

Self-Standing Certificates in the Graduate School – New Brunswick

In many areas a certificate earned primarily by a set of courses is an appropriate offering that not only provides advanced education and training, but prepares the candidate for specific career opportunities by providing a set of useful skills. Such advanced training is becoming increasingly important in meeting the needs of a professionally trained workforce. In response to the demand in both the public and private sectors for self-standing certificates, we anticipate that graduate programs and inter-program faculty groups across the New Brunswick campus will wish to consider new offerings of this kind, available to prospective students who are not also enrolled in degree programs. Therefore, the Graduate School – New Brunswick feels it is timely to provide guidance to faculty groups considering such new directions, so that proposals will take into account the factors that would be considered by the Graduate School before recommending their adoption.

A program proposing the establishment of a self-standing certificate should prepare a proposal that summarizes the purpose of the proposed program, the academic components of the program, the expected learning outcomes, assessment methods and standards and the resources that would be available to support the initiative, both academically and administratively. The proposal should also have examined how the proposed program supports the Rutgers mission and complements or goes beyond current offerings on the New Brunswick campus.

Once a proposal has been developed, the faculty member leading the initiative should submit it to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, who will present it to the appropriate area committee (or committees, for proposals that cross the major disciplinary areas) for consideration. Upon recommendation of the Area Committee(s), the proposal is forwarded to the Executive Council of the Graduate School. The Area Committees and the Executive Council are bodies of experienced faculty members who have been appointed or elected to serve in this oversight capacity. Both of these bodies will be examining proposals to determine how they satisfy the criteria outlined above and meet the expectations for excellence and sustainability. Upon recommendation of the Executive Council, the proposal is forwarded to the entire Graduate Faculty for consideration. If a new self-standing certificate program is recommended, upon approval by the Graduate Faculty the proposal is forwarded to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs for approval and presentation to the Board of Governors. Normally, such proposals are also circulated to other schools at Rutgers or other universities across the state before final adoption; they may also be the subject of review by an external consultant.

The following provides additional guidance on the components of a complete proposal for a new certificate program.

Goals for the Program

The proposal should document the goals that the new program is being designed to achieve: the students who would be served, the envisioned professional impact of this opportunity in meeting the needs of these students, and how the program complements the mission of the Graduate School – New Brunswick in providing graduate education. Proposed new programs or options

may be developed to serve the business or technical community of New Jersey or the tri-state region, but they could also serve teachers or the general public. Proposals should also address how graduate students in degree programs in New Brunswick could participate and benefit, in particular to provide practical components to their education. The proposal should describe how the program would work with those degree recipients in preparing them for and realizing careers in the business, industry, or service sectors motivating the proposed program. Measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the new program should be enumerated, as well as mechanisms proposed to monitor and take into account the evolving needs of the students to be served, especially since needs in the private sector are likely to change over time. A review of the progress of these new self-standing certificate programs, including data identifying the graduates' satisfaction with the program, should take place within five years after they have been established.

Complementing existing offerings

Proposals for new programs are expected to complement the current offerings in New Brunswick. Any significant overlap with other programs at Rutgers University or other programs offered in the State should be documented. If there is partial duplication of other New Brunswick programs, the proposal should justify it.

Quality of the program and its offerings

Central to all proposals is a discussion of the quality of the proposed program. Proposals should discuss the commitment and expertise of the graduate faculty members who will be developing the curriculum and teaching the courses, the educational preparation and characteristics of the students the program will attract, and the intellectual quality of the course offerings. It should articulate the learning goals of the program.

Proposals should document the commitment of the graduate faculty of the program to develop the curriculum, teach the courses, and advise and mentor the students. This should include a faculty "home" that can maintain continuity and quality control. The courses should be taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty members. If some courses will be taught by adjunct faculty members, their long-term commitment to the program should be documented.

An outline of the courses for the new program should be included with all proposal submissions. The proposals should include a description of who would take any new courses, i.e., only a new cohort of certificate students or both new certificate students and current degree students. If existing courses would be used, the proposals should address the different expectations of degree students and certificate students in the same classrooms. If certificate students take the same courses as Ph.D. students, the proposal should address how this could affect the quality of the experience for Ph.D. students or the ability of the certificate students to meet the expectations of the course. Proposals should address how courses that would predominantly serve certificate students would affect the faculty's commitment to Ph.D. education in the program. Detailed course proposals should ideally be submitted at the time a new program or option is proposed; clearly, they must be submitted for approval by the Graduate School before they are offered.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment

All proposals should include the specific learning outcomes for the certificate program and the specific course offerings. Additionally, methods for measuring the extent to which the certificates have met the specific programmatic goals as well as the students' learning goals will need to be enumerated.

Admission and Requirements

Proposals should consider the optimum size of the proposed program, when the program would admit its first cohort and over what time period the program would ramp up to full size. The proposal should describe the credentials expected of successful applicants. The Graduate School currently requires GRE General scores for all applicants; requests for a waiver of this requirement for a certificate program should be supported by specific arguments. Recommendations for admission should be made by a graduate faculty-based committee and would be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School – New Brunswick, who makes the offers of admission. Since students in certificate programs may not have the credentials to proceed to the master's or Ph.D., the proposal should address how the program would articulate realistic expectations to the certificate students, *i.e.*, that the certificate program is not normally an entrée to an existing degree program and that success as a certificate student does not itself warrant one's admission to candidacy for a degree program.

Resources

The proposal should document that there are sufficient resources, faculty, administrative, and physical, to implement a successful graduate experience. The proposal should document that graduate faculty members have been identified to teach the courses, advise the students at all stages of their studies and as they prepare for future careers, and mentor them in any capstone experiences. The proposal should also discuss the administration of the program. This includes a director for the new program and administrative support, such as office space, administrative support staff, and funds to recruit the new students.

If the new program will be requesting a tuition rate that is different from that of other Graduate School – New Brunswick programs, the differential tuition rate should be justified, and would require approval by the Board of Governors.