

# **Proposed Guidelines to Create a University Certificate and Professional Certification**

## **Background**

Case Western Reserve University has official governance processes for academic degree programs. These formal processes, which define and detail objective criteria and standards for awarding degrees, ensure that CWRU's degree programs maintain high quality and are consistent with the university's mission and strategic goals.

CWRU currently does not have an established university-level process for defining and approving criteria and standards for awarding certificates. Since there is no officially recognized university definition of what constitutes a certificate program, over the years, departments and other units of the university have established a variety of certificate programs on their own. These programs range from a single-day workshop to completion of 9-12 credit hours; some require a minimum gpa for completion and others merely require attendance at a one-day class. In these cases, the offering units individually verify completion of program requirements. Consequently, participation in or completion of certificate programs are typically not recognized on the official university transcript. If the courses that make up the certificate are regular courses that appear in the General Bulletin, the courses appear on a student's official transcript, but in most cases there is no notation on the transcript that the student is enrolled in a certificate program or that they have completed and been awarded a certificate. In some instances, the transcript will notate that the student is in a certificate program, but when they complete the program (or leave the program before completion), the transcript permanently shows that the student has been "discontinued" from the program.

There is now a growing desire to notate both participation in and completion of certificate programs on the university transcript. If this university-level recognition is to occur, CWRU must establish a formal process for approving certificate programs as well as defining and approving criteria and standards for such programs. This document intends to define the different types of certificates that may be offered at CWRU and establishes the minimum requirements for each type of certificate to be officially recognized by CWRU.

Please note, academic units can continue offering established certificate programs or develop new programs that do not meet University Certificate criteria, however, these will not be recognized on official university transcripts and the academic unit will continue to be responsible for conferring and validating its credential.

## **Definitions and Standards**

Case Western Reserve University awards University Certificates as a credential for completing a set of courses (possibly in combination with other learning experiences)

that focus on a specific topic or theme. Courses taken as part of a Certificate program are to be regular courses that appear in the General Bulletin. Certificates are recorded at the university level in the Student Information System and will appear as awarded on the student's official university transcript upon final confirmation from the units that certify degree requirements (i.e., Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, school registrars).

The scope of Certificate programs is generally narrower than that expected for full degrees, and thus can normally be completed in a shorter period of time. Certificate programs may be embedded within degree programs and offered as an option for degree-seeking students, or can be stand-alone programs to which students apply and are granted admission. Courses taken as part of a certificate program may be double counted for degree programs.

#### Graduate Certificate

1. A graduate certificate program contains courses taught at the graduate or professional level.
2. The program must include a minimum of 15 credit hours.
3. The student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.00 in order for the graduate certificate to be awarded.
4. A stand-alone graduate certificate may be designated as Title IV eligible if students will be eligible for federal financial aid. Additional approval through the Provost's Office is required.
5. Proposals for graduate certificates are reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty Senate, following review and approval through the offering academic unit. Graduate certificates are to be approved by the Faculty Senate before implementation. The objectives, admission requirements and learning outcomes for the certificate program must be articulated and will be considered during the review process.
6. Review by the Chancellor's Committee on Graduate Study (State of Ohio) will be required if the certificate requires 21 or more credit hours.
7. Certificates must be reported to (and if financial aid eligible must also be reviewed by) the Higher Learning Commission.
8. The certificate program may be subject to Gainful Employment reporting requirements to the federal government.
9. A description of the certificate program, including requirements for successful completion, must appear in the General Bulletin.

#### Post-Baccalaureate Certificate

1. A post-baccalaureate certificate program contains courses taught at the undergraduate and/or graduate/professional level.
2. The program must include a minimum of 15 credit hours.
3. The student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.00 in order for the post-baccalaureate certificate to be awarded.

4. A stand-alone post-baccalaureate certificate may be designated as Title IV eligible if students will be eligible for federal financial aid. Additional approval through the Provost's Office is required.
5. Proposals for post-baccalaureate certificates are reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty Senate, and/or the Faculty Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education, as determined by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, following review and approval through the offering academic unit. Post Baccalaureate certificates are to be approved by the Faculty Senate before implementation. The objectives, admissions requirements and learning outcomes for the certificate program must be articulated and will be considered during the review process.
6. Review by the Chancellor's Committee on Graduate Study (State of Ohio) will be required if the certificate requires 21 or more credit hours.
7. Certificates must be reported to (and if financial aid eligible must also be reviewed by) the Higher Learning Commission.
8. The certificate program may be subject to Gainful Employment reporting requirements to the federal government.
9. A description of the post-baccalaureate certificate program, including requirements for successful completion, must appear in the General Bulletin.

#### Professional Certification

1. Professional certification programs are intended for students who need to meet requirements and/or eligibility for licensure, exams, or board approval for certification in a particular professional area or skill.
2. A professional certification program is an approved sequence of courses that leads to a certification of completion in a specialty recognized by the school's, or discipline's, accrediting body or licensing agency.
3. The professional certification must meet the criteria set forth by the school's, or discipline's, accrediting body.
4. A stand-alone professional certification may be designated as Title IV eligible if students will be eligible for federal financial aid. Additional approval through the Provost's Office is required.
5. Proposals for professional certification are reviewed through the standard curriculum review process through the offering academic unit. Professional certifications are to be approved by the Faculty Senate before implementation. The objectives, admissions requirements and learning outcomes for the certification program must be articulated and will be considered during the review process.
6. Review by the Chancellor's Committee on Graduate Study (State of Ohio) will be required if the certification requires 21 or more credit hours.
7. The certification program may be subject to Gainful Employment reporting requirements to the federal government.
8. A description of the professional certification program, including any specific requirements for successful completion, must appear in the General Bulletin.

## **Additional Information**

### **University Undergraduate Certificate**

At this time there are no plans to offer university undergraduate certificates. Instead, “minors” play an analogous role, and these are notated on the transcripts of undergraduate students who complete them.

### **Certificates of Completion**

Various units of the university offer courses and other learning experiences aimed at continuing education or professional development. Such programs generally include courses that do not carry CWRU academic credit and which do not appear in the General Bulletin. These programs are not tracked at the university level, and are not eligible to be recorded on official transcripts. If regular credit-bearing courses are included as part of such programs, these courses will appear on an academic transcript but the transcript will not make reference to the continuing education or professional development program.

The academic or administrative units offering these not-for-credit programs may wish to issue certificates of completion to students who satisfy program requirements. In these cases, the offering units may issue such certificates, but these are not considered official university documents, and no records of the student’s participation in the program are entered into the Student Information System.