

CERTIFICATES, SPECIALIZED STUDIES, AND MINORS

Responsible Executive:	Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement
Approving Official:	Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Florida Board of Governors (BOG) Regulation 8.011(7) defines two types of certificates: a college credit certificate and a non-college-credit certificate.

The Florida Board of Governors (BOG) Regulation 8.011(7) (a) also cites other types of programs, including program minor, concentration, and area of emphasis, track, or similar curricular offerings. Florida State University uses the following definitions, guidelines, and procedures for certificate programs, specialized studies, and minors in accordance with the regulations of the Florida Board of Governors and SACSCOC.

A. College Credit Certificates

- a. A college credit certificate program is “an organized curriculum of college credit courses offered as a distinct area of study that leads to specific educational or occupational goals, and for which the university awards a certificate, diploma, or similar form of recognition upon completion” [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7)(b)]. SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 10.8 refers to “Professional certificates or other noncredit educational outside a collegiate course.” Thus, certificates should be viewed as professional in nature.
- b. Guidelines Include:
 - i. A college credit certificate is not intended as a degree, but as a supplement to a student’s specific educational goals or professional career preparation.
 - ii. Completion of a college credit certificate generally is related to a specific field, and usually associated with a limited set of

occupations.

- iii. College credit certificates may help prepare students for certain types of industry licensing, and to practice in or master technical aspects of an occupation.
- iv. College credit certificates shall be noted on a student's transcript as an official credential of the university.
- v. College credit certificate programs drawn from the existing approved curriculum for a degree or diploma program do not require separate approval by SACSCOC. However, to offer such a certificate at a new site does require approval of the site by SACSCOC.
- vi. A college credit certificate that is a significant departure from previously approved programs must be approved in advance by SACSCOC.

B. Non-College-Credit Certificates

- a. A non-college credit certificate is “an organized curriculum of study of any length that is offered for non-college credit (as measured through clock hours, continuing education units, competency exams, etc.), which leads to specific educational or occupational goals....” [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7) (c)]. Non-college credit certificates are those programs of study that do not award credit, such as those offered as part of continuing education.
- b. Non-college credit certificates:
 - i. May not be termed an undergraduate or graduate college credit certificate.
 - ii. May not be noted on transcripts.
 - iii. May not bear the official FSU seal.
 - iv. May have completion recognized in a “Recognition of Completion” document.

C. Specialized Studies Programs

- a. The term “Specialized Study” refers to an organized curriculum that

enhances or complements the degree to be awarded. “Such a curricular offering shall be as defined by the university with the credit-hour length set in accordance with the university policy, except that the number of credit hours shall not equal or exceed the number of credit hours established for a program major at the same degree level” [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7)(a)].

- b. Specialized Studies:
 - i. May be offered at the undergraduate or graduate level.
 - ii. May not be noted on transcripts.
 - iii. May not bear the official FSU seal.
 - iv. May have completion recognized in a “Recognition of Completion” document.

D. Minors

- a. The term “minor” refers to an “organized curriculum that is offered as part of a degree program and enhances or complements the degree to be awarded in a manner which leads to specific educational or occupational goals... (T)he number of credit hours shall not equal or exceed the number of credit hours established for a program major at the same degree level” [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7)(a)].
- b. Minors:
 - i. Are to be offered at the undergraduate level only.
 - ii. Generally exclude courses used to satisfy students’ Liberal Studies requirements and major requirements.
 - iii. May not be noted on transcripts.
 - iv. May not bear the official FSU seal.
 - v. May have completion recognized in a “Recognition of Completion” document.

II. POLICY (Including any Forms and Attachments)

A. College Credit Certificates

- a. **Nature of Certificates.** A college credit certificate program is intended to be professional in nature [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7) (b)]. Hence, all proposed college credit certificates must be in compliance with all definitions and guidelines above, and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered. Proposed college credit certificates must be in compliance with these guidelines and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered. Only programs of study that involve credit coursework need to seek approval with this policy.
- b. **Initiation.** A proposal to create a certificate shall be initiated by the director of the proposed certificate or the chair and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the proposed certificate, using the appropriate forms provided by the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The proposal shall be submitted using the following approval sequence:
 - i. Department Curriculum Committee (or Advisory Committee for Institute or Center, if applicable)
 - ii. Department Chair(s) or Director(s) of Institute(s) or Center(s)
 - iii. Curriculum Committee(s) of School(s) and College(s)
 - iv. Academic Dean(s)
 - v. Undergraduate Studies or The Graduate School, as appropriate
 - vi. SACSCOC Liaison
 - vii. Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, for final approval.
- c. **Notification.** Following approval, the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement shall notify the following offices

that the certificate program is in effect:

- i. Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
 - ii. Registrar
 - iii. Department(s)
 - iv. Academic Dean(s)
 - v. Undergraduate Studies or The Graduate School, as appropriate
 - vi. SACSCOC Liaison
 - vii. Institutional Effectiveness [or successor office]
 - viii. Budget
 - ix. Institutional Research
- d. **Off-campus sites.** No credit hours for a certificate program may be earned anywhere other than main campus or on the FSU-Panama City campus.
- e. **Proposal.** The college credit certificate proposal must include the following elements:
- i. **Purpose.** The proposal must identify particular needs, which cannot be met by existing degree programs or certificates, identifying the particular target group for the program. It will specify the skills and knowledge base to be achieved through the program. It must identify the requirements for certification essential to practice in or master technical aspects of an occupation and establish how specific courses satisfy this requirement. Finally, it shall provide the semester it is anticipated the program will start, and the director of the credit certificate program must be named.
 - ii. **Application Procedure.** The proposal must describe the process by which an individual student applies to the program. It shall indicate clearly the individual or position to which, or the technology through which, the application must be submitted and state that the certificate credential is not intended as a diploma or a degree. Students are required to apply for admission as soon as possible (and prior to

completing the second course in the program) and must be notified as soon as possible thereafter whether they are accepted into the program. Students should be informed that any course requirement taken towards a certificate that does not lead to licensure could be subject to the excess hour fee identified in BOG Regulation 7.003.

- iii. **Admission Requirements.** Students are not enrolled in a certificate program by virtue of being enrolled in related courses. Students must apply and be admitted to the certificate program in order to be considered enrolled for any purpose, including inclusion in a teach-out. The proposal must state the requirements for admission to the program. The admission process will specify whether an applicant must be currently pursuing a degree or may be registered as a non-degree-seeking student. Other criteria for admissions may include previous educational background, grade point average, or other qualifications. The admissions requirements must clearly state that students must apply to the certificate program prior to completing the second course in the program. The proposal will indicate the individuals or university positions that have the authority to admit a student to the certificate program.
- iv. **Program of Studies.** The proposal must include the total number of credits required and specify the courses to be taken. Credit hour requirements for each certificate may vary from 12 to 21 credits. Specific courses may either be required or elective. Each certificate program must include at least one common course or capstone experience required of all its students. A matrix must be included that illustrates whether specific courses are required or elective, and who is responsible for teaching the courses. Appropriate advising services must be made available for all students enrolled in a certificate program. If a certificate program includes courses common to

another certificate program, at least nine credits in each certificate program must be unduplicated in the other certificate program, absent justification provided to and approved by the relevant academic dean(s). Coursework used to fulfill the requirements of a certificate program may also be used to fulfill the requirements of an undergraduate major or minor. An undergraduate certificate shall not require the completion of graduate courses. Credit earned as part of a certificate program may or may not be transferable to an advanced degree program as determined by criteria established in the advanced degree program.

- v. **Enrollment.** The proposal will include an estimate of the anticipated enrollment in the credit certificate program at years 1 and 5. It must indicate what resources are necessary to support the proposed certificate program and what impact, if any, the use of these resources will have on existing degree or certificate programs.
- vi. **Certificate Requirements.** The proposal will indicate the number of credits required and any time limits governing when such credits are earned. It must indicate whether or not transfer credits are accepted and whether any specific grade point average is required. The proposal shall clearly distinguish between the purposes and character of the proposed undergraduate or graduate certificate and any related undergraduate minor or graduate specialization.
- vii. **Faculty Resources.** The proposal must confirm that the program instructors possess the specific credentials that qualify these individuals to teach in and/or direct the certificate program, per University policy. (See Florida State University Policy [3A-2], Policy for Credentialing Faculty Members, at <http://policies.fsu.edu>.)
- viii. **Institutional Effectiveness.** The proposal for a credit certificate shall

identify units with at least two student learning outcomes and one program outcome, along with appropriate assessment processes and methods, results and improvement/actions taken. All certificate outcomes will be assessed annually. Upon approval of the certificate program, the program faculty must enter these outcomes and assessment procedures into the university's institutional effectiveness (IE) portal. Credit certificate programs awarding fewer than nine (9) certificates annually shall not enter outcome results, analyses or improvement plans in the portal, in order to avoid compromising student privacy, but this circumstance must be reported in the institutional effectiveness portal.

- ix. **Location of Instruction.** The proposal shall indicate that no credit hours for a certificate program may be earned anywhere other than main campus or the Panama City campus.
 - x. **Design of Certificate and Wording.** The proposal for a credit certificate shall include the name of the certificate, the date awarded, and the school or college (and department or unit) awarding the certificate. It must indicate whether it is an undergraduate or graduate certificate.
- f. **Review.** All certificate programs, including their curricula and viability, are to be reviewed by the curriculum committee(s) of the appropriate unit(s) at least every 7 years. Compliance with policy requirements and restrictions is mandated for continuation of certificate programs. Any certificate program that has not awarded a certificate in the previous 7 years will be closed.
- g. **Termination or changes.** A credit certificate program may be terminated or changed by sending a memo from the director of the certificate, as available, or the faculty, chair, and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the certificate, to the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The latter must approve termination of or changes to certificate programs, and will notify the SACS liaison and other affected offices for appropriate action. Certificate programs will continue to be published in the *General Bulletin* until

officially terminated. Programs seeking termination that have students pursuing the certificate must provide a teach-out plan to the Office of the Provost. Plans shall be submitted 4 months in advance of the proposed program's termination and must include a plan for providing written notification to students admitted and enrolled in the program and a strategy and timeline for certificate completion, as required by university teach-out policy. (See Florida State University Policy 3A-4.)

- h. **Administration.** The following items apply to all undergraduate and graduate credit certificates:
 - i. All credit certificates shall require an application for all students to enroll. The unit offering the certificate and the dean or the dean's representative must approve the application.
 - ii. Successful completion of an approved credit certificate will be posted to the academic transcript. Units also may print and distribute affidavits to students earning credit certificates.
 - iii. Descriptions of approved credit certificates will be included in the appropriate university publications and websites. The Office of Institutional Research will maintain an updated list of all approved credit certificates.
 - iv. The Office of Institutional Research, in cooperation with the University Registrar, will assign a C.I.P. Code to each certificate and will report the number of certificates awarded annually in each active credit program.
 - v. General information regarding credit certificate policies will be available on the website of the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.
- i. **Waivers.** Waivers of the provisions of the certificate policy may be granted by the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement. Such waivers shall be in writing and sent to the certificate director, department chair,

academic dean, dean of The Graduate School or Undergraduate Studies, SACSCOC Liaison, and Institutional Research. Waivers must specify the rationale for the exception and the specific certificate provision(s) that are being waived.

B. Non-College-Credit Certificates. All non-college-credit certificates must be in compliance with all appropriate definitions and guidelines above. They are not required to seek approval with this policy.

C. Specialized Studies Programs. All proposed specialized studies programs must be in compliance with all appropriate definitions and guidelines above, and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered.

- a. **Initiation.** A proposal to create a specialized studies program shall be initiated by the director of the proposed specialized studies program or the chair and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the proposed program, using the appropriate forms provided by the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The proposal shall be submitted using the following approval sequence:
 - i. Department Curriculum Committee (or Advisory Committee for Institute or Center, if applicable)
 - ii. Department Chair(s) or Director(s) of Institute(s) or Center(s)
 - iii. Curriculum Committee(s) of School(s) and College(s)
 - iv. Academic Dean(s)
 - v. Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, for final approval.
- b. **Notification.** Following approval, the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement shall notify the following offices that the specialized study is in effect:
 - i. Registrar

- ii. Department(s)
 - iii. Academic Dean(s)
 - iv. Undergraduate Studies or Dean or The Graduate School, as appropriate
- c. **Proposal.** The specialized studies program proposal must include the following elements:
- i. **Purpose.** The proposal must identify particular needs, which cannot be met by existing degree programs or certificates, identifying the particular target group for the program. It will specify the knowledge base to be achieved through the program. Finally, it shall provide the semester it is anticipated the program will start.
 - ii. **Application Procedure.** The proposal shall describe the process by which an individual student applies to the program. It will clearly indicate the individual or position to which, or technology through which, the application must be submitted and state that the specialized studies program is not intended as a diploma or a degree or certificate.
 - iii. **Admission Requirements.** The proposal must state the requirements for admission to the program. The admission process must specify whether an applicant must be currently pursuing a degree or may be registered as a non-degree-seeking student. Other criteria for admissions may include previous educational background, grade point average, or other qualifications. The proposal shall indicate the individuals or university positions that have the authority to admit a student to the specialized studies program.
 - iv. **Program of Studies.** The proposal must include the total number of credits required and specify the courses or options of courses to be taken. Credit-hour requirements for each specialized studies program may vary from 12 to 21 credits. Specific courses may either be

required or elective. An undergraduate specialized studies program shall not require the completion of graduate courses. Credit earned as part of a specialized studies program may or may not be transferable to an advanced degree program as determined by criteria established in the advanced degree program.

- v. **Enrollment.** The proposal will include an estimate of the anticipated enrollment in the specialized studies program at years 1 and 5. It shall indicate what resources are necessary to support the proposed specialized studies program and what impact, if any, the use of these resources will have on existing degree or certificate programs.
- vi. **Requirements.** The proposal shall indicate the number of credits required and any time limits governing when such credits are earned. It will indicate whether or not transfer credits are accepted and whether any specific grade point average is required. The proposal shall clearly distinguish between the purposes and character of the proposed undergraduate or graduate specialized studies program and any related undergraduate minor or graduate program.
- d. **Review.** All specialized studies programs are to be reviewed by the curriculum committee(s) of the appropriate unit(s) at least every 7 years. Compliance with policy requirements and restrictions is mandated for continuation of specialized studies. Any specialized study that has not been awarded in the previous 7 years will be closed.
- e. **Termination or changes.** A specialized studies program may be terminated or changed by sending a memo from the director of the program, or the faculty, chair, and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the specialized studies program, to the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The latter must approve termination of or changes to specialized studies programs, and will notify other affected offices for appropriate action. Specialized studies programs will continue to be published in the *General*

Bulletin until officially terminated.

- f. **Administration.** Descriptions of approved specialized studies programs will be included in the appropriate university publications and websites. Specialized studies will not be assigned a CIP Code and will not be included in the State University System Academic Degree Program Inventory as stand-alone academic programs. General information regarding specialized studies policies will be available on the website of the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.

D. Minors. All proposed minors must be in compliance with all appropriate definitions and guidelines above, and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered.

- a. **Initiation.** A proposal to create a minor shall be initiated by the director of the proposed minor or the chair and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the proposed program, using the appropriate forms provided by the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The proposal shall be submitted using the following approval sequence:
 - i. Department Curriculum Committee (or Advisory Committee for Institute or Center, if applicable)
 - ii. Department Chair(s) or Director(s) of Institute(s) or Center(s)
 - iii. Curriculum Committee(s) of School(s) and College(s)
 - iv. Academic Dean(s)
- b. **Notification.** Following approval, the Dean's Office notifies the following offices that the minor is in effect:
 - i. Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement
 - ii. Undergraduate Studies or The Graduate School, as appropriate
 - iii. University Registrar
 - iv. Department

c. Proposal. The minor proposal must include the following elements

- i. Purpose. The proposal should identify particular needs, which cannot be met by existing degree certificates or minors, identifying the particular target group for the program. It shall specify in what ways the minor will complement students' degree programs. Finally, it must specify which fall semester the program will start (a fall start is required in order to be consistent with the *General Bulletin* publication schedule) and must identify the contact point for information regarding the minor.
- ii. Program of Studies. The proposal shall include the total number of credits required and specify the courses to be taken. Minors typically require between 12 and 18 credit hours and may not require students to complete more credits than the associated major. Specific courses may either be required or elective. An undergraduate minor may not require the completion of graduate courses.

d. Certification of Minor Completion. The unit responsible for the minor must ensure that the *General Bulletin* description of the minor requirements is clear and comprehensive enough for the student's dean's office to certify completion of the minor prior to graduation.

e. Administration. Descriptions of approved minors will be included in the appropriate university publications and websites. Minors will not be assigned a CIP Code and will not be included in the State University System Academic Degree Program Inventory as stand-alone academic programs. General information regarding minor policies will be available on the website of the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.

III. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Article IX, Section 7, Florida Constitution; BOG Regulations 1.001(4), 8.011

The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement shall be responsible for periodic review of this policy and for suggesting any necessary revisions to both the Faculty Senate and the Provost for approval.

Approved: *Sally McRae*
Provost and Executive Vice President