

Guidelines for Proposing Graduate Certificate Programs:

at Marquette University

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Overview

This document is the “*pergravia postulanda*¹” for Graduate Certificate Programs at Marquette University.

Guided by the extensive work conducted at the Council of Graduate Schools regarding Graduate Certificate Programs, this document offers a template that could be followed for Marquette to expand its certificate programs, subject, of course, to modifications through our usual and customary review and approval processes. It postulates that there are many solid reasons for implementing certificate programs, but they are not primarily financial in nature; rather they fall into the category of institutional relationship building without incurring new costs.

Following the “best practices” in place at institutional leaders in this area – University of Iowa, Johns Hopkins, New York University, Rutgers University, Saint Louis University, among others – here’s how certificate programs might be systematically expanded at Marquette.

Definition and Description

Graduate certificate programs are created often within the structure of the Graduate School. Students are awarded these certificates upon completion of a well-defined program of coursework. The graduate certificate is not defined as a degree by the Graduate School; rather, it is a focused collection of courses that, when completed, affords the student some record of coherent academic accomplishment in a given discipline or a set of related disciplines.

The graduate certificate is not viewed as a guaranteed means of entry into a graduate degree program. While the courses comprising a graduate certificate may be used as evidence in support of a student's application for admission to a graduate degree program, the certificate itself is not considered to be a prerequisite. The didactic material encompassed within a graduate certificate program may represent a more practice-oriented subset of an existing graduate discipline. The title of any graduate certificate program may or may not contain the word certificate, depending on the tradition in the discipline proposing the program.

Rationale for Graduate Certificate Programs

The rationale for Graduate Certificate Programs does **not** rest on quickly generating new revenue. Those who look to Graduate Certificate Programs as an easy opportunity to refresh revenue streams will soon be disappointed.

Rather than providing immediate financial injections into a depressed institutional budget, the rationale for graduate certificate programs stems from a variety of non-fiscal matters. Among

¹ *Pergravia postulanda* (Lat.) translates as “the most important matters to be asked for,” according to Professor Frank Morris, Professor of Classical Languages, College of Charleston

the benefits cited by those institutions with successful graduate certificate programs are the following opportunities to...

1. “grow” smaller master’s programs
2. increase community service by forming new partnerships
3. address the needs of a growing number of “Lifelong Learners”
4. build new “friends” for faculty via the use of Advisory Boards to provide input on new certificate programs
5. provide students with programmatic nuances they seek
6. provide students with academic environments that produce portable competencies
7. forge new partnerships within and outside of the University
8. provide students with academic preparation needed for new job responsibilities, new roles and/or for certification in an area
9. recruit students into graduate degree programs

While each of these seven benefits could theoretically result in increased revenue, the consensus in the Graduate Schools with certificate experience is that the financial benefits are secondary to the new relationships that will usually result.

Graduate Certificate Opportunities at Marquette

Certificate programs are not new to Marquette. Education offered one of the first: a Specialist Certificate, a “sixth year” program designed for educators halfway between the master’s and doctorate. Dentistry has offered a certificate to those students who complete master’s coursework, but lack the thesis. More recent certificate programs have been adopted in Engineering and Nursing.

Certificate programs are most effective when they arise from the faculty ranks in response to a perceived need for a specific skill set. Nevertheless, to stimulate thinking about new certificate possibilities, here are a few new opportunities that could have more of a career preparation focus:

1. Preparing Future Faculty
2. MAPS program: Gerontology, Dispute Resolution, and Administration of Justice.
3. Partnering with professional organizations, corporations, foundations, HBCUs, HSIs
4. Interdisciplinary certificates, especially with robust research centers and institutes
5. Joint certificate programs with other institutions, e.g. MCW
6. Human Resources Management
7. Technical Writing
8. Instructional Technology
9. Educational Leadership
10. Public Health
11. Risk Management
12. Health Administration
13. Web Technology
14. Software Engineering
15. International Business

- 16. Biotechnology
- 17. Distance Learning
- 18. Family Studies

Process of Approval for New Graduate Certificate Program

Proposals for new graduate certificate programs are created and submitted by faculty in the academic units. The proposals must be endorsed by the department heads and deans of the schools in which the contributing coursework is housed, as well as from those academic units whose students or programs could be impacted by the creation of the new graduate certificate.

The collaborating academic units at the other institution will normally endorse new graduate certificate programs in areas where joint graduate programs are conducted with other universities. The University Board of Graduate Studies considers all graduate certificate program proposals for academic merit. Those meeting the criteria set forth by the Graduate School are then recommended to the Academic Vice President for approval.

Criteria for Approval

The overarching principles applied to the assessment of the academic quality of proposals for new graduate certificate programs include four key factors.

1. The proposed sequence of coursework must offer a clear and appropriate educational objective at the post-baccalaureate level.
2. The proposed program must achieve its educational objective in an efficient and well-defined manner.
3. A demonstrated need for such a program must exist and be well documented. The need should quantify both external markets (i.e., external demand for the skills associated with such a certificate) and internal academic needs (i.e., the need for a critical mass of students in a given discipline).
4. An appropriate number of credit hours must comprise the certificate program. The number of graduate credits may not be less than 9 nor more than one-half of the credits necessary for a related master's degree from the Graduate School. Ordinarily, the credit requirement will range from 9 to 15 graduate credit hours. When no related master's program exists, the number of credits required for a graduate certificate is limited to 12.

Student Eligibility and Admission Criteria

The prerequisites and general criteria of eligibility for admission to any graduate certificate program include:

1. An earned baccalaureate degree or its equivalent from an accredited college or university is required.
2. Each program sets the minimum grade point average, minimum TOEFL scores, standardized test scores, whether or not certificate courses may be counted towards the related master's degree program, and other similar criteria as part of the application. 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.
3. Graduate students who are currently enrolled in a graduate program of study leading to a degree, and who wish to pursue a simultaneous graduate certificate within the Graduate School, must inform the certificate program coordinator and the Graduate School Office in writing of their intent to seek the graduate certificate. No other application is necessary.
4. Students who are currently enrolled in the Graduate School and who wish to pursue approved graduate certificate programs must apply for admission to such programs before one-half of the required credits are completed, although the Dean of the Graduate School may grant exceptions to this policy.
5. Certificate-seeking graduate students who are not currently enrolled in a master's program will be admitted into a separate classification within the Graduate School, as "Certificate Graduate" students. This separate classification will permit keeping of University-wide statistical and enrollment data for certificate programs, and will allow inclusion of such efforts in the annual reports and academic planning. The Registrar's Office will note successful completion of a certificate program on the student's transcript upon completion.
6. Students pursuing a graduate certificate will be required to meet the same academic requirements as those defined for degree-seeking students.
7. Graduate students who complete certificate programs may later wish to apply for regular degree programs. In such cases, the certificate coursework normally applies as transfer credits towards the new degree, provided it is within a six-year period. The Graduate School and the academic unit make final decisions in specific cases.

Certificate Graduate Students may enroll on either a part-time or a full-time basis, as determined by the certificate program coordinator. Students enrolled on a full-time basis will have access to the same campus services as other full-time graduate students.

Certificate Graduate Students also may be considered for merit-based financial aid by the department or program, as well as for need-based financial aid by the Financial Aid Office, but at a reduced priority compared to degree-seeking students.

The rationale for requiring formal enrollment in graduate certificate programs is based on the need for proper allocation of instructional resources and the desire to afford the certificate students equal access to the desired graduate courses. Departments and programs are better able to plan offerings of the appropriate graduate courses if they are aware of the upcoming demand for such courses. This demand can best be gauged by knowledge of the number of students in the program. By registering as graduate students, the certificate-seeking students will have timely access to graduate courses offered by departments and schools.

Certificate Program Review

All graduate certificate programs will be reviewed within the course of regular graduate program assessment and review, as defined by the University Board of Graduate Studies.

Application Procedure for a New Certificate Program

Two different application procedures exist, depending on the nature of the program being proposed. (1) **New proposals** that have incremental budgetary or resource implications should follow the new guidelines adopted by the Office of Academic Affairs, entitled “Overview for Developing and Seeking Approval of New Academic Programs.” Among other things, this document details the elements to be included in the program description, market demand analysis information, business analysis data, and an outcomes evaluation. (2) Programs that use existing courses and have no incremental budgetary or resource implications are candidates for expedited approval and should use the following guidelines for review on an expedited basis.

1. **Need.** A statement of need for the proposed program and the basis for such a need, supported by either externally or internally derived data;
2. **Objectives.** A statement of the educational objectives of the program;
3. **Programmatic Content.** A statement of the proposed course sequence associated with the certificate, including titles and course descriptions both for existing courses and any new courses that may be developed. A statement of how the proposed course sequences associated with the certificate will meet the stated educational objectives;
4. **Personnel.** 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 vitae;
5. **Certificate Program Coordinator.** The name and curriculum vita of the faculty member who will be designated as the coordinator of the program, for purposes of communication with the Graduate School.

6. **Resources.** Indicate if the proposed certificate program will require any new personnel or fiscal resources. Specify initial projected revenue and costs over the first three years of operation.
7. **Marketing.** Indicate how the new Certificate Program would be marketed. What target audiences exist? How will the market be identified? What marketing tools will be used to reach the target audience? At what frequency will marketing efforts be initiated? Who will assume the marketing responsibility? What marketing budget is anticipated? At what cost? How will it be marketed differently from regular degree programs?

Appendix A

Frequently Asked Questions

Here are the frequently asked questions – and answers – regarding graduate certificate programs, as identified by the Council on Graduate Schools²

1. Who administers graduate certificate programs?

In a nationwide survey, roughly two-thirds of them are administratively handled in Graduate Schools.

2. Are there State and certification agency requirements that could impact certificate proposals?

Probably, yes. This matter needs to be explored further.

3. Will graduate certificate programs affect diversity in the Graduate School?

It may, but most schools report it is too early to tell.

4. How successful will the certificate programs be?

Beyond a system of regular program reviews, all proposed certificate programs should include a “sunset clause.”

5. Is there a fast-track process for approval?

Yes, most institutions have a fast-track approval process if the program requires no new courses or faculty, and follows standard admissions process and completion requirements. An institutional three-month approval process is typical in those instances.

6. Will a graduate certificate program cannibalize an existing related degree program?

While this threat is an initial concern, over 90% of the survey respondents reported it has not turned out to be a problem. To the contrary, they have attracted new students who would not

² For a more detailed discussion, the reader is referred to a paper authored by Wayne Patterson, Council of Graduate Schools, **A Structure for Certificate Programs**, January 2000.

otherwise be in graduate school; some subsequently apply to master's programs after completing certificate programs.

7. Are the programs post-baccalaureate or post-masters?

They could be at either level.

8. Are the programs in a single discipline or interdisciplinary?

They could be either single or multi-disciplinary. Greater student interest is reported in multi-disciplinary programs.

9. Are certificate programs offered via distance learning?

No, not now, although many institutions are considering this option.

10. Is the completion of a graduate certificate recognized on the transcript?

Yes.

11. How are graduate certificate programs priced?

They use the same tuition rate as for other graduate degree programs. A few schools provide them at no-charge for existing degree-seeking students.

12. What is the fiscal basis for graduate certificate programs?

At most universities the fiscal issues are handled in the same way as with degree programs.

13. Are certificate students eligible for financial aid?

At most universities, "yes," provided the student is enrolled at least half-time. However, certificate students don't receive the same priority as degree-seeking students.³

14. Who pays the tuition for graduate certificate programs?

Most universities report that employers assume the costs of tuition in graduate certificate programs approximately to the same extent that they do with degree programs.

³ The Office of Student Financial Aid has confirmed that half-time certificate-seeking students are eligible for financial aid, although academic units may wish to award those students aid on a lower priority than degree-seeking students.