

## Undergraduate and Graduate Certificate Programs

Non-degree credentials are increasingly common across the higher education landscape: recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that in 2018, over 25% of Americans held one or more non-degree credentials.<sup>1</sup> Non-degree credentials typically signify that the recipient has mastered a knowledge base and set of skills aligned with one or more specific career paths.

While some non-degree credentials require pre-requisite knowledge and degree attainment, others can be completed as early as pre-college; many high schools are now offering opportunities for their students to earn career-oriented alternative credentials.

For WP students, earning a career-oriented alternative credential as part of their academic program can help with early internship and job placement which, in turn, can help them pay for their education while taking classes. Furthermore, packaging courses into a certificate with clear student learning outcomes helps students understand, and explain to employers, what they have learned and what skills they have developed. Alternate credentials can provide an advantage for students when seeking appropriate, gainful employment upon graduation. Therefore, one of the goals set for the Alternate Credentials Pillar of the WP Strategic Plan is to have students in every major earn an appropriate alternate credential in the first 60 credits of their academic program.

The majority of non-degree credentials fall into one of the following 6 categories:<sup>2</sup>

Type	Definition
For-Credit Certificate	Credential awarded by an educational institution for completion of a credit-bearing educational program. Usually less than one year in length. May be completed prior to earning the bachelor degree; some are offered to post-baccalaureate students only.
Non-Credit Certificate	Credential awarded by an institution (educational or workplace) for completion of a non-credit educational program. This includes bootcamps, military and employer training programs with clearly articulated learning outcomes.
Industry Certification	Credential awarded by an industry body or governmental agency for demonstration of skills, typically via examination, based on industry or occupational standards.
Occupational or Professional Licensure	Credential awarded by a state or federal governmental agency for demonstration of skills in a specific occupation. Sometimes awarded for completion of an educational program. Often requires work experience in an occupation.
Apprenticeship	Credential awarded after completion of structured educational and workplace program based on industry and occupational standards.
Badges & Other Micro Credentials	Credential awarded for completion of a short program of study or for demonstration of a targeted set of skills. These are newly emerging.

Most of the alternate credentials our students earn will fall in the first category: For Credit Certificates.

A for-credit certificate is a formal credential recognized by the NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) and the US Department of Education (USDE). Students can matriculate directly into a certificate program without being matriculated in a degree program, which means these can be offered to an external audience as well as enrolled students. Certificates may be offered at the undergraduate or graduate level.

A for-credit certificate typically consists of three to five 3-credit courses with well-aligned student learning outcomes that provide for a defined knowledge base and set of skills preparing students for one or more specific career paths. Certificates may require more credits based on accrediting, certification and licensing requirements.

Ideally, a for-credit certificate offered at the undergraduate level will consist of courses that can also be counted within a student's major, minor or satisfy a UCC requirement. Structuring certificates and academic programs in this way allows students to complete certificates and still complete their degree within 120 credits. The credits earned in a graduate certificate should, when possible, be applicable to completion of a full graduate degree program.

Because of the focus on a narrow body of knowledge and skill set, certificates should have limited, if any electives. Every course included in a certificate should address essential learning outcomes necessary for earning the certificate.

For certificates marketed to an external audience (i.e. not currently matriculated students), the offering of courses should allow completion within one year. Based on our experience offering online programs to adult learners, online asynchronous offerings in shorter 7-week sessions are preferred. However, this may not be preferred for our traditional 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate students. So, consider the audience carefully when determining how to deliver the certificate.

The focus of this document is to provide the process and outline for proposing a for-credit certificate. Departments do also have the option of offering non-credit certificates and certifications. However, if our matriculated, degree seeking students need to pay extra for non-credit certificates and certifications, these charges very likely will not be covered by financial aid. One option is to embed these types of credentials into required courses offered within a major.

<sup>1</sup> Cronen, S., McQuiggan, M., Isenberg, E., & Grandy, S. (2018). *Adult training and education: Results from the National Household Education Surveys program of 2016*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Van Noy, M., McKay, H., & Michael, S. (2019). *Non-Degree Credential Quality: A Conceptual framework to Guide Measurement*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers Education and Employment Research Center.

## For-Credit Certificate Review Process

For-Credit Certificate proposals need to pass through the following levels of review:

- Department
- College Curriculum Committee
- College Dean
- Senate (UG or GR Program Council plus Full Senate)
- Senate
- Office of the Provost
- Board of Trustees (Ed Policy Committee plus Full BOT)

Following approval by the BOT, notification, along with a copy of the BOT resolution, is sent to the NJ President's Council Academic Issues Committee and the NJ OSHE. Approval by the NJPC or NJ OSHE bodies is not required.

The remaining BOT meeting for 2023-2024 is 6/20/2024. The BOT Education Policy Committee meeting is typically held two weeks before the full BOT meeting. Proposals must reach the Office of the Provost four weeks prior to the BOT meeting (two weeks before the committee meeting).

Please use the following approval form and outline for proposals. If approved, the information included in this proposal will be used to build an appropriate catalog entry as well as web pages and other marketing materials. ***Starting in AY 2024/2025, this form will be available as an online curriculum workflow; new proposals generated starting Fall 2024 will only be submitted through Curriculog (available on WP Connect).***

*It can be helpful for those developing certificates to send draft proposals to Jonathan Lincoln ([lincolnj@wpunj.edu](mailto:lincolnj@wpunj.edu)), Associate Provost, for preliminary review and advice. By doing so, we can ensure that proposals meet the requirements for certificate programs in advance and may minimize the need for edits during the review process.*

## New For-Credit Certificate Proposal

Certificate Name:

Level (Undergraduate, Graduate, or both):

Department (s):

College (s):

Approvals:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
College Curriculum Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
College Dean

Date of Senate Meeting and Recommendation \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Provost Office Approval

Date of Board of Trustees Meeting and Resolution \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date of sent Registrar for Implementation \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

**Provide responses to the following 10 items:**

1. List the most important Student Learning Outcomes for the certificate. Do not list more than three. SLOs should focus on a narrowly defined knowledge base and skill set that prepares students for one or more career paths; these need to be written in a clear, concise manner. Avoid jargon that an external audience will not understand (including students who have not yet taken the courses).
2. Include at least one, but no more than three NACE Career Competencies (attached) developed by taking this certificate.
3. Describe applicable career paths supported by this certificate (these can be general or specific). It is not expected that the certificate will fully prepare students for these career paths.
4. Provide a concise statement of employer demand (Evidence can come from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics; NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development; professional and disciplinary organizations, direct input from local employers or alumni; models of similar certificates offered regionally or nationally; etc.)
5. What is the primary audience for the certificate? (Will the certificate be offered for matriculated students? An external audience? Both? For specific majors? Those seeking entry level preparation or advancement in a current career? Etc.):
6. List the course requirements (Include course number (if known), credits and a catalog description for each course; if program is approved, full course outlines will need to be developed and approved prior to program implementation if any of the courses are new):
7. Identify courses, if any, that satisfy UCC requirements:
8. Identify courses, if any, that satisfy bachelor or master degree requirements (identify relevant degree programs):
9. Proposed sequence/frequency of course offering and modality:
10. List any costs associated with delivery. Costs might include software licenses, course preparation materials, delivery of new courses added to the schedule, etc. Do not include marketing expenses unless recommending a means of marketing unique to the certificate.