for admission to a graduate degree program, the certificate itself is not considered to be a prerequisite. The didactic material encompassed within a graduate certificate program may represent a more practice-oriented subset of an existing graduate discipline. The title of any graduate certificate program may or may not contain the word certificate, depending on the tradition in the discipline proposing the program.

B. Process of Approval for New Graduate Certificate Programs

Proposals for new graduate certificate programs are created and submitted by constituent graduate faculty for review by the Graduate Program and Curriculum Committee and approval by the Graduate Council. Each proposal must include a signed endorsement by all of the department chairperson(s), dean(s) of the college or professional school(s) and the appropriate vice chancellor(s) contributing to the organization and administration of the certificate. In the case of interdisciplinary certificate programs, the administrator ultimately responsible must be identified. New graduate certificate programs offered in collaboration with other universities must also be endorsed by the collaborating department(s) at the other institutions and must meet the requirements for prior authorization from UNC Office of the President. The Graduate Council considers the merit of all graduate certificate proposals, and makes recommendations for approval/disapproval to the dean of the Graduate School. Those approved by the Graduate Council and dean of the Graduate School are then recommended to the Chancellor for approval. The Graduate School will make notification of approved certificates to the General Administration of the University of North Carolina.

C. Criteria for Approval of Certificate Programs

Criteria for approval of new graduate certificate programs include the following:

1. The proposed sequence of course work must meet a clear and appropriate educational objective at the post-baccalaureate level.
2. The proposed program must achieve its educational objective in a well designed, cohesive and timely manner.
3. A demonstrated need for the certificate must exist, supported by externally or internally derived data.
4. An appropriate number of credit hours must comprise the certificate program. The number of graduate credits may not be less than 9 semester hours nor more than one-half of the semester hours necessary for a related graduate degree from the Graduate School.

D. Policies Governing Certificate Admission Criteria and Subsequent Admission to Graduate Degree Programs

The certificate admissions criteria and policies governing the relation of certificates to graduate degree programs include the following:

1. An earned baccalaureate degree or its equivalent from an accredited college or university is required.
2. Each certificate program sets the minimum admissions requirements for the certificate (e.g. grade point average, minimum TOEFL scores, standardized test scores, work experience, etc.). However, all certificate candidates must be informed at the time of their acceptance that admission to and completion of a certificate program does not supersede the admission requirements to a degree program should they subsequently apply to a graduate degree program.
3. Each graduate program must decide which, if any, certificate courses can be counted toward the graduate degree if a certificate student is admitted into a graduate degree program. There may be limitations on the hours taken as a non-degree student that can be counted toward a particular graduate degree, as determined by the graduate degree-granting department.
4. Graduate students currently enrolled in a graduate degree program, may simultaneously pursue a graduate certificate if approved by both their graduate advisory committee, (or graduate program director if no committee has been formed), and the certificate program director. No other application is necessary.
5. Students who are currently enrolled in the Graduate School and who wish to pursue approved graduate certificate programs must apply for

admission to such programs before one-half of the required credits are completed. The Dean of the Graduate School, upon request by the certificate program coordinator, may grant exceptions to this policy. Certificate-seeking graduate students who are not currently enrolled in a master's program will be admitted into a separate classification within the Graduate School, as "Certificate Graduate" students, as defined by the Graduate Council. This separate classification will permit keeping of University-wide statistical and enrollment data for certificate programs, and will allow inclusion of such efforts in the annual reports and academic planning. The Graduate School will note successful completion of a certificate program on the student's transcript upon completion.

6. No transfer credit from another institution will be counted toward the completion of a certificate program at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington with the exception of courses offered as part of a certificate program with a collaborating institution.
7. Students pursuing a graduate certificate will be required to maintain good academic standing as specified by the Graduate Council and possibly by the academic department.

A certificate graduate student may enroll on either a part-time or a full-time basis, as determined by the certificate program coordinator. Certificate graduate students enrolled as non-degree students will not be eligible for graduate assistantships nor will they be eligible for financial aid through the Financial Aid Office.

N.B.: The rationale for requiring formal enrollment in graduate certificate programs is based on the need for proper allocation of instructional resources and the desire to afford the certificate students equal access to the desired graduate courses. Departments and programs are better able to plan offerings of the appropriate graduate courses if they are aware of the upcoming demand for such courses. This demand can best be gauged by knowledge of the number of students in the program. By registering as graduate students, the certificate-seeking students will have timely access to graduate courses offered by departments and schools.

E. Certificate Program Review

All graduate certificate programs will be reviewed within the course of regular graduate program assessment and review, as defined by the Graduate Council.

F. Application Procedure for a New Certificate Program

For consideration by the Graduate School all proposals will be reviewed by the Graduate Program and Curriculum Committee and approved by the Graduate Council. Proposals for new graduate certificate programs must contain the following information:

1. A statement of the educational objectives of the program;
2. A statement of the admission standards for the certificate program and a statement of the academic retention standards for the successful completion of the program.
3. A statement of the proposed course sequence associated with the certificate, including titles and course descriptions both for existing courses and any new courses that may be developed;
4. The catalog copy for the certificate program;
5. A statement of how the proposed course sequences associated with the certificate will meet the stated educational objectives;
6. A statement of the need for the proposed program and the basis for such a need, supported by either externally or internally derived data;
7. The names of the faculty associated with or contributing to the certificate program, either by teaching one or more of the courses associated with the program or participating in the design of the course sequence. Adjunct faculty associated with the program should also include up-to-date curriculum vitae;
8. The name and curriculum vita of the faculty member who will be designated as the coordinator of the program for purposes of communication with the Graduate School;
9. A specification of resources needed to implement the program.
10. If the proposed graduate certificate program contains no new courses, no new faculty, no additional costs, and maintains the admissions and academic standing requirements of a related degree program, the proposal will be given expedited review in the approval process.
11. The unit offering the certificate program must specify what professional license, if any, for which the certificate qualifies.