

Guidelines for UWSP Certificate Programs

Certificate programs are a means of meeting the needs of a specified audience with an educational program that is more than a random sequence of educational activities, but does not involve a fully developed curriculum leading to a degree. In general, certificate programs consist of an agreed upon sequence of courses that provides an individual with skills and/or knowledge of particular value to the targeted audience. Certificate Programs result from a collaborative effort involving faculty from a sponsoring academic department(s) and representatives from the targeted audience (e.g. association, profession, or industry). UWSP Extension* is also normally involved.

Two different types of certificate programs can be offered: certificates that signify the satisfactory completion of a specified curriculum of courses carrying University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point credit, and certificates that signify the satisfactory completion of a specified curriculum of noncredit instruction. The guidelines adhered to in designing, offering, and administering each type of certificate program vary and reflect the degree of flexibility that is incorporated into the program.

Certificate Programs (Academic Credit)

Credit-based Certificate Programs offer an opportunity for a person, usually one who already has an undergraduate degree, to earn college credit and to advance toward a credential that certifies a significant level of achievement within a prescribed sequence of courses. A Certificate Program is often the means by which a person can either prepare for or improve upon their level of success in an area of practice for which they have not had adequate academic preparation. As the rate of change in the workplace accelerates, more people find it necessary to engage in continuous learning to meet the challenges of new duties and responsibilities. Often their need is for in-depth study that goes beyond what is generally provided through noncredit professional development activities. The Credit-bearing Certificate program is one means of meeting such a challenge. It is of particular value since achievement in the program can be verified through examination of a transcript showing course completed and is directly associated with the quality control asserted within the overall academic institution.

Since these programs are credit-bearing, faculty in the involved disciplines exercise complete control over the academic aspects of such efforts. The Certificate Program curriculum, all of its various components, the sequence and number of courses involved, and the faculty providing the instruction of those components must be approved by the sponsoring department(s) and College(s). Furthermore, each course in the program must be an approved part of the academic curriculum offered by the sponsoring department. The guiding principle is that the standards applied to the offering of those credits leading to a Certificate are the same as those applied for all credit-bearing courses. The academic department and college provide oversight for these areas.

*UWSP Extension includes Fund 104 activities that are based in any of the four Colleges.

Procedures for Approval of All Credit-Bearing Certificate Programs

The procedure for the approval of credit-bearing certificate programs often requires faculty in the sponsoring academic department in conjunction with UWSP Extension staff to determine what is appropriate to meet the needs of the potential audience for the program. Approval by the curriculum committee in the sponsoring department(s); the sponsoring department(s); the department Chair(s); the Dean(s) of the college(s) involved; the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee; the Graduate Council, if graduate credit is involved; and, the Teacher Education Committee, if teacher education is involved, is required before the proposed certificate is transmitted to the Faculty Senate, the Executive Director of UWSP Extension (when PR funded) and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for information. At a minimum, proposals shall incorporate the following information:

Proposal Components:

A Statement of Benefits to the Department, College, and the University (WHY?)

Identification of the Targeted Audience and Evidence of Need (WHO WOULD BE SERVED?)

A Description of the Academic Component (WHAT?)

Admission requirements.

The number and sequence of courses to be completed.

The number of credit hours to be earned.

The minimum grade-point requirements to be met.

A description of any unique characteristics of the program.

An assessment of the certificate's relationship to existing degree programs.

A description of the administration and budgeting for the program (HOW?)

Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements for the Certificate as verified by the responsible administrative area, a Certificate of Completion for the credit-bearing certificate program is issued. Certificates are signed by a designated representative of the sponsoring department(s) and by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or his or her designee. The certificate indicates that the person has met all the requirements established for the Certificate Program, as set forth by the appropriate Department(s). Certificate completion will also be noted on the official UWSP transcript.

The sponsoring department will provide a report to the appropriate Dean(s) and the Vice Chancellor on an annual basis. The report will be an assessment of the extent to which the program is meeting the goals established and will include an analysis of the fiscal viability of the program, its impact on UWSP's degree-seeking students and its future.

The Registrar will include certificate completions in the annual data reports.

Certificate Programs (Non-credit Professional Development)

Noncredit Certificate Programs are a flexible means of meeting the educational needs of a specified audience. Although they generally specify that a prescribed set or sequence of educational activities must be completed satisfactorily in order for the individual to earn the

certificate, there usually are no formal admission requirements and no formal grading is involved. The typical Non-credit Certificate Program involves a series of workshops or short courses that are completed over an established period of time. These are not to be confused with Certificates of Attendance that are often provided to program attendees as verification of participation in a noncredit activity.

In most cases the curriculum of a noncredit certificate program is developed jointly by an advisory team consisting of representatives from the involved academic unit(s), representatives of the targeted audience for the program, and members of UWSP Extension. These same parties also participate in the evaluation and assessment of the program on a consistent basis. Noncredit certificates provide a means of designing and offering a set of educational activities to meet very specific needs without the constraints imposed by offering credit experiences, but within the limitations established by the involved parties.

Although no UWSP credit is involved, a Certificate Program curriculum, all of its various components, and the faculty or staff providing the instruction in such a program must meet the standards agreed to by the sponsoring department(s) and UWSP Extension. Responsibility for the administration and evaluation of the program rests with UWSP Extension.

Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements for the Certificate as verified by the responsible administrative area, a Certificate of Completion for a non-credit-bearing certificate program will be issued. Such certificates will be signed by a designated representative of the co-sponsoring department(s) and a designated representative of UWSP Extension. The certificate indicates that the person has met all the requirements established for the professional development certificate conducted by the co-sponsoring department.

UWSP Extension will submit a report annually to the Deans' Council and Registrar, enumerating the noncredit certificate programs offered by UWSP.