

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Introduction

On October 20, 2000 the Arkansas Department of Higher Education approved a resolution that would allow universities to offer graduate certificate programs that meet the ADHE Board's definition (see below) upon written notification to ADHE. Board approval would not be required. This document is to serve as the guidelines for establishing and gaining approval of Graduate Certificate proposals at UCA.

The approval process will follow the same steps as all new program proposals as outlined in the *Curriculum Development Process Guide, University of Central Arkansas* page 4, i.e. the proposal must gain approval at all levels and in the following order:

1. The department or departments offering the Graduate Certificate Program.
2. The appropriate College Curriculum and Assessment Committee.
3. University Academic Assessment Subcommittee (AASC) and PEC (if relevant).
4. Graduate Council.
5. Council of Deans.

Notification of Graduate Certificate Program additions/deletions would be presented to the UCA Board of Trustees in the President's report. Written notification of additions/deletions of graduate certificate programs will be submitted to ADHE by the Provost's office.

Definition (from ADHE resolution)

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A Graduate Certificate program is a 12-18 hour, focused collection of courses which, when completed, affords the student some record of coherent academic accomplishment in a given discipline or set of related disciplines. These graduate certificate programs have the following characteristics:

1. The courses are part of the graduate curriculum of the university with graduate programs as a part of its role and scope.
2. Faculty have graduate faculty status.
3. Admission and completion requirements are based upon the policies of the Graduate School.
4. Recognition of the completion is noted on the student's transcript.

Purpose of Graduate Certificate Programs (from ADHE resolution)

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A graduate certificate program can be designed by a university to: 1) enhance marketability of its graduate students and programs, 2) provide a service to the community at large through a short-term graduate program, and 3) provide expanded opportunities for students wishing to further their education for personal or career advancement.

New Program Proposal

All new graduate certificate program proposals must include form P-1 (see page 9 in ADHE Coordinating Board publication *Procedures for Preparing Proposals for New Programs*). Two additional elements should be included on a revised form P-1 for graduate certificate programs: 1) a proposed expiration date (optional) when the certificate program would be automatically decertified and 2) the relationship between the certificate program and related graduate degree programs. Item #14 - "Board of Trustees Approval" should be changed to "Board of Trustees Notification."

The proposed expiration date, which is optional, is designed for certificate programs established to fulfill short-term needs or designed to meet the specific needs of a particular constituent when it is anticipated that the program will not be needed past the expiration date.

The relationship between the certificate program and existing graduate programs should be clearly spelled out in the proposal. For example, will some or all of the courses completed for the graduate certificate program count toward a graduate degree program now or in the future? Is the certificate program designed to give training specifically for students completing an existing graduate degree program?

Modifications to Graduate School Policy specifically for Graduate Certificate Programs

1. Students enrolled only in graduate certificate programs have the same status, rights and privileges as all other graduate students EXCEPT that they are not eligible for graduate assistantships. Further, students enrolled in graduate certificate programs have the same expectations in terms of GPA as all other graduate students.
2. Since certificate programs are only 12-18 credit hours, no transfer credit will be allowed except from a collaborating institution. A collaborating institution must be specified in the program proposal.
3. Courses may not count toward completion requirements for more than one certificate or degree program. Students who have completed some of the courses as part of other certificate or degree programs will still be required to complete the same number of credit hours as other students in the program. Related courses may be substituted for courses previously completed.
4. At the proposers' option, the statute of limitations specified on page 18 of the *University of Central Arkansas Graduate Bulletin 1999-2001* may be modified to a shorter time span. This may be appropriate given the fewer credit hours and, in some cases, the rapidly changing nature of the curriculum content.
5. The Program of Study is submitted during the first semester of course work.
6. At the proposers' option, admission requirements may differ from the traditional graduate school admission criteria except that all students in a graduate certificate program must have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and all international students must have the Graduate School minimum TOEFL score. Proposals for exceptions to the Graduate School's admission criteria must be accompanied by written justification. Exceptions may be deemed appropriate in cases where the certificate programs are "practitioner oriented." In such cases, appropriate professional experiences or previously earned degrees or certificates may substitute for one or more Graduate School Admission criteria (except as noted above).

Curricular expectations

Graduate certificate programs are expected to have a well defined and appropriately sequenced curriculum that has specific objectives. The curriculum is expected to be worthy of graduate course work. All course work must be at the graduate level. As stated in the definition, programs must be a minimum of 12 hours. Special approval will be needed for programs that exceed 18 hours. In no case should the number of credit hours exceed ½ of the number of credit hours for a related masters' degree.

Graduate certificate programs will be reviewed in the same fashion as degree programs except for those programs that will expire before coming due for a review.