

November 12, 2014

Proposed Guidelines for Graduate Certificates

Developed and recommended by the Graduate Council, March 10, 2014
Revised November 12, 2014, and approved by Faculty Senate

Graduate certificate programs are formally recognized programs of study attesting to a level of competence or to the development of skills in a particular area or field. They are intended only for students already enrolled in graduate programs at Rice. Graduate certificates are offered in these areas both to recognize students who have achieved this level of competence or skill and to encourage students to pursue these areas, which the faculty has designated as having significant value in the graduate curriculum. A certificate comprises a specific grouping of courses and related activities (such as internships) that either:

1. forms a coherent yet distinctive complement to the major of a degree program, or
2. leads to the acquisition of specific skills or professional expertise

Certificate programs are distinct from master's degrees; both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary certificates must have a purpose and structure that cannot be accommodated by a conventional master's degree (see Guidelines for the Creation, Administration, and Elimination of Graduate Degrees). Successful completion of a certificate will appear on the transcript at the time of the completion of the graduate degree

All Graduate certificate programs must be approved by the Graduate Council and the Faculty Senate. Certificate programs will be approved for a five-year period and may be renewed upon application.

Guidelines

1. Minimum standards: twelve graduate (12) credits, or nine such (9) credits plus a graduate-level internship or other experiential learning opportunity. Each Department or Program is responsible for determining the number of credits and the courses that are acceptable for satisfaction of the Certificate requirements.

a. All departments are eligible to submit proposals for the granting of Certificates. Programs eligible to submit applications for Certificates are restricted to faculty-based Centers, Institutes or other consortia reporting directly to one or more of the Deans of the university or the Vice Provost of Research.

b. All courses counting toward the certificate must be taken on either a letter-grade or S/U basis. Courses taken for a letter grade must be completed with a grade of B- or better.

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- c. No more than one-third of the credit hours required for the certificate may be taken on an S/U basis.
 - d. No more than one-third of the credit hours required for the certificate may be transfer credit.
 - e. Students must obtain the approval of their Director of Graduate Studies to apply for a Certificate.
2. A certificate program is not intended to substitute for a graduate degree but may be taken by graduate students to complement their graduate program.
 3. Multiple certificates: Students may acquire more than one certificate provided that the credits in each certificate are unique and non-redundant with those of any other certificate.
 4. All proposals for a certificate must originate from the faculty of the department or program offering the certificate. Proposals must be endorsed in writing by the appropriate dean(s). If the certificate will be under the supervision of a dean or deans outside of the schools of the university, the proposal must further be endorsed in writing by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Certificate proposals should be submitted to the Speaker of Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Graduate Council and should include:

1. Justification for the certificate program. What is the target audience for the certificate? What is the need or demand for the certificate? Is the certificate different in structure and purpose from a regular graduate degree? Is there any potential for the certificate to attract students to the detriment of existing graduate degrees? If the certificate is affiliated with a degree already offered, how will it complement that degree?
2. Description of the requirements for the certificate, listing required courses, electives, other requirements, and the total minimum number of hours required; assurance that the courses proposed for the satisfaction of the certificate are offered regularly enough to allow for timely completion of the certificate requirements.
3. List of participating faculty. Identify those faculty who will have primary roles in administering the certificate and advising student participants.
4. For certificates offered outside of existing departments or programs, a list of members of the steering committee that will oversee the curriculum for the certificate, appoint advisors, and alert relevant administrators of any course or non-course deficiencies in curricular offerings for the certificate.
5. Procedures and qualifications for approval to pursue the certificate.
6. To comply with SACS accreditation requirements, as well as best practices in curriculum design, the proposal must include (1) a

description of student learning outcomes that are clear standards for observable, measurable student-centered outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and behaviors; (2) a curriculum map that relates the components of the proposed certificate to the specified student learning outcomes; and (3) an assessment plan for measuring the success and effectiveness of design of the certificate curriculum after implementation. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is charged with assisting proposers with the development of these elements. In addition, the proposal must include a letter from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness indicating whether SACS notification is required and, if so, the schedule for notification.

7. Supporting letters from chair(s) of participating departments/programs and the appropriate dean(s) verifying that:
 - a. The proposed certificate has been reviewed and received faculty approval through appropriate governance procedures;
 - b. Resources to support the certificate, as presented in the proposal, are available without impacting other courses and programs for at least five years.
8. The complete and specific language describing the official name of the certificate and the exact requirements for students to complete it – *as they would appear in the General Announcements if the proposal were approved* . The General Announcements should note that the graduate certificate must be in place during the year in which the student matriculates or graduates and that the student must apply and be approved for the certificate prior to graduation according to the rules established by the administrators of the certificate.