



Policies and Procedures for Implementing and Administering Graduate Certificate Programs

Introduction: A growing number of research institutions are offering graduate level certificates. Certificates indicate that a student has acquired a specialized body of knowledge, and is designed to enhance the student's marketability.

It is assumed that most students who earn Graduate Certificates at UTSA will also be working on graduate degrees. However, some baccalaureate degree holders who are academically qualified may, for a variety of reasons, feel reluctant to commit the time and resources to earning a graduate degree, yet may want to acquire the specialized body of knowledge offered through certificate coursework. In addition, there are others in the community who have already earned a master's or a doctoral degree, have no interest in pursuing a second graduate degree, yet wish to obtain the knowledge and professional advantages associated with earning a certificate in a specific area.

Although there are a variety of ways in which a certificate program can be structured and administered, the following are a set of policies and procedures designed to guide the development of certificate programs at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Proposals for new certificate programs: Faculty within the area of study have the authority to initiate proposals for new certificate programs. Proposals for new certificate programs must contain the following:

1. **Statement of Purpose:** What are the educational goals of the proposed program? What is the link between the proposed certificate program and existing programs? If the specific certificate program is subject to licensure and/or accreditation standards, these must be specified, and proof that the certificate program meets these standards must be provided.
2. **Statement of Need:** What evidence exists that suggests there is sufficient student demand to warrant the implementation of the proposed certificate program?
3. **Statement of Resources:** What resources (e.g., personnel, facilities, equipment, library) are needed to implement and present the program?
4. **Description of Curriculum:** What are the program's requirements, including what courses are used in the program, how frequently are they offered, and what new courses are proposed?
5. **Faculty List:** What faculty will be involved in the program?
6. **Program Administration:** Who will be the program director? How will the program director be selected? What unit will be responsible

for overseeing the program and the curriculum? Who will be responsible for advising students and for monitoring their progress? What will be the procedure involved for awarding certificates?

7. **Admissions Requirements:** What will be the admissions requirements?
8. **Projected Enrollments:** What will be the projected enrollments?
9. **Budget:** How much is the program anticipated to cost over the next five years?
10. **Endorsements:** Endorsements from all chairs of departments involved in the proposed certificate program and/or all center directors involved should be included as an appendix.
11. **Evaluations/Reviews:** How will the programs be evaluated?

Approval process: Faculty proposing a new graduate certificate program must receive approvals from the department or unit in which the program will be housed. If a proposed certificate is interdisciplinary, all participating departments or units must approve the program. Once this approval is received, the proposal will be considered for approval by the Academic Curriculum Committee in the college in which the program is housed. If a certificate program will be housed in more than one department, approvals must be received from all relevant departments before being forwarded to the College for approval. If the certificate program is being housed in a center, approval from the Center Director must be received before forwarding the proposal to the College for approval. Certificate programs that will be housed in more than one college must receive approval from the Academic Curriculum Committee from each involved college.

Note that the Coordinating Board requires that certificate programs of 16 hours or more should be in an area (and level) in which UTSA already offers a graduate program.

Once the proposed Certificate Program is approved at the College level, the proposal will be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies for review by the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School. Proposals that receive approval from the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School will be submitted to the Graduate Council for approval. After Graduate Council approval is obtained, the proposal will be submitted to the Faculty Senate for approval. Once Faculty Senate approval has been obtained, the proposal will be submitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for final approval.

Approval will not be required beyond the institutional approvals outlined above if the certificate proposal requires fewer than 16 hours to complete. Certificate proposals of more than 16 hours require notification to the University of Texas System and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will be notified each time a graduate certificate program **of 16 hours or more** is added to or deleted from the UTSA course offerings. **The Coordinating Board does not require notification regarding the addition or deletion of certificate programs of less than 16 hours.**

Relationship between graduate certificate programs and existing graduate degree programs: Certificate programs can be included within or added to existing master's or doctoral programs, or developed to stand alone. Students can use the same course to earn both a certificate and a graduate degree as long as the requirements for both have been fulfilled.

Hours required to earn a certificate: Consistent with policies developed by other institutions, certificate programs at UTSA should include no less than 12 hours and no more than 18 hours of coursework.

Course Restrictions: All courses offered in a certificate program must be approved graduate level courses. Students must maintain the same academic standing as a degree seeking student in order to be eligible to enroll.

Administration: Single discipline certificate programs will be administered in the department housing the program. Interdisciplinary certificate programs will be administered in the unit (department or center) where the Certificate Program Advisor resides.

Review: Certificate programs will be reviewed as part of the regular academic program review required for academic programs administered in each department. The faculty's appraisal of the certificate program will be included in the department's self study, and will be included as one of the programs reviewed by the external evaluators. Renewal of the certificate program will be determined by the outcome of the review, as determined by the Graduate Council, as well as by the ability of the certificate program to demonstrate that it is self supporting, as determined by SCH's generated. **If the certificate program has licensure and/or accreditation standards that must be met, evaluation methods for those programs may be modified in order to allow satisfactorily meeting those standards to be considered a sufficient criterion for meeting review standards, upon approval of the Graduate Council.**

As certificate programs are expected to be self supporting, the Office of the Provost will determine whether each reviewed certificate program meets the fiscal requirements for renewal.

Certificate programs that are determined not to be self supporting at the end of any review cycle will be discontinued.

Classification of Students: Students who are pursuing a certificate while also pursuing a graduate degree will be classified as degree seeking students. Students who are pursuing a certificate while not enrolled in a degree program will be classified as special graduate students (non degree seeking).

Financial Aid: Students who are pursuing a certificate as special graduate students will not be eligible for financial aid.

Entry to Graduate Degree Programs: Any student who is admitted into a

certificate without being currently enrolled into a degree program is considered to be a special graduate student. If the student wishes to enter a degree program, s/he will be required to apply to that program as a degree seeking student. Admission into or completion of a certificate program is not considered to be qualification for entry into a graduate degree program.

Eligibility to gain admission to a certificate program: Students who apply for admission will be either students who are currently enrolled in a graduate degree program and who wish to earn a certificate in addition to their degree or students who are not currently enrolled in a graduate degree program. Students who are currently enrolled in a graduate degree program have already met university requirements for admission. In this case, no formal application process is necessary. The student should contact the Certificate Program Advisor and complete a form requesting permission to complete the certificate program, which would be signed by the Certificate Program Advisor and the Dean of the College or the Director of the Center in which the certificate program is housed.. A copy of this form will be sent to the Graduate Advisor of Record for the student's degree program, the college in which the student's degree program is housed (or in the case of a program housed in a center that is not part of a college, the center will receive the form), and the Graduate School.

Students who are not currently enrolled in a graduate degree program will be required to apply for admission to the Certificate Program as a special graduate student. Applicants will be required to meet the university admissions requirements for special graduate student admission.

It is the responsibility of all students enrolled in certificate programs to discuss their academic preparation for the courses included in the certificate program in which they are enrolled. If it is determined by the Certificate Program Advisor that a student requires prerequisite background courses to adequately prepare him/her for the courses included in the certificate program, this should be noted in the student's file, and the student should be required to take them before enrolling in program coursework.

It is the responsibility of all students enrolled in certificate programs to meet with the Certificate Program Advisor during the last semester in which they are enrolled in the certificate program to determine whether they will meet the requirements for receiving the certificate by the end of the semester. If it is determined that requirements have been met, the Certificate Program Advisor will prepare a Certificate Degree Plan, which will be sent to degree audit. If approved, the student's transcript will indicate that the student has earned the Certificate. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Advisor of Record for the Certificate to complete the degree audit form and submit this form to the Office of the Registrar.

Transcript: The student's completion of a certificate program, with or without completion of a degree program, will be recorded on the student's transcript.