
Policy on Certificates and Micro-credentials

(This policy was approved by the CSULB Academic Senate on April 11, 2024, and approved by the President on April 23, 2024.)

(Supersedes Policy Statements 16-17 and 85-08)

Certificate: A certificate program is a coherent grouping of courses from one or more disciplines that provides a set of learning experiences, often, but not always, related to a specific career area. Alternatively, a certificate program may provide a multidisciplinary focus on a specific topic or area. A certificate program differs substantially in focus and scope from a degree program, for instance in providing learning for a specific career area or a multidisciplinary focus, although certain common courses may be applied to both degree and certificate courses of study. A certificate provides formal recognition by the University that the course of study involves substantial exposure to the discipline, topic, or area.

Micro-Credential: A Micro-Credential is a series of courses, or a stand-alone course of study, that allows students to gain relevant skills and competencies. Micro-Credentials are compact credentials that complement but differ from certificate and degree programs in that they are smaller and more focused, designed to provide immediate skills, knowledge, and experiences to make students ready for the workforce.

Stackable Micro-Credentials: Wherever possible, Micro-Credentials can be stacked to serve as pathways to earning units toward an initial or advanced degree or a certificate.

1 Types of Certificates

The University authorizes the issuance of the following types of certificates and micro-credentials:

1. Academic Certificate
2. Non-Credit Certificate
3. Academic Micro-Credential
4. Non-Credit Micro-Credential
5. Certificate of Participation

All Certificates and Micro-Credentials bearing the name of the University shall be one of these five types.

Note: this policy does not address teaching credentials.

2 Academic Certificate

An Academic Certificate may be a subset of courses from a degree program or differ substantially in focus from a degree program. Credit-bearing Certificates can be offered state-side or through the College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPaCE). Students may earn an Academic Certificate in recognition of satisfactory completion of a planned sequence of courses at the graduate, post-baccalaureate, or undergraduate levels designed and approved in accordance with the following:

- 2.1 Academic Certificate programs generally shall be designed *either* for graduate or post-baccalaureate students *or* undergraduate students who wish to complete a certificate program concurrently with their declared major. A certificate could be considered either undergraduate or post-baccalaureate based upon the student's status when adding the certificate to their degree plan.
- 2.2 Regulations enacted by the U.S. Department of Education require that 'stand-alone' certificate programs prepare students for gainful employment in order to be eligible to receive Federal Financial Aid.
- 2.3 Academic Certificate programs need to be classified by the College or Department as belonging to one of the following categories: an undergraduate, a post-baccalaureate, or a graduate certificate. Any of these certificates can be classified as a stand-alone program that meets stand-alone Federal Financial Aid eligibility guidelines.
- 2.4 A minimum of 12 units is required for an Academic Certificate. Departments may require a baccalaureate degree as a prerequisite to admission to a post-baccalaureate or graduate certificate.
- 2.5 Undergraduate certificate programs with 12-18 units shall consist of at least 75% upper-division units. Up to 6 units of graduate-level coursework may be included in the 75% of units. Undergraduate certificate programs may be offered to currently enrolled undergraduates in conjunction with their baccalaureate studies. Certificate programs over 18 units must contain at least 12 of their units at the upper-division level.
- 2.6 Post-baccalaureate certificate programs with 12-18 units shall consist of at least 75% upper-division units. Up to 6 units of graduate-level coursework may be included in the 75% of units. The certificate does not need to be taken in conjunction with a degree program. Certificate programs over 18 units must contain at least 12 of their units at the upper-division level.
- 2.7 Graduate certificate programs must include at least 70% of graduate-level units. Graduate certificate programs may be offered to currently enrolled graduate students in conjunction with their graduate studies or to post-baccalaureate students. With the permission of the graduate degree program, up to 15 units may be counted toward both a graduate Academic Certificate program and a graduate degree program.
- 2.8 Any prerequisites for the courses in the Academic Certificate program shall be clearly stated and included in the listed unit range of the certificate program in the Catalog.
- 2.9 No more than 25% of the units required for the Academic Certificate program shall be transfer units from another academic institution or credit for prior learning.
- 2.10 All credit courses in the Academic Certificate program shall be graded as letter grade, except for those courses that are offered only on a Credit/No Credit basis.
- 2.11 Approval of the Academic Certificate program's curriculum shall follow standard University curricular procedures.
- 2.12 Although Chancellor's Office authorization is not needed for new certificates, WSCUC authorization is required for credit-bearing certificates.

3 Non-Credit Certificate

Students may earn Non-Credit Certificates only through the College of Professional and Continuing Education in recognition of the satisfactory completion of a planned sequence of not-for-credit courses. Non-Credit Certificate programs are designed to prepare students for employment and/or acquire new skills to enhance career prospects or pursue knowledge or competencies that fulfill lifelong learning goals. Non-Credit Certificates should not duplicate stateside programs except when serving distinct populations, and relevant stateside faculty and programs should be consulted before such programs are created.

- 3.1 Non-Credit Certificates are typically designed to align with industry or workforce development agency requirements or standards. Some courses may require successful completion of industry

- standardized tests or certification exams. Non-credit courses are not eligible for financial aid.
- 3.2 Any prerequisites for the courses in a Non-Credit Certificate program shall be clearly stated.
 - 3.3 Non-Credit Certificate courses that include assessment of competency may be considered for credit for prior learning at a later time. Please consult the [Policy on Credit for Prior Learning \(CPL\)](#) for further information.
 - 3.4 Students who successfully complete a course or program of study will receive a notation of "Complete" or "Incomplete" on their learning record as deemed appropriate by the instructor of record.
 - 3.5 Non-Credit Certificate program courses may be offered for Continuing Education Units (CEU) based on contact hours for each course in a program (10 Hours = 1 CEU). Students may request a copy of their record for CEUs earned for a course.
 - 3.6 Establishment of a Non-Credit Certificate program's curriculum shall require approval from the Provost (or designee), the Chair of Academic Senate, and appropriate college curriculum committee(s) and dean(s).

4 Academic Micro-Credential

Academic Micro-Credentials are credit-bearing programs. Students may earn an Academic Micro-Credential in recognition of satisfactory completion of a series of courses, or a stand-alone course of study that may involve multiple learning experiences and assessments that are aligned with student learning outcomes.

Academic Micro-Credentials can be offered state-side or through CPaCE.

- 4.1 Academic Micro-Credentials can be offered with a minimum of 3 units and a maximum of 11 units. The majority of these offerings require no prior education ("background") in the subject area.
- 4.2 All credit courses in an Academic Micro-Credential program shall be graded as Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit.
- 4.3 With the permission of the graduate degree program, up to a total of 15 units from multiple Academic Micro-Credentials may be counted toward both a graduate-level Academic Certificate program and a graduate degree program.
- 4.4 Students who complete an Academic Micro-Credential program will receive a notation on their learning record.
- 4.5 Academic Micro-Credential programs shall be approved by the College Curriculum Committee(s) that most closely align(s) with disciplinary expertise, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, the Curriculum and Educational Policies Council (CEPC), and the University Resources Council (URC).

5 Non-Credit Micro-Credentials

- 5.1 Students may earn Non-Credit Micro-Credentials only through the College of Professional and Continuing Education in recognition of satisfactory completion of a grouping of Non-Credit courses.
- 5.2 Non-Credit Micro-Credentials are short-term programs, delivered in a flexible format, based on the learners' and/or employers' needs that include assessment of competency.
- 5.3 Non-Credit Micro-Credentials are stackable.
- 5.4 Non-Credit Micro-Credential courses may be considered for credit for prior learning at a later time. Please consult the Policy on [Credit for Prior Learning \(CPL\)](#) for further information.

6. Certificate of Participation

A Certificate of Participation may be awarded in recognition of any of a wide variety of educational experiences sponsored by a unit of the University. Such certificates are not meant to connote any specific

level of competence and may not be designed or used for such purposes. The rules governing the issuance of such a certificate bearing the University's name or the name of any of its colleges, departments, units, or centers, are as follows:

- 6.1 A Certificate of Participation shall not bear the University seal.
- 6.2 A Certificate of Participation shall not be awarded for completion of regular University credit courses individually or in clusters.
- 6.3 All wording on a Certificate of Participation should be such that there is no implication that the University by issuing this kind of certificate is attesting to any level of skills gained or educational achievement.
- 6.4 Requests to issue a Certificate of Participation shall be reviewed and approved by the Dean of the appropriate College.

7. Documentation

Certificates, micro-credentials (both academic and non-credit), other learning experiences (such as completion of or participation in courses), and hard or soft skills and competencies (academic or non-credit, demonstrated through courses, exams, projects, or other means that measure and assess the outcomes) shall be documented by appropriate departments.

- 7.1 Academic certificates and micro-credentials shall be documented in the student's transcript through appropriate departments (e.g., Enrollment Services). Non-credit certificates and micro-credential may be recorded in digital form on an appropriate platform through appropriate departments (e.g., Academic Technology Services).
- 7.2 The title of the record must reflect whether the accomplishment is credit-bearing or not and shall reflect the level of the learning experience (for instance in terms of time invested by the student or academic rigor). Only certificates and micro-credentials approved through the regular curricular process shall receive those titles. Other learning experiences might receive names such as competency, skill, achievement, knowledge, training, milestone, badge, etc. Learning experiences approved by professional organizations shall receive the titles preferred by those organizations.
- 7.3 While certificates and micro-credentials must be approved through the regular curricular process, regardless of their point of initiation, other learning experiences can also be created by divisions or units such as Student Affairs, Academic Technology Services, the Office of Undergraduate Research Services, etc.