

UTDPP1120

Academic Credentials Policy - Certificates, Digital Badges, and Recognition of Completion

Policy Statement

The University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas) will provide learners various pathways to earn credentials that will meet current workforce needs. Learners include UT Dallas enrolled students desiring proficiency in certain disciplines, UT Dallas alumni who need to update their skills and abilities to remain current in their chosen fields, and those who may or may not possess a degree but need a credential to pursue employment opportunities and to advance their careers. Irrespective of their status, learners' skills and accomplishments will be recognized with verifiable and identifiable methods, including transcripts and digital badges.

Definitions

Academic Certificates: Consist of semester-based, credit-bearing, and graded UT Dallas courses offered on the undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate levels. UT Dallas academic certificates typically have a minimum of semester credit hours (SCH), ranging from 9 to 15 SCH. Lower or higher SCH requirements may be appropriate depending on the scope of the subject of the certificate. Completed certificates are recorded in academic records and on transcripts.

Embedded Academic Certificates: Some UT Dallas degree programs have embedded certificates that can be completed en route to completion of the degree program. Students who enroll in embedded academic certificates are degree-seeking students at UT Dallas.

Stand-alone Academic Certificates: Certificates designated as stand-alone may be taken by students enrolled in degree programs as well as by students only seeking the certificate (non degree seeking). Admission to a stand-alone academic certificate program does not constitute admission to a degree program. Generally, students are certificate-seeking, although they may choose to apply to degree programs and become degree-seeking.

Professional Certificates: Consist of non-credit modules aimed at full-time professionals (non-degree seeking students) who are seeking additional knowledge and/or certification. These certificates are typically earned in a short timeframe within a year or less. Learners will receive awarded certificates that will not be recorded on transcripts; learners may receive digital badges and/or other approved institutional documents.

Digital Badges: A digital badge is a digital representation that recognizes participation and competencies, skills and achievements earned by learners. These badges will include verifiable and identifiable data associated with the specific learner. Digital badges are most commonly awarded for professional certificates, but may also recognize the completion of other activities.

Alternative Credential Platforms: Non-traditional and digital credentials are offered through UT Dallas' partnerships with approved third-party vendors. These alternative credentials may be viewed as pathways to obtain attainable and accessible education. Such courses or modules may be used as materials supplemental to instruction provided within UT Dallas graded, organized courses or may be offered as a stand-alone program. Digital badges do not come with letter grades upon completion, and therefore do not add or subtract to an enrolled student's GPA, or produce a GPA for non-enrolled students. The following section on Transfer Credit provides additional information regarding credit earned within these platforms.

Transferring in Alternative Credentials

Students may petition for transfer credit when they provide official documentation of awarded digital badges or other alternative credentials according to the policies and procedures of the University Catalog. As credit is petitioned after admission, academic credit for awarded alternative credentials will not be considered as part of an applicant's transferable GPA or transfer hours for admission. Some schools or programs may opt not to allow individual petitions for credit for awarded digital badges, as specified on their departmental websites.

Approvals

Before an academic certificate that meets these definitions can be advertised or students enrolled, the program must be approved according to the school's curricular approval process; the Chief Academic Officer; the Office of Institutional Success and Decision Support; the Graduate Council or the Council for Undergraduate Education, as appropriate; the Committee on Educational Policy; and the Academic Senate. An assessment plan must accompany every proposal request to establish an academic certificate. Proposals may include a request that a

digital badge be created for the program; this should assert that the program constitutes a "credential of value" or comparable offering as specified by THECB.

Changing the academic certificate program's length (semester credit hours) may be subject to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) approval in accordance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

Templates for academic certificates and for assessment plans can be found online on the [New Certificate Program](#) Forms website.

Approvals should be secured for professional certificates before offering them. Schools interested in offering these types of credentials are encouraged to review the Professional Certificate template.

Assessment

Academic certificates will be assessed annually, according to the assessment plan on file, per guidance of the University Assessment Committee (see UTDPP1098).

Periodic Certificate Program Reviews

Academic certificate programs will be reviewed periodically, in accord with UTDPP1013 Academic Program Review. Embedded certificates should be reviewed at the same time as the degrees in which they are embedded, and stand-alone certificates with the same CIP codes should also be reviewed at that time.

Recognition of Certificate Completion on Student Transcripts

Undergraduate academic certificates: The student's transcript will reflect that the student has completed the undergraduate level academic certificate program, if the student (a) has a grade point average of at least 2.0 in the organized courses that constitute the undergraduate academic certificate program, (b) meets all academic standards as required by the school and stated in the University Catalog, (c) the certificate program and the courses constituting such program are listed in the University Catalog, and (d) the student declares to the Responsible University Official (RUO) of the Program their intent to complete the certificate.

Graduate academic certificates: The student's transcript will reflect that the student has completed the graduate level academic certificate program, if the student (a) has a grade point average of at least 3.0 in the organized courses that constitute the graduate academic certificate program, (b) meets all academic standards as required by the school and stated in the University Catalog, (c) the certificate program and the courses constituting such program are listed in the University Catalog, and (d) the student declares to the RUO of the Program their intent to complete the certificate.

Students must apply to graduate with the certificate. A certificate will be awarded according to the University Catalog graduation deadlines and requirements. The Office of the Registrar will certify that all undergraduate certificate program requirements have been met and will award the student's certificate. The Office of Graduate Education will certify that all graduate certificate program requirements have been met and will award the student's graduate certificate.

Recognition of Earned Credentials on Other Institutional Documents

The official academic transcript remains as the official document and will list the degree and major, and if applicable, second major, double degree, minors, concentrations, designations, academic certificates, and academic honors. Other institutional documents may include the following:

1. Digital badge: an official record that recognizes participation and competencies, skills and achievements earned by learners and awarded upon completion.
2. Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR): an official portable document that captures different methods of learning, both in and outside of the classroom, by recording career ready skills and experiences earned by learners. The document may include one or more credentials, such as badges, degrees, certificates, courses, and experiences.

Closing a Certificate Program

In accordance with the University and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Substantive Change policies, an academic certificate program may not be closed until UT Dallas has received prior SACSCOC approval of a teach-out plan. The dean of the school must submit to the Office of Institutional Success and Decision Support (OISDS) a memo that includes the rationale for closure (such as low enrollments or

shifts in market demand) and a teach-out plan for currently enrolled students. OISDS will submit the request to SACSCOC.

A teach-out plan is not needed when closing a professional certificate program; however, the dean of the school should notify the OISDS if the professional

Declaring Admission into a Certificate Program and Reporting

Students must declare admission into a certificate program so that they can be tracked within the University's student data system as a certificate program student. Students must declare admission to an embedded certificate before Census Day of the first term of certificate enrollment. Students must declare admission to a stand-alone certificate according to admission deadlines within the University Catalog. Admission to certificate programs is outlined in the University Catalog.

Financial Aid

Federal and state financial aid is not available for certificate programs at UTD. While students may qualify for financial aid for degree programs that include certificate courses, they are not eligible for aid specifically for the certificate programs themselves. Additionally, financial aid is not available for digital badges.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

LAST REVIEWED

- Unknown

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