

Approved by the Faculty Senate
January 29, 2014

Proposed Guidelines for Undergraduate Certificates

Developed and recommended by the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum
December, 2013

Undergraduate certificates are formally recognized programs of study attesting to a level of competence or to the development of skills in a particular area or field. Undergraduate 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 undergraduate 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 majors or minors; both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary certificates must have a purpose and structure that cannot be accommodated by creation of a minor (see Guidelines for the Creation, Administration, and Elimination of Majors and Minors). Non-degree granting programs may offer certificates. Successful completion of a certificate will appear on the transcript at the time of graduation.

All undergraduate certificate programs must be approved by the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum 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 (12) credits, alternatively nine (9) credits plus an 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 Program requirements.

a. The requirements of the certificate must include elements that are unique to the program - that is, these requirements may not be a subset of the requirements for any Rice major or minor - or a combination of such programs.

b. Courses used to satisfy certificate requirements may also be used to fulfill free elective requirements, but not distribution requirements, for the undergraduate degree.

c. All courses counting toward the certificate must be taken on a letter-grade basis, and be completed with a grade of C or better.

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- d. No more than one-third of the credit hours required for the certificate may be transfer credit.
2. A certificate program generally will be available to all undergraduate students. Exceptions must be clearly justified in the certificate proposal.
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 or, in the case of a multi-disciplinary certificate, from the faculty of each participating academic unit. Proposals must be endorsed by the appropriate dean(s).

Certificate proposals should be submitted to the Speaker of Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum and should include:

1. Justification for the certificate program. How does the program enhance the undergraduate curriculum? What is the need or demand for the certificate program? Is the certificate different in structure and purpose from a minor? Is there any potential for the certificate to attract students to the detriment of existing majors or minors? If the certificate program is affiliated with a degree program, how will it complement that program?
2. Description of the requirements for the certificate, listing required courses, electives, other requirements, and the total minimum number of hours required.
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 admission to the certificate program.
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 program to the specified student learning outcomes; and (3) an assessment plan for measuring the success and effectiveness of the program 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

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- 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.
 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*