

UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

I. Definitions

Undergraduate certificate programs: these programs are generally offered for academic credit by respective departments/colleges. The format of these certificate programs is to accumulate a specific set of courses to constitute some degree of content mastery. Most provide an adjunct area of study to the student's academic major.

The following guidelines are related only to undergraduate certificate programs offered for academic credit.

II. Certificate Purposes

Undergraduate certificate programs should provide an area of academic specialization in addition to the student's academic major.

III. Certificate Standards/Guidelines

Undergraduate certificate programs must meet the Northwest Accreditation Standards;

Standard 2.A General Requirements: The institution offers collegiate level programs that culminate in identified student competencies and lead to degrees or certificates in recognized fields of study. The achievement and maintenance of high quality programs is the primary responsibility of an accredited institution; hence, the evaluation of educational programs and their continuous improvement is an ongoing responsibility. As conditions and needs change, the institution continually redefines for itself the elements that result in educational programs of high quality.

2.A.3: Degree and certificate programs demonstrate coherent design; are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes; and require the use of library and other information sources.

Standard 2.B. Educational Program Planning and Assessment: Educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution.

2.B.2: The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete their programs, no matter where or how they are offered, have achieved these outcomes.

Standard 2.C: The undergraduate program is designed to provide students with substantial, coherent, and articulated exposure to the broad domains of knowledge. The commission encourages a tripartite structure for baccalaureate and academic or transfer associate degree programs: (1) general education requires students to master competencies for independent learning and to develop an awareness of the fundamental areas of knowledge; (2) the major requires students to achieve a knowledge base in a specific area of concentration; and (3) electives provide the opportunity for students to pursue other intellectual interests. The instructional program, as a whole, is based on a clear rationale with the component parts designed to reflect the rationale. Degree and certificate programs are characterized by clarity and order which are discernable in model curricula shown in official publications and are recorded in official student records of actual programs pursued. Programs of study for which applied or specialized degrees are granted, or programs of an academic year or more in length for which certificates are granted, contain a recognizable body of instruction in three program related areas: (1) communication, (3) computation, and (3) human relations describe in Policy 2.1 General Education/Related Instruction requirements.

Policy 2.1 General Education/Related Instruction Requirements: Programs of study for which applied or specialized associate degrees are granted, or programs of an academic year or more in length for which certificates are granted, must contain a recognizable body of instruction in program-related areas of 1) communication, 2) computation, and 3) human relations. Additional topics which should be covered as appropriate include safety, industrial safety, and environmental awareness. Instruction in the related instructional areas may be either embedded within the program curriculum or taught in blocks of specialized instruction.

Each approach, however, must have clearly identified content that is pertinent to the general program of study.

The institution's baccalaureate degree programs and/or academic or transfer associate degree programs require a substantial and coherent component of general education as a prerequisite to or an essential element of the programs offered. All other associate degree programs (e.g. applied, specialized, technical) and programs of study of either 30 semester or 45 quarter credits or more for which certificates are granted, require at least six semester or nine quarter credits of related instruction or the equivalent.

Therefore, undergraduate certificate programs should have the following characteristics:

- A) A curricula that is appropriate in breadth, depth, sequencing of courses and total number of credits,
- B) Identified learning outcomes,
- C) An assessment plan for the learning outcomes,
- D) A plan for how the certificate program will be administered – how will students be identified and tracked for assessment purposes and towards completion of the certificate, what entity will be responsible for curricula review to ensure that A, B, and C above are maintained appropriately, and
- E) Be housed in an academic unit department/college or a University of Nevada, Reno Institute.

IV. Admissions Policies

All student completing undergraduate certificate programs must be admitted to the University of Nevada, Reno as either an undergraduate, graduate special, or regularly admitted graduate student.

V. Academic Requirements

To be awarded the certificate, the student must maintain a minimum "C" 2.0 GPA in the courses/credits that constitute the certificate. Departments/programs may require higher academic requirements for their specific certificates.

VI. Procedures for Approval of an Undergraduate Certificate Program

For an Undergraduate Certificate Program to be approved it must:

1. Develop a pre-proposal and submit it to the University Pre-Proposal Review Committee (Provost's Office). If approved to move forward:
2. Develop a full proposal that adheres to the guidelines above. The proposal should identify the need, educational objectives, impact on existing programs, curricula with justification/rationale, assessment plan, faculty involved, person responsible (coordinator/director), and budget. Some proposals may also find it appropriate to address the need for an advisory committee which includes representation from the professional, business, or government sectors which the certificate program is designed to serve. The proposal would need to be approved by departments and colleges involved through their usual curricula review process. Signatures of department chairs and college deans that would have faculty involved in the certificate program and/or offer courses that constitute the certificate program would be secured as the proposal is approved at the department/college levels. If any new courses are being proposed as part of the certificate process, the University Courses and Curricula forms and procedures would need to be completed and submitted with the proposal.
3. Submit the full proposal with approval signatures and any course/curricula forms to the Provost office (30 copies).
4. The proposal would be forwarded by the Provost to the University Courses and Curricula for approval.

VII. Dissolution of an Undergraduate Certificate Program

For a Undergraduate Certificate Program to be discontinued, the same procedures for approval would need to be followed – i.e. the proposal for discontinuation, including rationale would need to be approved at the department and college levels of all units that are participating in the certificate program. The course required for the certificate program

would be offered until the last admitted student has completed the certificate program and no new students would be admitted at the time the dissolution was approved.