



# Policy on Approving, Implementing and Administrating Certificate Programs

December 1, 2002

Responsible Office: College of Graduate and Professional Programs

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## 1. Authority

According to James Madison University policy, the College of Graduate and Professional Programs holds responsibility as a coordinating entity to a variety of instructional products both on and off campus to meet the continuing education needs of the workforce. These products include but are not limited to: professional development planning services, graduate and undergraduate credit courses, **credit and noncredit certificate programs**, custom-designed courses, contract courses, packaged programs, and external degree programs.

## 2. Definitions

A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM is any voluntary, non-degree, prescribed course of study, credit or noncredit, that upon satisfactory completion results in the awarding of a certificate. Certificate programs may be at the undergraduate, graduate, or non-credit level. A certificate program at the undergraduate level should consist of a minimum of 12 credit hours or 140 noncredit contact hours to a maximum of 33 credit hours, while a certificate program at the graduate level should consist of a minimum of 6 credit hours or 70 noncredit contact hours to a maximum of 18 credit hours. This distinguishes a "Certificate Program" from workshops, seminars, or conferences that provide participants with a documentation of participation or attendance and/or less than 12 CEUs at the undergraduate level and 7 CEUs at the graduate level.

A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM COORDINATOR is the individual responsible for unit coordination, administration, and decision-making regarding the certificate program. This person serves as the primary contact with the College of Graduate and Professional Programs regarding the certificate program.

A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ADVISOR is an individual responsible for advising students on academic matters related to the certificate program. The Certificate Program Advisor also completes the certificate program audit when a student completes coursework.

CGAPP is the acronym for College of Graduate and Professional Programs.

## 3. Program Development and Approval

A certificate program may be created and developed by JMU Instructional or Administrative Faculty. The appropriate Deans and Unit Coordinators involved, as well as appropriate college C& I committees (when programs bear credit), will review and approve all certificate programs. Certificate programs are developed **primarily** for non-degree seeking students, although programs for degree-seeking students are not excluded, and degree-seeking students may be permitted to enroll in a certificate program.

### **3.1 Credit Certificate Program Approval**

- 3.1.1 All credit certificate programs should be comprised of only approved JMU credit courses. Under certain circumstances, approved credit courses from comparable institutions may comprise a portion of a program; JMU should be in official partnership with such institutions (e.g. a consortia).
- 3.1.2 If a credit certificate program is intended to be offered as part of JMU's official curriculum, the program should go through official C&I curriculum approval for a new program. Credit courses comprising this type of certificate program must be approved through official C&I process or with the exception mentioned above.
- 3.1.3 Occasionally a need exists to expedite the development of a certificate to respond to an immediate need in the community, and/or if a credit certificate is intended to be offered to a specific cohort of individuals on a temporary basis, and/or the program is developed on a trial basis, the program may be considered "Experimental", and need only be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Department Heads and Deans. Credit courses comprising this type of certificate program may be experimental courses or C&I approved courses.
- 3.1.4 "Experimental" certificates may run for up to two years before they must gain C&I approval and become part of the official JMU curriculum.
- 3.1.5 Prior to the implementation of a certificate program, the individual or department must complete the appropriate curriculum approval form.

### **3.2 Non-Credit Certificate Program Approval**

- 3.2.1 Appropriate Department Heads and/or Deans should approve non-credit courses comprising non-credit certificate programs.
- 3.2.2 Non-credit certificates will be considered "Experimental" until adopted into the official University catalog.

## **4. Certificate Program Implementation**

### **4.1 General**

- 4.1.1 Faculty or administrators wishing to offer a JMU certificate must submit the appropriate curriculum form indicating program approval with all appropriate signatures to the CGAPP.
- 4.1.2 A Certificate Program Coordinator and a Certificate Program Advisor must be designated for each Certificate Program. One person can serve in both positions for a program. A secondary coordinator/contact is desired.

- 4.1.3 Each certificate program must have an applicable Certificate Program Plan Form. Students enrolled in certificate programs must complete this form, in consultation with their Certificate Program advisor, prior to beginning coursework. The Certificate Program Advisor/Coordinator and the student must sign the Certificate Program Plan form, and file a copy with the CGAPP.

## **4.2 Certificate Program Application Fees**

- 4.2.1 An application fee applies to each certificate program. This fee is waived for JMU degree-seeking students.
- 4.2.2 Any prerequisite requirements for entry into the program should be stated on marketing materials and application instructions (for example: two years work experience or Associates Degree, Baccalaureate degree, specific skills or abilities).
- 4.2.3 A student must have a completed Certificate Program Application Form (non-degree), Change of Major/Minor/Certificate (undergraduate), or Request to Add a Certificate Program (graduate) on file with the CGAPP in order for their file to be considered complete, and in order to receive a certificate.

## **4.3 Certificate Program Plan Form**

- 4.3.1 Each program will have a Program Plan form.
- 4.3.2 The Program Plan form outlines a plan of study that the student must satisfactorily complete in order to receive the certificate. This form facilitates the certificate program audit when a student completes his/her program.
- 4.3.3 Each certificate-seeking student should complete the Program Plan form in consultation with his/her advisor. The advisor must sign the completed form.
- 4.3.4 A completed Program Plan form must be on file with the CGAPP in order for the student's file to be considered complete, and in order for the student to receive a certificate.

## **4.4 Certificate Fee**

- 4.4.1 All students, whether degree seeking or non-degree seeking, will be assessed a Certificate Fee. This fee is not the application fee, but an administrative processing fee assessed to cover administrative costs of creating and maintaining files on the student, tracking the student through his/her program, ensuring the program completion is noted on the student's transcript, and awarding of the certificate.
- 4.4.2 A student will not be billed for the certificate fee until after he/she is accepted into the certificate program.
- 4.4.3 A student will be assessed the certificate fee for each certificate program in which they are enrolled.

# **5. Program Administration**

## **5.1 General**

- 5.1.1 General administration of a certificate program will occur within the CGAPP.
- 5.1.2 The CGAPP will maintain a file for each student enrolled in a certificate program. A copy of the application form, Certificate Program Plan Form, and documentation of the student's satisfactory completion of program requirements will compose the student's file. This documentation may include JMU transcripts, transcripts from other institutions where appropriate coursework was completed, letters of support, or other such documents deemed acceptable by the program advisor.
- 5.1.3 The CGAPP will issue the appropriate certificate to the student upon satisfactory completion of the program requirements.
- 5.1.4 A certificate will not be issued until all documentation is present in the student's file in the CGAPP, and the Certificate Program Plan Form is verified.
- 5.1.5 **Completion of a credit certificate program will be noted on the individual's official transcript.**

## 5.2 Specific

- 5.2.1 Program-specific administration will occur within the appropriate department(s).
- 5.2.2 Changes to program prerequisites, requirements, or course of study options will occur at the program level and must go through the C& I process. Changes must be submitted to the CGAPP promptly.
- 5.2.3 Changes in program advisors and program coordinators will occur at the program level, and the CGAPP must be notified promptly.
- 5.2.4 Programs hold the authority to accept or decline application to the program, although it is recommended that such decisions be made in consultation with the CGAPP, particularly when a program is experimental.

## 5.3 Student Advising

- 5.3.1 Student advising will take place through the program.
- 5.3.2 Each Certificate Program must have at least one Certificate Program Advisor.
- 5.3.3 An advisor may also hold the role of Certificate Program Coordinator.
- 5.3.4 The Certificate Program Coordinator conducts the audit of the certificate verifying the student's successful completion of program requirements.
- 5.3.5 A copy of the student's signed/verified (audited) Program Plan Form must be on file in the CGAPP before a certificate is issued and program completion is noted on a student's transcript.

## 6. Program Enrollment

- 6.1 The student must complete the certificate program's application form and submit the form to the CGAPP. Documentation of meeting prerequisites should accompany the form.
- 6.2 Program advisors will review applications and determine the applicants' acceptance or denial. Applicant interviews are permitted and encouraged.

## **7. Transfer Credit**

- 7.1 The Program Coordinator will determine the maximum number of transfer credits (up to a maximum of 50% of the total program hours) that may be counted towards completion of the certificate program.
- 7.2 The program coordinator will also determine whether this credit may be transferred from institutions other than JMU or from within JMU, or both.

## **8. Timeline for Completion of a Program**

- 8.1 The Program Coordinator determines the maximum time limit for completion of a certificate program (up to a maximum of one year per 3 credits after enrollment in a certificate program.) A student who exceeds this time limit must reapply for the program and pay all applicable fees.

## **9. Evaluation**

- 9.1 The Program Coordinator ensure that each student evaluates each course in a certificate program during the semester in which the course is taken.
- 9.2 CGAPP will ensure that each student is asked to evaluate the certificate program upon completion of the program. Students completing certificate programs will be asked to complete a standard evaluation form (web-based or paper) prior to receiving their certificate.
- 9.3 CGAPP will maintain records of certificate program evaluations and copy them to Program Coordinators.