

## **GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

### I. Definitions

Graduate certificate programs can either be:

- a) Professional certificate programs: these programs are generally offered for no credit through the College of Extended Studies. The format of these certificate programs is primarily a short course, workshop or series of workshops that provide an opportunity for professional development. Such courses do not lead to licensure of any type, do not require admission to graduate special status or graduate student status and do not, as noted, provide academic course credits.
- b) Graduate certificate programs offered for academic credit: these programs are only offered at the post-baccalaureate level for academic graduate level course credits. Some of these graduate certificate programs can lead to licensure by an outside entity (e.g. teacher or administrator licensure). Those programs that require a baccalaureate degree for admission will be designated "Graduate Certificate Programs." Those certificate programs that require a master's degree either for admission or as part of the certificate process will be designated "Advanced Graduate Certificate Programs."

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

### I. Certificate Purposes

Graduate Certificate programs should be organized in order to meet one or more of the following education needs:

1. Provide specialized professional training in a comparatively brief time frame,
2. Provide specialized professional training that leads to licensure by an outside agency (e.g. teacher licensure, accountancy)
3. Provide a curricula that is more applied knowledge rather than research based, and/or
4. Provide a curricula that complements a particular graduate program.

### II. Certificate Standards/Guidelines

Graduate Certificate programs should meet the Northwest Accreditation Standards; Standard 2 – Educational Program and Its Effectiveness

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.

Standard 2.A.3: Degree and certificate programs demonstrate a 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 the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution.

Standard 2.B.2 The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes of 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.

Therefore, Graduate Certificate Programs should have the following:

- A) A curricula that is appropriate for its purpose in terms of breadth, depth, sequencing of courses and total number of credits. As a rule of thumb, those certificate programs that provide specialized professional training in a comparatively brief time frame, provide a curricula that is more applied knowledge than research, and/or provide a curricula that complements a particular graduate program should offer a minimum of 9 credits and not exceed 12-15 credits of course work. For those certificate programs that lead to licensure, the curriculum must be consistent with the outside agencies licensure requirements. All course work for a graduate certificate program must be at the graduate level. For graduate certificate programs (post-baccalaureate) the course work for the certificate should be completed within 6 years. For advanced graduate certificates, the course work for the certificate should be completed within 8 years.
- B) A clear set of written policies regarding such matters as admissions and time to completion of the certificate.
- C) A clear written statement of the final result(s): i.e., meeting state requirement for licensure; general professional development; goes on the university transcript.
- D) An assessment plan for the learning outcomes of the certificate program.
- E) A plan for how the program will be administered; who will administer it, who will provide staff support, how will students be admitted, how will student progress towards completion of the certificate be tracked.
- F) Be housed in an academic department, graduate program or University of Nevada, Reno Institute.

### III. Admission Polices

Admission to a graduate certificate program can either be:

a) As a graduate special student: these students will complete the university graduate special application and notify the program/department of their intent to complete the certificate program. The program/department will recommend/not recommend admission to the certificate program to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will have the final decision on admission to the certificate program. These students will complete the graduate program certificate requirements (course work, etc.) and upon notification by the program to the registrar's office the graduate program certificate will be posted to the student's transcript.

These students (graduate special students) will not need to meet the minimum requirements for admission to graduate school.

Some students who are admitted as a graduate special student may decide after completing some/all of the credits for the certificate program that they wish to pursue a graduate degree. To do so, they must meet the minimum requirements for potential admission, apply to the graduate program and be admitted. If they are admitted, they may request that 9 credits of their certificate work be applied to their degree. To apply more than 9 credits of their certificate work towards the degree, they must submit the request for exception through their major advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies for their graduate program, to the graduate dean who will make the final decision on the number of credits from the certificate program that can be applied to the degree.

Successful completion of a graduate certificate is not viewed as a guaranteed means of entry into a graduate degree program. However, courses comprising a graduate certificate may be used as evidence in support of a student's application to a graduate degree program.

b) As a graduate student admitted to a particular graduate program: There are two possible options within this category of admitted students. First there may be certificate programs that are open only to graduate students admitted to a particular certificate program (e.g. nursing certificate programs). In these cases, the students must be admitted to that program to pursue that certificate program. In the second case, students would be admitted to a particular graduate program and pursue the certificate that may or may not be housed in, but complementary to their graduate studies (e.g. admitted to social psychology and pursuing the Bioethics graduate certificate). In either of these cases, the

student must meet the minimum requirements for admission to graduate school and the requirements for maintaining regular graduate student status. The student must apply to the certificate program with the department/program. The department/program will recommend/not recommend admission to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will make the final decision on admission. Those students who are admitted will complete the graduate program certificate requirements (course work, etc.) and upon notification by the program to the registrar's office the graduate program certificate will be posted to the student's transcript.

IV. Academic Requirements

To be awarded the certificate, the student must maintain a "B" 3.0 GPA in the courses/credits that constitute the certificate. A grade of C- or lower in a particular course will not be counted towards completion of the certificate and if the course is required for the certificate, it must be repeated to earn a grade of C or better. In cases where a graduate student is a candidate for both a graduate degree and graduate certificate, it will be at the discretion of a student's advisory/examining committee whether or not any of the credit hours, up to a maximum of 9 credits, earned toward a graduate certificate may be counted in the graduate degree program of study.

V. Procedures for Approval of a Graduate Certificate Program

For a Graduate 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 would need to be approved by departments and colleges involved through their usual curricular review processes. 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 Curriculum 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 Provost office will route these to the Graduate Council for review. If approved by Graduate council:
5. The proposal would be forwarded by the Graduate Council to the University Courses and Curriculum for approval.

VII. Review of Graduate Certificate Programs

Graduate certificate programs, like all other instructional programs, will go through regular program review. Typically, this will occur in conjunction with the program review of the academic department most responsible for the program.

VIII. Dissolution of a Graduate Certificate Program

For a Graduate 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 courses 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.