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GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATE AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Introduction

This policy replaces the academic policy, "Guidelines for Certificates, Workshops, and Non-Degree Programs" in order to bring GW policy into sync with the modern era of rapidly expanding "alternative credential programs," programs that are shorter than degree programs such as certificate and micro-credential programs and that are offered by colleges and universities worldwide. Driven primarily by demand from both students and employers for short, focused educational programs that develop specific competencies needed in the workplace, alternative credential programs may take a wide variety of forms (e.g., in-person or online continuing education offerings, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), bundled sets of courses, multi-week on-campus programs). They may be offered either for-credit or not-for-credit and can appeal to students currently enrolled in GW undergraduate or graduate degree programs or to learners coming to the University from outside (as alumni, as non-alumni, through their employers, or on their own).

Alternative credential programs such as micro-certificates can give learners an opportunity to sample a field of study to determine whether they want to seek a certificate or degree in it; gain, in a cost-effective way, the skills they most need at a given point in their life to become employable; update prior training or advance in a chosen career; or simply learn about something that interests them. They can increase awareness of GW programs for new audiences, expand access to the wealth of learning opportunities at GW, and enable schools and programs that respond to emerging opportunities in the market place to grow.

In developing and offering these innovative alternative credential programs, academic quality should be the foremost consideration. Priority should also be given to identifying and meeting the learning and career development needs of current and future learners in conjunction with the needs of the private and public entities that hire and employ our well-educated students. With the exception of workshops and short courses (Category 1 below), alternative credential programs must be developed through established, faculty-governed curricular approval processes and approved by the relevant approving officials and committees before they are offered. These programs can be either for-credit or not-for credit and should be designated as one or the other for clarity. Thought should be given to "stackability," or the extent to which a program relates to, and can be combined with other credentials to create a meaningful learning path that may lead some learners to a larger credential such as a degree.

Digital Badges

Increasingly awarded at many colleges and universities that offer alternative credential programs to undergraduate and graduate students, digital badges are typically online, verifiable, and portable recognition of knowledge, skills, and competencies mastered by learners. They have become an important part of the alternative credentials movement as a way to demonstrate that students have mastered specific employment-related skills. An "open badge" is a type of digital badge that conforms to the open badges standard and includes metadata providing detailed information about the credential and how it was earned. Badges can be linked to resumes; posted on websites and social media sites such as LinkedIn; shared with potential employers; and otherwise used by students to document what they

have learned in a GW program. Digital badges can be awarded to individuals who complete either for-credit or non-credit offerings described in this document.

The badging of GW program completers will be most trustworthy and cost-efficient if it is done under a contract with an open-badges compliant badging vendor and managed by the Office of the Registrar. Programs offering badges must adhere to official GW badge design templates and be initiated by the administrative unit responsible for the badge through the badging platform and the process developed and maintained by the Office of the Registrar.

It is in GW's interest to establish naming conventions for both types of programs and badges associated with them to prevent confusion if certain program and badge names mean different things in different schools. Because costs are entailed, schools should develop their own policies on when badging is or is not appropriate. At GW, badges of participation, badges of completion, and badges of achievement are permissible. "**Badges of Participation**" are generally not awarded for attending informal workshops or seminars (Category 1 below), but may be awarded to acknowledge attending in person or participating online in a short workshop or seminar (Category 1 below). If a unit wishes to award a digital badge for completing a micro-credential or certificate program or portion within such a program when learning outcomes are not formally assessed, a "**Badge of Completion**" is appropriate. When an individual has demonstrated mastery, through formal learning assessment, of a micro-credential or certificate program or course or module within the program, , as should be the case in all for-credit micro-credential and certificate programs and some non-credit programs, the University can testify to that with a "**Badge of Achievement**."

Programs will determine whether to award digital badges for completion of (a) a whole micro-credential or certificate program, (b) a single course or module within such a program, and/or (c) a distinct area of expertise acquired through more than one course or module within a program or across programs. Badges are most valuable to the recipient when they document specific competencies, skills, and knowledge demonstrated by the learner through a well-designed learning outcome assessment methodology. The content of badges of participation or completion should not imply that the learner has demonstrated mastery of the program's content.

Below is an outline of policies and procedures pertaining to five categories of alternative credential programs:

1. **Workshops and short seminars**
2. **For-credit micro-credential programs**
3. **Non-credit micro-credential programs**
4. **For-credit certificate programs**
5. **Non-credit certificate programs**

Category 1: Workshops and Short Seminars

Workshops and short seminars are symposia, colloquia, discussion sessions, and other time-limited educational events. They are not considered micro-credential or certificate programs, do not carry academic credit, typically involve only a few hours of learner effort, and are most often offered only once rather than repeatedly. An example is a 2- to 4-hour sample class session whose main intent is to arouse interest in a program by giving prospective

learners a preview of its content and difficulty level; another is a symposium with guest speakers on a topic of current interest.

While documentation may be produced and distributed to acknowledge participation in these types of activities, it may only acknowledge the learner's attendance and involvement and cannot be considered a formal recognition of accomplishment. The document does not represent proof of completion of a "certificate program," an evaluation of the learner's level of performance during the program, or a certification of attainment of any specific level of knowledge or competence. The Office of the Registrar does not maintain official documentation of learner participation.

These non-credit, short offerings typically:

- involve only a few hours of learner effort
- are most often one-time rather than recurring offerings
- do not involve learning assessment
- can be offered by a department, program, or other offering unit without higher approval, depending on a school's policy in this regard
- the offering unit must maintain all participant records
- upon completion, learners generally do not but may receive some acknowledgment of learner participation, either on paper or in the form of a digital Badge of Participation (following the badging policy described above) or another. The acknowledgment of participation should **not** contain the words micro-certificate, certificate, or diploma, include the university seal, or resemble a GW diploma or certificate.

Category 2: For-Credit Micro-Credential Programs

The term "micro-credential program" applies to a wide variety of emerging alternative credential programs that offer focused education in a defined area of study. A for-credit micro-credential program is a program awarding more credits than a single course but fewer credits than a certificate program and having a coherent focus and purpose, a definable body of knowledge and skill to be mastered, and learning outcome assessment (e.g., "a graduate micro-certificate program in the field of XXX involving 9 credits). A micro-certificate program may be free-standing (as when working professionals in a field are educated about an emerging topic in the field) or "stackable" (as when the credits earned are a coherent portion of and may count toward the completion of a for-credit certificate program or a degree program). Records of enrollment in and completion of for-credit micro-credential programs will be maintained by the Office of the Registrar.

Subtypes, paralleling certificate program nomenclature (see Category 4), are:

1. **Undergraduate micro-certificate** (typically at least 9 and fewer than 18 credits)
2. **Post baccalaureate micro-certificate** (typically at least 9 and fewer than 18 credits)
3. **Graduate micro-certificate** (typically 6 to 11 credits)
4. **Post-master's micro-certificate** (typically 6 to 11 credits)

The above nomenclature may be used if desired in naming programs or the credentials awarded upon completion (e.g., "Graduate Micro-Certificate in Assessment"). Alternatively, the term Micro-Credential (e.g., Graduate Micro-Credential in Assessment) or Specialty Certificate (e.g., Graduate Specialty

Certificate in Assessment) may be used, with the word "specialty" meant to imply a more narrowly focused and shorter program than a certificate program.

For-credit micro-credential programs should:
- have admission requirements consistent with their level (undergraduate, graduate) and involve a simplified admission process for students who are already enrolled at GW
- adhere to the GW policy for assigning credits based on expected hours of student direct and indirect learning, which can be done in a variety of course formats (e.g., self-paced online vs hybrid vs. classroom instruction) but in all cases should involve instructor engagement with students (e.g., through lectures, discussions, individual meetings, provision of feedback on work, or similar means)
- use rigorous methods for measuring and documenting student performance through learning outcome assessments
- make clear in writing before registration their stackability—i.e., whether and how they articulate with other offerings such as certificate and degree programs
- be proposed and approved at the department/offering unit, dean/school, and Provost levels through the CourseLeaf catalog and curriculum database
- have a designated program director or similarly titled individual who is responsible for administering the program, including meeting the needs of its students and keeping the school/college and the Provost's Office fully informed of any significant changes in the program
- provide students with an official transcript generated by the Office of the Registrar
- result in an acknowledgment of achievement in the form of passing grades in the University's student record system (following standards appropriate to the level of student and school/college) and a notation on the student's transcript and, if desired, an official GW paper credential issued by the Registrar and/or a digital badge or set of badges of achievement initiated by the offering unit through the badging system overseen by the Office of the Registrar that will serve as the verifiable record of learning
- be subject to ongoing academic and financial review (see Category 4, For-Credit Certificate Programs, for additional guidance on administration of for-credit programs)

Category 3: Non-Credit Micro-Credential Programs

Like for-credit micro-credential programs, non-credit micro-credential programs fall between workshops/short seminars and certificate programs in scope and length. They should have a coherent focus and purpose, a definable body of knowledge and skill to be mastered, and some type of active learner engagement. Micro-credentials leading to a badge or certificate of achievement should also include a formal assessment of learning outcomes. The program (e.g., the Micro-Credential or Professional Micro-Certificate in the field of Assessment) should be composed of modules, units, or CE units rather than "courses" to avoid confusion over whether credit is awarded. Individual modules may be bundled or stacked to a micro-certificate.

Because the term "certificate" is commonly used in the non-credit domain, as in the for-credit domain, it can be used for non-credit programs. However, they should, unless a standing contract prevents it, have a title that would distinguish them from for-credit micro-certificates. For example:

a. **Professional Micro-Certificate** where the program is intended for practicing employees or professionals in a specific field
b. **Executive Micro-Certificate** where it is for top, executive-level employees/professionals in a field
c. **Continuing Education Micro-Certificate,** where contact hours or continuing education units (CEUs) needed by members of a particular profession are awarded, following the standard of 1 CEU for 10 hours of participant work
d. **Lifelong Learning Micro-Certificate,** where a program offers personal enrichment of knowledge and/or skill in an area of interest.

Alternatively, the term "Micro-credential" (e.g., Professional Micro-Credential in Assessment) or "Specialty" (e.g., Professional Specialty Certificate in Assessment) may be used, with the word "specialty" meant to imply, as "micro-certificate" does, a more narrowly focused and shorter program than a certificate program.

Boot Camps: Boot camps are typically meant to help individuals, who in some cases may qualify for admission with only a high school diploma, develop employability skills needed in the workforce (e.g., general business or technology skills or more specific skills needed in a particular industry). For example, they may run 18-24 weeks and involve about 10 hours a week of learner work if taken part-time or they may be offered full-time. Boot camps, like all programs, should be clearly described in terms of what the learning objectives are, who its intended audience is, what its level of complexity or sophistication is, and what learner background is required or desirable for admission.
Units may wish to devise other labels for other types of non-credit programs but should use titles that are informative and not use titles that have quite different meanings at GW or in the larger higher education community.

Non-credit micro-certificate programs, boot camps, and other offerings should:
- state admission requirements consistent with their level of complexity or sophistication
- make clear to learners in writing before registration that the work is not-for-credit while also making them aware of any approved mechanisms for counting the work toward completion of another GW offering
- use appropriate methods for assessing learner participation and/or learning outcomes
- be approved by the offering unit and the school's dean and undergo a streamlined oversight review at the Provost level involving a check for reasonableness and completeness. This will be enabled by submission, in advance of the program's offering, of a short form to the Alternative Credentials Database, which will document all programs not documented through CourseLeaf.
- have a designated program director or similarly titled individual who is responsible for administering the program
- maintain records for individual learners at the department and/or school level and inform learners at registration whom they should contact if they need documentation of their participation. Non-credit micro-credential programs will not yield a Banner student information system record, transcript, and other documentation maintained for for-credit programs by the Office of the Registrar
- award Badge(s) of Completion (based on completion of the program without learning assessment) or Badge(s) of Achievement (if learners demonstrate mastery through learning

assessment) initiated by the offering unit through the badging system overseen by the Office of the Registrar, which will serve as a permanent, verifiable record of the learner's participation or achievement

- be subject to ongoing academic and financial review.

Category 4: For-Credit Certificate Programs

For-credit certificate programs provide substantial education short of a degree at either the undergraduate or graduate level. The programs center on a coherent and relatively free-standing body of knowledge and skills, and their completion represents the achievement of competence in a well-defined domain. For-credit certificate programs should:

- have admission requirements consistent with their level (undergraduate, graduate) and involve a simplified admission process for students who are already enrolled at GW

- award at least 15 credits at the undergraduate level or 12 credits at the graduate level

- adhere to the GW policy for assigning credits based on expected hours of direct and indirect student work

- use rigorous methods for measuring and documenting student performance through learning outcome assessment

- make clear their stackability—i.e., whether and how they articulate with other offerings, such as a related degree program

- are proposed and approved at the department/offering unit, dean/school, and Provost levels through CourseLeaf (or its successor system)

- have a designated program director or similarly titled individual who is responsible for administering the program

- provide students with an official transcript generated by the Office of the Registrar indicating a student's coursework and program completion

- result in an acknowledgment of achievement in the form of passing grades and a notation on the student's transcript and, if desired, a Registrar-generated certificate and/or a digital badge or set of badges initiated by the offering unit through the badging system overseen by the Office of the Registrar that will serve as the verifiable record of the student's achievement of specified knowledge and competencies

- be subject to ongoing academic and financial review

A for-credit certificate program can be:

• a free-standing program that bears little resemblance to existing degree programs, e.g., a new interdisciplinary program or an attempt to test the market to determine whether a new degree program will succeed;

• a subset of courses offered as part of an existing curriculum for a degree program; and/or,

• a credential for students who elect not to finish a degree program in which they were enrolled.

Curriculum Requirements for For-Credit Certificate Programs

There are four general categories of for-credit certificate programs at GW: undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, graduate, and post-master's, associated with the following credits:

1. **Undergraduate certificate** (at least 15 credits)
2. **Post baccalaureate micro-certificate** (typically at least 15 credits)
3. **Graduate certificate** (a minimum of 12 credits, more typically 15 or 18 credits)
4. **Post-master's certificate** (a minimum of 12 credits)

The curriculum requirements for both the **undergraduate** and **post-baccalaureate certificate programs** include undergraduate-level coursework. The difference between the two programs is in admissions requirements. The undergraduate certificate requires a high school diploma or equivalent only; the post-baccalaureate certificate program requires completion of an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited institution prior to admission.

Graduate and post-master's certificate programs are composed of graduate-level coursework. Applicants to graduate certificate programs must successfully have completed an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited institution prior to admission prior to admission. Post-master's certificate programs require successful completion of a master's degree prior to admission.

The content, methodology, and workload for all courses applied toward a certificate program must be clearly defined and appropriate for the level and amount of credit awarded. Because of the small number of courses included in a certificate, these programs should not have concentrations associated with them.

Administration of For-Credit Certificate Programs

Each certificate program must have a designated program director or similarly titled individual who is responsible for administering the program, including meeting the needs of its students and keeping the school/college and the Provost's Office fully informed of any significant changes in the program.

Approval of For-Credit Certificate Programs

As with degree programs, all new certificate program proposals, as well as requests for changes to existing certificate programs are submitted into the CourseLeaf system for review and must be approved by the appropriate department(s), dean's office, academic editor, and Office of the Provost prior to public announcement of the program, acceptance of applications, or student enrollment in the program. Approval by the Board of Trustees is not required. All CourseLeaf submissions must clearly articulate the justification for the program, admissions criteria, learning outcomes, and curricular requirements. See https://academicplanning.gwu.edu/program-approval-process for detailed information on this process. Program review processes are discussed below under Ongoing Review.

Admissions Requirements and Procedures

The admissions and academic requirements, and administrative processes listed here apply to for-credit programs only. Admissions standards should be set for each certificate program by the department and

school/college offering the program. Admissions criteria and processes must be clearly communicated so prospective students know what is required in the way of academic credentials, standardized test scores, prior coursework, work experience, and any other background or supporting documents.

Even if admissions requirements for the certificate program are somewhat different from those in the most closely related undergraduate or graduate program, the intent should be to ensure that students can succeed at the level of the coursework required. A student's presence in the classroom should not in any way compromise the quality of the educational experience for others, particularly if certificate students are taking the same courses as degree candidates.

The minimum requirements for the different levels of certificates are as follows:

- **Undergraduate certificate**: High school diploma or equivalent (i.e., GED).
- **Post-baccalaureate certificate**: Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution.
- **Graduate certificate**: Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and evidence of a background of solid academic work that indicates the ability to complete graduate-level work (e.g., a minimum undergraduate grade-point average of 3.0, satisfactory GRE scores, successful completion of relevant coursework at the graduate level, positive letters of recommendation, and/or evidence of professional experience relevant to the graduate certificate).
- **Post-master's certificate**: Master's degree from a regionally accredited institution.

Although admissions processes may be simplified for certificate programs, admissions procedures should be comparable to those for degree programs. Information about the program and its requirements should be available to prospective students through the department/school website, brochures, University Bulletin, and other means; letters of admission or denial should be sent to each applicant; applications should be processed in a timely fashion; and so on.

Certificate programs should be listed in application materials, and applicants should follow the same admissions processes and pay any application fee associated with the program for which they are applying.. All applicants for for-credit certificate programs must be appropriately coded and entered into the Banner student information system following University guidelines.

Students enrolling in a certificate program are required to pay a matriculation fee. This fee is not charged to those who are concurrently enrolled in a degree program or who have previously enrolled as a student at GW and have a Banner student code of D (Old Grad, New Degree) or R (Readmit).

International Students: Visas and English as a Foreign Language

Visas. Many international students seeking to enroll in a certificate program are already enrolled in a degree program and therefore have the visa status they need pursue a certificate program as well. However, it is possible for an international student seeking to enroll in an 18- credit or longer certificate to obtain a visa for that purpose. An I-20 or DS-2019 can be issued to international students who are enrolled full-time in a certificate program; students enrolled in a graduate certificate program must take a minimum of 9 credits each semester and students in an undergraduate certificate program must take a minimum of 12 credits each semester. In addition, students who require an F or J visa from the University must provide appropriate financial certification to the admissions office and be processed through the International Services Office.

English as a Foreign Language. All applicants who are citizens of countries where English is not an official language are required to submit scores from an acceptable English as a Foreign Language (EFL) test: The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the academic IELTS, or the PTE Academic.

Exceptions may be made for applicants who hold a degree from a university located in a country in which English is the official language and the language of instruction at the university. Exceptions may also be made for students wishing to enroll in GW programs in which the language of instruction is not English. Certificate students who will not be enrolling in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, must provide current minimum EFL scores.

Transfer Credit

The number of transfer credits, if any, earned at other institutions or from GW courses taken on a non-degree basis that may be counted toward a for-credit certificate (see Translation section below) should, for undergraduate certificates, comply with the undergraduate transfer credit rules that apply in the relevant GW school/college and, for graduate certificates, should generally not exceed one quarter (25%) of the credits required for the certificate program.

For transfer of credit to be approved, **all** of the following conditions must be met:

a. the coursework must be from a regionally accredited institution and must have been taken within two to five years prior to admission to the certificate program, depending on the rate of change in the field of study;
b. The department must approve it as applying toward program requirements;
c. it must have been taken at an appropriate level (undergraduate- vs. graduate-level coursework);
d. the student must have received a minimum grade of *C* in coursework to be transferred toward an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate certificate and a minimum grade of *B* in coursework to be transferred toward a graduate or post-master's certificate.

Title IV Student Financial Assistance

Federal regulations define some certificate programs as a "gainful employment program." Those programs seeking approval for federal student financial assistance (Title IV) eligibility should contact the Office of Student Financial Assistance to obtain forms and instructions about data requirements that must be completed when seeking approval for Title IV eligibility. Students may receive financial assistance once the certificate program has been approved for Title IV eligibility.

Students enrolled in for-credit certificate programs may be eligible for federal loans provided the following conditions are met:

- the certificate program requires a minimum of 24 credits of undergraduate-level coursework for an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate certificate, 18 credits of graduate-level coursework for a graduate certificate, or 12 credits of graduate-level coursework for a post-master's certificate;
- the student is enrolled at least half time in each semester (6 credits for undergraduate programs and 5 credits for graduate programs);
- the program has received the final approval of the Office of the Provost (and an accrediting body, where applicable); and,

- the program has been approved as a "gainful employment program" and is eligible for Title IV student financial assistance.

Certificate students who do not meet these criteria may be eligible for alternative loans, provided they are enrolled at least half time in each semester.

Detailed information regarding Title IV certification is available on the Office of Student Financial Assistance website at https://financialaid.gwu.edu/policy-certificate-students .

Academic Requirements

To ensure continued high academic standards, departments/schools should make requisites for success in the program clear to applicants and maintain the same standards when teaching courses to certificate students that are applied when teaching degree candidates. Each certificate program should set minimum grade performance standards no lower than those for the most closely related degree program. Undergraduate and post-baccalaureate certificate students must maintain a minimum grade-point average of 2.0, and graduate and post-master's certificate students must maintain a minimum grade-point average of 3.0. Additional scholarship requirements may vary.

Policies for registration, grading, and academic progress should be the same as those for degree programs (e.g., processes for course withdrawals, time lines for Incompletes, and so on). It is the program's responsibility to warn students if they are in academic peril. As in degree programs, students should receive the appropriate notices if they earn a grade of *F* or do not maintain the required minimum GPA. Students in certificate programs are expected to be continuously enrolled and actively engaged in fulfilling the program's requirements each semester of the academic year until the certificate is awarded. The policies and processes for continuous enrollment, leave of absence, and withdrawal are the same as those for students enrolled in degree programs.

Each program should also have a time limit for completion of the certificate to ensure that students' knowledge is up-to-date and to encourage them to maintain progress. A reasonable limit is three or four years, with allowance for one or more semester breaks within that time so long as the entire program is completed within four years.

Concurrent Enrollment in a Graduate Degree and Certificate or Micro-Certificate Program

Although a common and logical progression is from a micro-certificate or certificate program to a degree program, students may concurrently pursue a micro-certificate or certificate and a degree, whether offered by the same or different departments or schools. This may happen when a student is admitted to a degree program and later realizes that a certificate in the same department can be obtained and can count toward the degree or when such a student determines that a certificate or micro-certificate program in another department/school would allow a student to obtain specialized expertise that complements their degree program. With the approval of the relevant dean's office(s) and departments/programs, a mutually agreeable percentage of the courses required for the certificate may be applied toward the degree.

Applicants applying to more than one department/school must submit a separate application to each, including supporting documents, unless there is a written policy to the contrary. Students enrolled in

both a certificate or micro-certificate and a degree program must have the degree program coded as their primary curriculum and the certificate as their secondary curriculum.

Sequential Completion of Certificate and Graduate Degree Programs

Departments/schools must set clear policies regarding the admission of micro-certificate or certificate program students who wish to enroll in a relevant degree program once the certificate program has been completed. These policies should specifically address the conditions under which such students may apply and be admitted to a degree program that is related to a micro-certificate or certificate program, e.g., whether they must meet the same or similar entrance requirements as other degree applicants, whether they will be given any preference in admissions. In all cases, program materials and letters of admission should clearly state that admission to a micro-certificate or certificate program does not guarantee admission to any other program at the University. An application fee is waived for students currently enrolled in a micro-certificate or certificate program when applying to a GW degree program.

When courses taken while in a micro-certificate or certificate program can fulfill requirements for an existing degree program, the school/college should establish a clear policy regarding the transfer of credits into degree programs, defining in each case how many credits and which courses can count toward which degree(s). The policy can allow from zero to all credits completed in the micro-certificate or certificate program to count toward a degree based on the relatedness of the micro-certificate or certificate and the degree program content—for example, allowing counting of none toward the degree when the courses taken in the certificate program have little or no relevance to the degree, counting of all when the certificate program consists entirely of courses that are required for the degree program, and counting of some number in between when the courses are relevant as electives but are not central to the learning objectives of the degree. The policy should specify how recent the coursework must be to provide appropriate training.

Finally, similar issues arise when two micro-certificate or certificate programs are pursued either simultaneously or concurrently. To avoid duplicative content, a student enrolled in two certificate programs can count no more than one course (or 25% of a certificate program's credits) toward completing both certificate programs. No double counting is appropriate when two micro-certificates are taken.

Translation of Non-Credit Work into Credit in a Credit-Bearing Program

Each school should have a thoughtfully constructed and explicit policy on the circumstances, if any, under which learners may be awarded academic credit or advanced standing in a for-credit certificate or degree program based on not-for-credit learning experiences. Under carefully defined and agreed upon conditions, GW may allow non-credit work completed in a GW non-credit program to be translated into an allowable number of credits in a GW for-credit certificate or degree program. With faculty and school approval, for example, completion of a not-for-credit micro-credential program designed and offered by GW, or by GW in partnership with EdX or another approved vendor, may entitle a learner who meets admission requirements and is accepted by a related certificate or degree program at GW to a specified amount of elective credit or advanced standing in the program.

The policy on whether or not translation of GW non-credit work to course credit within a GW program is allowed should be made known to students at admission to both the non-credit and for-credit program. Middle States standards and the University's Assignment of Course Credit policy must be followed; that is, one credit is associated with at least 37.5 hours of course work time, usually through a combination of direct and indirect learning. The skills and knowledge gained through non-credit work must also be judged by the for-credit program's faculty to be fully consistent with the program's academic standards and curriculum content. Finally, learning must have been documented in the non-credit program through verifiable and rigorous learning outcome assessment. At present, GW does not award credit for non-credit work completed elsewhere.

Category 5: Non-Credit Certificate Programs

Like non-credit and many for-credit micro-credential programs, non-credit certificate programs generally are professional development programs and often involve the awarding of certification of some kind, such as continuing education units (CEUs, following the national standard of 1 CEU per 10 hours of learner effort), a badge or badges, and/or educational measurement units used by other relevant accrediting bodies. Non-credit certificate programs are generally longer, more substantively complex, and broader in focus than non-credit micro-credential programs. Standards in the non-credit education domain nationally differ widely, however, such that there is no agreed-upon line of demarcation between non-credit micro-certificate and certificate programs. Offering units are asked to bear in mind that a for-credit certificate involves a minimum of 450 hours of student effort on average (12 credits x 37.5 hours per credit) and that a non-credit certificate will normally consist of multiple modules teaching multiple skills, whereas non-credit micro-programs may consist of as few as only two modules, fewer than 16 CEUs, or training in only one focal skill. Non-credit certificate programs can be labelled Professional, Executive, Continuing Education, or Lifelong Learning Certificates based on their target audiences and aims.

Non-credit certificate programs should:

- state admission requirements consistent with their level of complexity or sophistication
- make clear to learners that the work is not-for-credit while also informing them of any approved mechanisms for counting the work toward completion of another GW program
- use sound methods for assessing learner participation and/or learning outcomes as appropriate
- be approved in advance by the offering unit and the school's dean and undergo a streamlined oversight review at the Provost level to check for reasonableness and completeness. This will be enabled by submission, in advance of the program's offering, of a short form to the Alternative Credentials Database documenting all programs not documented through CourseLeaf.
- have a designated program director or similarly titled individual who is responsible for administering the program
- maintain records for individual learners at the department and school levels and inform students at registration whom to contact if they need documentation. Non-credit certificate programs will not yield a Banner record, transcript, and other documentation maintained for for-credit programs by the Office of the Registrar
- award Badges of Completion (based on participation) or Badges of Achievement (if learning assessment is done) initiated by the offering unit through the badging system overseen by the

Office of the Registrar, which will serve as a permanent, verifiable record of the learner's participation or achievement

- be subject to ongoing academic and financial review.

All new non-credit certificate programs must be approved by the offering unit and the unit's school/college, and must be submitted for streamlined review to the Provost's Office before it is offered, through the new Alternative Credentials Database.

Admissions requirements and standards for these programs may vary widely by program as no academic credit, which requires a prerequisite diploma or degree, is awarded for participation in these programs.

Records for individual program participants will be maintained at the department, school, and, if feasible, University level (through the badging system and/or a system appropriate for this purpose). A non-credit certificate may take the form of either a paper certificate of completion (based on participation) or a paper certificate of achievement (based on learning assessment). However, such documents must not resemble a GW diploma or for-credit certificate. Badge(s) of Completion (based on participation) or Badge(s) of Achievement (based on learning assessment) may also be awarded. Badges will be initiated by the offering unit through the badging system overseen by the Office of the Registrar to serve as a permanent, verifiable record of the learner's participation or achievement.

The five categories of offerings outlined in these guidelines are summaried in **Appendix A.**

Student and Learner Rights and Services

The school/college and/or department/program is responsible for providing each student or learner with materials that clearly describe the program's requirements, policies, and procedures and ensure that all federal regulations are met.

Students in on-campus, for-credit, micro-certificate or certificate programs who have met their financial obligations to the University are issued a GWID and GWorld card, may establish a GW email account, and have use of all general use and program-specific library, Blackboard, and computing facilities, the Lerner Health and Wellness Center, Student Health Center, limited services of the University career center, and any services their school/college-specific career center provides to students in their location or type of program.

Students enrolled in off-campus, hybrid, or online for-credit micro-certificate and certificate programs are generally entitled to the same basic resources (GWID, GWorld card, library, Blackboard), and they are entitled to services that are normally available to similarly-situated off-campus or online students. Off-campus and online students do not have access to the Lerner Health and Wellness Center, and online students and students studying abroad (i.e., students outside the Washington, DC Metro area) do not have access to Student Health Center health and counseling services but can seek from the Center recommendations of services in their area.

Learners in not-for-credit programs do not have GWIDs, GW email accounts, or GWorld cards and therefore do not have access to library, Blackboard, and other resources available to students in for-credit programs. They are entitled to the same rights and services as other similarly-situated non-credit learners.

All individuals in both for-credit or non-credit programs are subject to the University's Code of Academic Integrity and relevant parts of the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and Code of Student Conduct. Individuals who complete either for-credit or non-credit micro-certificate or certificate programs do not participate in University graduation ceremonies. Certificate-offering schools and departments/programs are encouraged to hold separate ceremonies or adopt other appropriate methods for honoring the achievements of participants awarded certificates.

Budgeting Considerations

The Provost, deans, and faculty bear the responsibility of evaluating the financial viability of University programs, including certificate and other alternative credential programs. In proposing alternative credential programs, departments and other units should develop and provide a rationale for sound pricing strategies in an increasingly competitive and ever-changing market in which tuition costs may vary from $0 to full tuition and, in collaboration with their financial office, should develop a budget model projecting expected revenue and costs. Flexibility in setting tuition based on market analyses is desirable in this context. However, administrators must weigh and analyze the financial implications of allowing learners to enter a pathway to a degree at a low cost for the ultimate financial viability of the degree program.

The costs of awarding digital badges through a vendor and the Office of the Registrar's support of badging processes are only a small part of the total cost of offering alternative credential programs. The full incremental costs include increased demands for staff and other resources needed for program development and management, instruction, online course design, approval and review of program curricula through the Alternative Programs Database or CourseLeaf, maintaining records of individual learners at the department, school, and university levels, central and school badging costs, budgeting and accounting, marketing and recruitment of students, IT support, student support services within and outside a program, and ongoing academic and financial reviews.

As they expand, GW's efforts to develop alternative offerings will demand proportionate increases in resources. To incentivize offering units to continue innovating, administrators should consider formulas for returning a share of net revenues to those units. Finally, to encourage the development of cross-school and other interdisciplinary programs, deans should encourage and support such collaborations and financial administrators should do all possible, including modifying financial systems, to facilitate agreements that ensure fair sharing of tuition revenue credit and program costs between the collaborating units.

Financial Contracts or Agreements

If any of the types of programs discussed above, credit or not-for-credit, are to be offered through a customized, business-to-business, or other tailored contract with specific private or public organizations (e.g., organizations that will be offered a tuition discount and/or will pay the University for their employees' training), or are to be collaboratively offered through a contract with another educational institution or an educational vendor such as edX or Noodle, the contract or agreement between the University and the outside entity or entities must be approved in advance of the offering of the program under the University's policy for the review and approval of contracts (see the "Signing of Contracts and Agreements" policy as it applies to educational contracts and agreements and its associated Contract Process Guide). This review should be fast-tracked and should include review and approval by, in order,

the offering unit andrelevant financial office, the Office of the General Counsel (which will route it to offices such as risk management and, the privacy office where appropriate), the relevant dean, and the Provost.

<div align="center">**Ongoing Review of Micro-Credential and Certificate Programs**</div>

Periodic reviews of micro-credential and certificate programs by offering units, schools, and, less often, the Office of the Provost serve two main purposes: (1) to ensure that programs are maintaining high academic quality, contributing to the University's educational mission, and adhering to relevant GW policies, and (2) to ensure that they contribute to the University by demonstrating that they are financially viable and/or demonstrably enhance GW's reputation. Reviews at the start of the program are especially critical so that adjustments can be made rapidly if a program fails to meet quality or revenue expectations. In addition, course feedback or evaluation surveys should be used to evaluate the course or program at the end of the offering.

With this in mind, offering units should be expected to report briefly to their deans on the development, status, and student response to a micro-credential or certificate offering each year in its first four years. By the four-year mark, the offering unit and dean's office should reach a decision about whether or not to continue as is, continue but adjust, or discontinue the program. If the program continues, the dean's office may wish to monitor its progress. A brief description of a program's status (e.g., improvements, enrollments, badges awarded, financial viability) should be incorporated in the offering unit's next Academic Program Review (APR). Micro-credential programs can be summarized briefly in a table in the APR. Both for-credit and non-credit certificate programs should be described more thoroughly. Resulting feedback from the Provost, dean, and faculty reviewers of the self-study should be discussed by administrators with the offering unit and used to improve programming.

The Office of the Provost maintains an inventory of all for-credit micro-certificate and certificate programs in the CourseLeaf database; the new Alternative Credentials Database will contain information about non-credit programs; the Office of the Registrar will maintain a record of all digital badges awarded through its badging system; and the Office of Student Financial Assistance maintains a list of all certificate programs that have been approved for federal financial aid.

Finally, the members of the Provost's Task Force on Academic Credentialing who collaborated on this policy saw great value in continuing dialog and seeking constructive feedback from faculty and administrators involved in developing and managing alternative credential programs at GW. It is therefore recommended that the Provost create a standing Committee on Alternative Credentials composed of relevant faculty and administrators from across the University, and including a liaison to the Faculty Senate Educational Policy and Technology Committee, to pursue these goals:

- to share information about innovations and best practices, whether at GW or elsewhere;
- to encourage cross-school collaboration to create market-responsive programs that one school alone could not create;
- to monitor successes and failures in the alternative credentials arena and extract lessons from these experiences;
- to monitor duplication and undesirable competition between credentials offered at GW and
- to advocate for improvements in policy, procedure, and practice at GW to facilitate successful innovation.

--Provost Task Force on Academic Credentials, Carol Sigelman Chair, February 3, 2024 (membership listed in **Appendix B**).

Appendix A. GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATE AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS:

Typology of Programs

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
Type	Workshops & Short Seminars	For-Credit Micro-Credential Programs	Non-Credit Micro-Credential Programs	For-Credit Certificate Programs	Non-Credit Certificate Programs
Characteristics	Usually one-time events, e.g., symposia, colloquia, sampling of a program to attract interest	More than one course, less than a certificate, with clear focus and learning outcome assessment (LOA)	Shorter than non-credit certificates: micro-certificates, boot camps, etc., sometimes with LOA	Four or more courses with clear focus and LOA	Multiple modules or units, with clear focus; longer than micro-certificate, often with LOA
Naming	Whatever's descriptive—but not Category 2-5 program titles (e.g., micro-certificate, certificate),	Undergraduate, Post-bacc, Graduate, or Post-master's Micro-certificate in X	Professional, Executive, Continuing ed, or Life-long learning Micro-certificate in X	Undergraduate, Post-bacc, Graduate, or Post-master's Certificate in X	Professional, Executive, Continuing ed, or Life-long learning Micro-certificate in X
Length/Credits	Only a few hours; no credit, CEUs, etc.	Undergraduate 9-17 credits; graduate 6-11 credits	Length varies; shorter than non-credit certificates	Undergraduate 15 credits+; graduate 12-18 credits	Length varies; longer than non-credit micro-certificates; e.g., more than 16 CEUs, 200 hours of effort
Proposal/Approval Process	Offering unit only	CourseLeaf > chain through Provost-level approval	Alternative Credential Database> Provost-level quick review	CourseLeaf > Provost-level approval	Alternative Credential Database > Provost-level quick review
Student records	Kept only in offering unit	BANNER/ Registrar	NEW Alternative Credential Database & Unit/school records	BANNER/ Registrar	Alternative Credential Database & Unit/school records
Badges awarded through Registrar's badging system?	Usually not; if awarded, must be Badge of Participation	If desired, Badge of Achievement based on LOA	Badge of Completion if no LOA; Badge of Achievement if LOA	If desired, Badge of Achievement based on LOA	Badge of Completion if no LOA; Badge of Achievement if LOA

Appendix B. PROVOST TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS		
Name	**Title**	**School/Division/Department**
Carol Sigelman	Professor of Psychology	CCAS-Psychology
Jeff Brand	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and Special Programs; Associate Professor of Philosophy	Office of the Provost and CCAS-Philosophy
Cheryl Beil	Senior Associate Provost of Academic Planning and Assessment; Assistant Research Professor of Psychology	Office of the Provost and CCAS-Psychology
Katie Cloud	University Registrar	Office of the Registrar
Jane Thorpe	Professor and Senior Associate Dean for Academic, Student and Faculty Affairs	MISPH
Tobi Greiff	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	CPS
Laurie Posey	Associate Professor	Nursing
Ryan Watkins	Professor, Educational Technology	GSEHD
Manny Teitelbaum	Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs	ESIA and CCAS-Political Science
Stephanie Allgaier	Director of Graduate Student Services	Law
Shivraj Kanungo	Vice Dean for Graduate Programs; Program Director, MS in Interdisciplinary Business Studies; Associate Professor of Decision Sciences	Business
Zoe Szajnfarber	Professor of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering; Director of Strategic Initiatives- GW Engineering	Engineering
Laurie Lyons	Assistant Dean, Academic Planning and Curriculum Management	SMHS
Kim Gross	CCAS Vice Dean for Programs & Operations; Associate Professor of Media and Public Affairs	CCAS and CCAS-MPA
Mountasser Kadrie	Academic Coordinator of the Healthcare MBA; Program Director of the Clinical Operations and Healthcare Management Program; Associate Professor of Clinical Research and Leadership	SMHS
Laila Sorurbakhsh	Assistant Dean of Academic Programs; Assistant Professor of International Affairs; Director of Online Education; Co-Founder/Co-Director of the Data Literacy Initiative	ESIA