

GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

I. The Purpose of the Undergraduate Certificate Program

- A. The purpose of this proposal is to outline the Undergraduate Council's recommendations for the admissions and academic requirements, as well as the associated policies, of newly created undergraduate certificates that are not included as part of another undergraduate program.
- B. As of Fall 2018, George Mason University offers 11 baccalaureate/undergraduate certificate programs. The Undergraduate Council is investigating the opportunity to create additional certificate options that do not have the same admissions requirements as the current baccalaureate/undergraduate offerings. Additionally, standardization around certificate program structure and requirements, as well as policies affecting certificate applicants and students, must be explored.

II. Criteria and Program Requirements for the Undergraduate Certificates

- A. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) provides several guidelines concerning undergraduate certificates. In addition to these guidelines, the Undergraduate Council proposes the following.
- B. A program length of between 9 – 18 credit hours
 - 1) Mason recommends certificate programs of 12-18 credit hours;
 - 2) At least 50% of the program at or above the 300-level;
 - a) Any prerequisites for 300/400-level courses must be part of the curriculum plan;
 - 3) New certificate students may transfer in only 3 credits of previous coursework toward the completion of a certificate

C. Proposed certificates must:

- 1) Not compete with other currently offered programs at NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES;
- 2) Have a clearly defined audience;
- 3) Be composed of integrated, focused, and pre-existing courses;
- 4) Be based on specific learning objectives and outcomes;
- 5) Be provide as a stand-alone program, or as part of another program, but is not automatically earned by completing the requirements for a major;
- 6) Be subject to established residency and unique credit requirements
- 7)
- 8) Include annual data collection and evaluation plan

D. Certificate students have 8 semesters from matriculation (not including summers) to complete their certificate program.

E. Certificate students will be responsible for abiding by all undergraduate academic policies of all undergraduate degree seeking students

III. Admissions and Application Process

A. Admissions Policies

- 1) Applying for Admission - Application for admission to an undergraduate certificate should be made to the Office of Admissions. Applications are available at www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now. A non-refundable and non-transferable fee must accompany the application

- 2) Application Deadlines for Applicants with or without previous college credits - The application deadline for fall admission is January 15 for certificate applicants without any previously attempted post-secondary college coursework, and March 1 for certificate applicants with attempted post-secondary college coursework. The application deadline for the spring semester is October 1. Applications received after published deadlines will be considered on a space-available basis only. The university reserves the right to close applications before published deadlines if conditions warrant. Admission is contingent on satisfactory completion of in-progress course work and graduation from high school or community college, if relevant.
- 3) Enrollment after Previous Attendance - Students in good academic standing who have missed one or more consecutive semesters of enrollment (excluding summer term) at Mason, and who do not meet any of the excluded categories listed below under Readmission after Previous Attendance, may re-enter by completing a re-enrollment form available through the Office of the University Registrar. Undergraduate Certificate students do not need to submit a re-enrollment form if an approved Leave of Absence is on file. Upon re-enrollment, undergraduate certificate students who do not have an approved Leave of Absence on file will be required to meet new catalog year requirements. Some academic programs require departmental approval prior to re-enrollment.
- 4) Readmission after Previous Attendance - Undergraduate certificate students who have missed one or more consecutive semesters of enrollment (excluding summer term) at Mason must apply for readmission through the Office of Admissions if any of the following conditions are true:
 - a) The student has not been enrolled at Mason for more than 2 years and an approved Leave of Absence form is not on file;
 - b) The student is an undergraduate returning after any absence during which he or she studied at another institution without prior written permission of his or her school or college. Such students must reapply as transfer students;
 - c) The student was suspended or dismissed from any college or university for nonacademic reasons;
 - d) The student was academically dismissed from Mason;
 - e) The student was ever convicted of a felony.

- f) Right to Rescind Admission - Mason reserves the right to rescind offers of admission if applicants fail to (1) successfully complete their current academic program, (2) maintain grades that meet the requirements for admission to George Mason, and (3) exhibit exemplary personal conduct prior to enrollment. Additionally, Mason may rescind an offer of admission based on cancellation or change of any test score required for admission or if it is determined that admission was obtained through the use of incomplete, falsified, altered, or embellished information. Mason also reserves the right to impose restrictions or requirements on the admission of a student (e.g., housing or educational restrictions or additional conditions or requirements prior to enrollment) as a result of any of the foregoing. Admitted students are required to update the Office of Admissions promptly of any new information that may affect their admission, including, but not limited to, any changes in their participation in their current academic program or their grades, or any conduct related issues (e.g., criminal matters and school discipline matters).

Upon learning of any relevant changes to a student's record, either directly from the student or from a third-party, the Dean of Admissions shall refer the case to the appropriate committee for review. The student shall have an opportunity to provide a written statement to the Dean of Admissions for consideration by the committee. The committee shall make a recommendation to the Dean of Admissions regarding whether the offer of admission should be rescinded or whether any restrictions or additional requirements should be placed on the student. In the case of withdrawal of admission from a matriculated student, credit earned at Mason may be withheld.

- 5) Domicile - The Office of Admissions applies the Code of Virginia (§ 23.1-500 through 510) to determine whether students are domiciled in Virginia, and thereby qualify for in-state tuition. All certificate applicants who believe they qualify for in-state tuition rates must complete the Application for In-State Tuition (sections A and/or B) at the time of application.
- 6) Changing Programs of Study - Certificate students are not permitted to change their program level from certificate to bachelor's degree without submitting a new application to George Mason University. Admission into, or completion of, a certificate program does not guarantee admission into a bachelor's degree program at George Mason University.
 - a) Note that applicants who wish to change to a degree program after the completion of their certificate must complete Freshman English Composition and a Mason Core equivalent math prior to admission review. The English course must be equivalent to ENGH 101 and the Math course must be equivalent to one of the following: MATH 106, 108, 110, 111, 113. 125 or STAT 250. Virginia Community College System (VCCS) applicants see below. College Algebra is not accepted. Qualifying courses in English and Math must be completed prior to application. These courses may be taken at Mason as part of the certificate program.

B. Admissions Requirements

- 1) Applicants with no previously attempted post-secondary work follow the freshman requirements outlined in the catalog.

[https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/undergraduate-policies/
#freshmantext](https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/undergraduate-policies/#freshmantext)

- 2) Applicants with previously attempted post-secondary work – The following factors are considered when reviewing applicants for admission to certificate programs:
- a) Applicants who have more than 30 transferable credits:
 - (i) Recommended cumulative college grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 (applicants are required to submit official college transcripts from all post-secondary coursework attempted);
 - (ii) Required personal statement (topic varies by program);
 - (iii) Required Resume;
 - (iv) For all non-native English speakers, scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam;
 - b) Applicants who have fewer than 30 transferable credits must also submit, in addition to the above, the following:
 - (i) Final High School Transcript;
 - (ii) Scores from SAT I or ACT (unless applying as a Score Optional applicant);
 - c) Note: The Admissions Committee may request either of these credentials for some students who have completed more than 30 credits.

IV. Student Services for Certificate Students

- A. Immunization Requirements – All certificate students are required to comply with university requirements surrounding the submission of immunization records.
- B. Financial Aid – Federal Financial Aid is not available, at this time, for undergraduate certificate programs.
- C. Housing - Undergraduate certificate students are not eligible for on-campus housing.
- D. Registration – Certificate students register for classes based on the number of earned credits.

V. Resource Needs for Undergraduate Certificate Program

VI. Implementation Timeline