

# **Northern Arizona University**

## **Policy and Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs**

**Approved by University Graduate Committee 11/30/00**

**Amended 5/3/01, Updated 6/15/04**

### **A. Introduction**

The graduate certificate is a focused collection of courses that, when completed, affords the student a record of coherent academic accomplishment in a given discipline or set of related disciplines. The didactic material encompassed within a graduate certificate program may represent a more practice-oriented subset of an existing graduate discipline. The graduate certificate requires fewer credits than a master's degree.

### **B. Issues to be Considered in Developing a Graduate Certificate Program.**

- What is the focus of study for the certificate?
- Who are the intended participants in the program? What prior expertise or education is required for students?
- How will the certificate program be delivered – through existing courses from several departments, through courses supplemented by an interdisciplinary introduction or capstone source?
- How will the program be administered? Who oversees the budget, curriculum design, registration paperwork, etc.?
- How will the program be financed? What is the funding source for creating the program and offering it?

### **C. Criteria for Graduate Certificate Programs**

1. The proposed sequence of coursework must offer a clear and appropriate educational objective at the post-baccalaureate level.
2. The proposed program will achieve its educational objective in an efficient and well-defined manner.
3. The need for the certificate program must be explained. It may be defined in terms of either external markets or internal academic needs.
4. An appropriate number of academic credits must comprise the certificate program. Ordinarily, the credit requirement will range from 12 to 18 graduate semester credits.
5. No more than one 400-level course (3 credit or 4 credit) may be used on a certificate program. A minimum grade point average of 3.0 must be achieved to obtain a graduate

certificate. No more than three hours of work with a grade of C may be used on a certificate program.

6. Each graduate program must decide which, if any, certificate courses can be counted toward the graduate degree after admission of a certificate student into the graduate degree program.-
7. No more than 25% of the hours required for the certificate program may be transferred from another university.

#### **D. Student Eligibility and Admission Criteria**

1. Applicants must hold an earned baccalaureate degree or its equivalent from an accredited college or university with a minimum grade point average as required by the Graduate College (2.5) or equivalent qualifying experience.
2. The application process for certificate-seeking graduate students is similar to that for degree-seeking students. Applicants must complete an application for admission to the Graduate College as a degree/certificate seeking student, pay the application processing fee and submit official transcripts. They must also submit all other materials required by the certificate program. The application is reviewed by the appropriate person or committee in the certificate program. If admission is recommended, an admission letter is issued by the Graduate College.
3. Graduate students who are currently enrolled in a graduate program of study leading to a degree and who wish to also earn a graduate certificate must also apply for the certificate.
4. Each program sets the minimum admissions requirements for the certificate (e.g. grade point average, standardized test scores, work experience, etc.). Greater flexibility than that found in graduate degree admission requirements is intentionally built into graduate certificate programs so that the needs of the target student population may be met, if it is appropriate to do so.
5. All certificate candidates must be informed at the time of their acceptance that admission to and completion of a certificate program does not supersede the admission requirements to a degree program should they subsequently apply to a graduate degree program.
6. Certificate-seeking students must apply to graduate using a form available from the Graduate College. When the student completes the certificate program requirements, the certificate will be awarded and will appear on the student's transcript. A certificate document, similar to a diploma, will be sent to the student.

#### **E. Proposal Procedure for a New Certificate Program**

Proposals for new graduate certificate programs must contain the following information:

1. A statement of the educational objectives of the program;
2. A statement of the need for the proposed program and the basis for such a need, supported by either externally or internally derived data;

3. The catalog copy for the certificate program (on the NAU Proposal for New Program or Program Change Form); and appropriate new course or course change forms for new and modified courses;
4. A statement of the proposed course sequence for the certificate (if not included in the catalog copy); and how the proposed course sequence will meet the stated educational objectives;
5. A statement of the admission criteria and standards for the certificate program;
6. The names of the faculty associated with or contributing to the certificate program, either by teaching one or more of the courses associated with the program or participating in the design of the course sequence. Adjunct faculty associated with the program should also include up-to-date curriculum vita. The name of the faculty member who will be the coordinator of the program should be included.

#### **F. Approval Process for New Graduate Certificate Programs**

Proposals for new graduate certificate programs are created and submitted by faculty, either from a department or several departments working as an interdisciplinary group. Proposals must be accompanied by endorsement from the department chairs and deans in which the contributing coursework is housed. The Review Committee of the University Graduate Committee considers all graduate certificate program proposals. Those meeting the criteria set forth above are then recommended to the University Graduate Committee for approval.

If the proposed certificate program contains no new courses, and requires no new faculty or other resources, the proposal will be given expedited review in the approval process. It will be considered by the University Graduate Committee no less than 60 days and no more than 90 days after it is delivered to the Graduate College. The last date to submit a proposal for a certificate to be implemented in the fall semester is March 1. The last date to submit a proposal for a certificate to be implemented the spring semester is October 1 of the previous year.

#### **G. Certificate Program Review**

All graduate certificate programs will be reviewed within the course of the regular university program review process.

The Review Committee of the University Graduate Committee will monitor enrollment and graduation statistics for all graduate certificate programs annually.

Because graduate certificate programs are intended to be flexible and meet relatively short-term needs, each graduate certificate program will undergo a formal review by the Review Committee of the University Graduate Committee in the fourth year after approval. The unit(s) offering the certificate will submit a short report (1-2 pages) that includes:

the enrollment history of the certificate (number enrolled each fall semester). Is the certificate meeting the enrollments projected in the original proposal?

statistics on the number of certificates awarded (from the Graduate College website)

What were the goals of the certificate program as stated in the proposal? Is the program fulfilling those goals? Are any changes in the program are needed?

What has been the impact of the certificate on the department's graduate degree program(s)?

What has been the impact of the certificate on the department's resources? Are changes needed in this area?

Are the students primarily full-time or part-time? What is the average length of time to earn the certificate? What are the students' reasons for enrolling in the certificate? Are most certificate students enrolling in the certificate "stand-alone" or in addition to an NAU degree program?