

Transcribed Certificate Programs at Western Oregon University

Prepared by 2013-2014 Academic Requirements Committee

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October 2018 update to address technical wording

October 2019 update to address new Federal rules about Financial Aid

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Certificate Programs at Western Oregon University are programs that are designed to better prepare students for employment or advancement in specific career areas, or in areas which are broadly beneficial to careers. As such, WOU Certificate Programs are aligned with professional development and train students for employment or advancement in specialized industries and professions. Some certificates offered at WOU are administered by other entities; the current document applies exclusively to transcribed certificate programs that are part of the official academic offerings at Western Oregon University and are specifically listed on student transcripts. Certificate Programs at WOU have undergone a thorough curriculum review process. Certificates can be earned as part of a degree program or independent of one.

Certificates should have outcomes that are aligned with the university's mission, values, and/or goals, and should be clearly distinguishable from majors, minors, and other educational offerings. These outcomes should be distinct from any other degrees or programs and should lay out the specific skills, abilities, or knowledge that students will achieve through earning the certificate.

Certificates should be formed and maintained with one or more of the following requirements:

1. Alliance/compliance with an established, national or international body that influences and reflects a field's best practices.
2. Adherence to the standards set up by a comparator analysis with other universities that offer similar programs.
3. Guidance from an Advisory Board formed of professionals and/or educators working in the professional area served by the certificate

Certificates require some measure of achievement at their completion, such as a portfolio, test, or internship experience, evaluated by one or more faculty members according to an established rubric. Options for doing this could include, but are not limited to: a capstone experience; different outcomes; specific skills learned; licensure requirements; endorsement, requirements, or alignment with competencies from an exterior body such as a professional organization, accrediting agency, or group of employers; a reflective assignment or experience, etc. In some cases, such as when a certificate is a series of courses which build upon one another, passing the final course may be used as this measure of achievement.

The completion requirement will serve as both an indication to graduates and their instructors that the certificate was completed by a student who has gained the abilities the certificate is meant to foster and as an assessment measure for continual improvement of the certificate.

Requirements for Certificate Program Curriculum Proposals

Proposals for new Certificate Programs at Western Oregon University must satisfy the following requirements for approval.

A. Proposals must go through the full campus curriculum review process as a new program, starting at the department/division level, proceed through the Curriculum or Graduate Studies Committee (as appropriate), Faculty Senate, and ultimately be approved by the WOU Administration.

B. Certificate Programs must be approved by the WOU Board of Trustees. Proposers will need to complete and submit the relevant portions of the HECC Proposal for a New Academic Program prior to Board approval.

C. Certificate Programs must be specifically linked to and/or aligned with professional development. As such, Certificate Programs must target the development of proficiency, competency, and/or expertise in the professional realm and provide documented value to an identifiable industry and/or profession.

D. Before enrolling in a Certificate Program at WOU, candidates must first be admitted to Western Oregon University.

E. In most cases, Certificate Programs at WOU should have a minimum of 12 upper-division undergraduate credit hours or 12 graduate credit hours, with the exception of language certificates at the elementary or intermediate level. In some cases, such as language certificates at the elementary or intermediate level, lower-division courses or fewer credit hours may be permissible. The curriculum must be designed such that the coursework purposefully targets a specific profession or professions, except for language certificates and other areas which by design enhance a student's degree in a wide variety of professions. Programs that include a significant number of electives in broad content areas will not be approved. Certificate programs of different scopes and purposes that do not conform to the above requirements- such as those aligned to specific industry training or certification- may be approved.

F. Certificate programs that have endorsements from, meet standard requirements of, or align with competencies from an external body may be approved without conforming to the above requirements. Faculty should clearly articulate their arguments about why their Certificate Program should be considered an exception to the standard requirements, and should attach relevant documentation to their application.