

Wichita State University

Academic Affairs Committee

Guidelines for Undergraduate Alternative Credential Pathways

DEFINITION: Alternative credential pathways are 1) less than a degree such as credit bearing certificates and badges; 2) tools to evaluate a student’s ability to demonstrate competency in discrete areas, and 3) combined together, can fulfill the requirements of specific degrees that meet workforce demands and match the mission and culture of Wichita State University. As a standalone option, they are not degrees, certificates, concentrations, minors¹, or certification programs.²

- *Badges: Typically .5 credit hours and demonstrate competency in discrete areas. Amounts more than .5 will need to be justified in the proposal and increase in increments of .25 (e.g. .75, 1.25). The minimum requirement for instruction for a .5 credit hour badge, would be 7.5 hours of direct instruction and 15 hours of out-of-classroom work per the Federal definition and assignment of credit hours. (See Appendix A)*
- *Stackable Credentials: badges, minors, or certificates that are designed to combine toward a degree program that is already established. (See Appendix B)*

POTENTIAL STUDENTS include:

- Students seeking skills or knowledge in a focused area for which we have no degree, major, minor, or concentration.
- Students seeking more flexibility in obtaining just-in-time credentialing, such as licensed professionals, who would use badges as proof of updated skills and knowledge.

COURSE WORK: Badges can be awarded for approved academic work completed in workshops, short courses, or for parts of a regular course, such as modules or units, in which there may be a need or it may be useful to award credit for less than a full credit hour. Upon successful completion, badge credits would be awarded as “badged” or BG credit.

¹ Minors and concentrations are usually embedded within existing degree programs; alternative credential pathways may, but are not usually embedded within existing degree programs. Alternative credential pathways are targeted at specific audiences, often persons seeking specialized information for a job. Upon completion of the alternative credential pathway, the badge or certificate serves as a credential that bolsters employability as a job applicant or improves chances of advancement within a current job.

² Certification, not a certificate, is a process that assures that students meet certain standards within their program of study. These standards are usually specified by an external board. For example, teacher certification standards are set by the Kansas State Board of Education and are implemented in part, through the content of various courses. Students who take the appropriate courses and meet other required standards become certified to teach in the State of Kansas.

Stackable credentials can be made up of badges that combined equal the equivalent of a credit hour (or multiple credit hours). Stackable minors and certificates would have to follow curriculum paths that lead to an established degree program and WSU transfer policies.

MANAGEMENT: An undergraduate alternative credential pathway may be housed in a single department or institute, or may be interdepartmental, or even inter-college. In all cases, the alternative credential pathway is proposed and managed by faculty having an interest in awarding badges or providing stackable credential pathways through the established curriculum. Normally one faculty member serves as the alternative credential pathways coordinator for the department awarding credit this way. The Office of Workforce, Professional, and Community Education (WPCE) will assist departments in determining the market for such programs. Students will be directed to the Office of WPCE for assistance in enrolling in a particular program.

ELIGIBILITY: Undergraduate students seeking to enroll in alternative credential pathways must be admitted to Wichita State University and meet all the necessary prerequisites.

DEGREE OVERLAP: If approved as such, students may use alternative credential pathway course work toward an eventual degree.

COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS: Degree-bound students would be held to the cumulative graduate grade point average policies of the degree for which they are seeking. Students completing badges will receive “badge” credit that will not be factored into their overall GPA. It is allowable for students in non-degree status and pursuing a badge to do so without adhering to defined time limits (i.e., satisfactory academic progress) as long as they have no Federal Financial Aid. Each alternative credential pathway should offer a sequence of courses that allows completion of the program requirements.

APPROVAL PROCESS: Proposals for new undergraduate alternative credential pathways should be processed by way of the curriculum routing form starting in the department and if appropriate routed to the Academic Affairs Committee before final approval by the Provost and Senior Vice President. The proposal shall contain:

- The title of the proposed alternative credential pathway
- Program objectives
- Demonstration of need
- A detailed description and rationale for the pathways through an already established curriculum
- A plan for offering a sequence of courses that allows completion of the program requirements
- Exceptional circumstances that favor the development of the proposed alternative credential pathway
- Organization of the program, including identification of
 1. Faculty associated with the alternative credential pathway, normally those who expect to teach courses in the alternative credential pathway curriculum

2. A coordinator responsible for management of the alternative credentials pathway, for advising students, etc.
- Statements of support from chairs and deans whose programs and faculty are involved in the proposed alternative credential pathway. Colleges and departments may have procedures for faculty approval that must be respected as well. Statements from representatives of any program, department, or college on which the proposed alternative credential pathway will have an impact.
 - An assessment plan for the alternative credential pathway must be included. The plan should include how the quality of the pathway will be monitored. The plan should also include narrative on how continuation and duration of the pathway will be determined.
 - Prior to submitting a proposal for a degree-bound alternative credential pathway, it is the responsibility of the originating unit to consult with the Offices of Academic Affairs and Financial Aid to determine whether the proposal triggers Gainful Employment Rules as determined by the U.S. Department of Education (i.e., whether the pathway would be eligible for Federal Financial Aid consideration). If the program is a Gainful Employment program, Federal regulations require a university to disclose, inter alia, the following information about the program on the university's website and in materials promoting the alternative credential pathway:
 - Tuition and fees;
 - Costs of books, supplies, room and board;
 - On-time graduation rate for students completing the program;
 - Job placement rates; and
 - The median loan debt incurred by students who completed the program.
 - Curriculum routing sheet with the appropriate departmental, college and university signatures.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL:

Principles for assessing the academic quality of proposals:

- A demonstrated need must exist.
- Course work should offer clear educational objectives at the undergraduate level.
- For stackable credentials course work comprising the alternative credential pathway must be integrated into an existing program
- Deans, chairs, and other administrators will address resource issues in their statement of support.

RECOGNITION: Students completing an undergraduate alternative credential pathway will receive an appropriately worded credential such as an electronic badge signifying that it was issued by WSU and what was required to complete the badge. Notation will be made on the student's transcript when a badge or certificate has been awarded.

PROMOTION: Approved undergraduate alternative credential pathways will be listed in the *Undergraduate Catalog* (print and web versions), and Schedule of Courses. Departments may choose to promote their options for alternative credential pathways through other venues.

DURATION AND REVIEW: Undergraduate alternative credential pathways will exist as long as the department or college assessment data support a need for the option.

QUALITY:

- The courses offered for undergraduate credit must be taught by faculty with expertise in the area of the offering and appropriate advanced degrees.
- Degree-bound students must maintain at least a 2.00 grade point in the stackable classes to qualify for the graduation at the end of the program.
- Undergraduate alternative credential pathways are initially approved through a process defined and monitored by the Academic Affairs Committee and are periodically reviewed at an interval of approximately three years.

Approved by the Faculty Senate on February 9, 2015

Guidelines reviewed by the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee on April 30, 2015

Appendix A: Examples of Badges Awarded for Modules within a Course

A 3-credit hour course could be divided into 6 discrete modules, upon the completion of one unit in which a student could be awarded a badge worth .5 credits and would carry 22.5 hours of work to complete (a combination of direct instruction and out-of-class work).

Appendix B: Examples of Stackable Credentials

Undergraduate

The following examples are for students completing a degree. The first set of examples are for students who have 62 hours completed at a KBOR school. The second set are for students who have completed only the General Education requirements (either at WSU or elsewhere).

KBOR AA or AS complete already (transferring in minimum of 62 hrs)

60 hours needed:

- 5 12-hour certificates (60 hrs) –
- One certificate must include 2 GE 300+
- or
- 3 18-hour certificates (54 hrs)
- 2 GE 300+ electives (6 hrs)
- 122 hrs.

Degree: Bachelors (if certificates are 12-hours each)

- 1) Certificate 1 = 12 hrs
- 2) Certificate 2 = 12 hrs
- 3) Certificate 3 = 12 hrs
- 4) Certificate 4 = 12 hrs
- 5) Certificate 5 = 12 hrs

Degree: Bachelors (if certificates are 18-hours each)

- 1) Certificate 1 = 18 hrs
- 2) Certificate 2 = 18 hrs
- 3) Certificate 3 = 18 hrs
- +
- 6 elective hours from Gen Ed 300+

If Gen Ed is already complete (completed 42 hrs)

78 hours needed:

- 6 12-hour certificates (72 hrs)
- or
- 4 18-hour certificates (72 hrs)
- 6 credit hour electives
- 120 hrs

Degree: Bachelors (12-hour certificates)

- 1) Certificate 1 = 12 hrs
- 2) Certificate 2 = 12 hrs
- 3) Certificate 3 = 12 hrs
- 4) Certificate 4 = 12 hrs
- 5) Certificate 5 = 12 hrs
- 6) Certificate 6 = 12 hrs
- +
- 6 credit hour electives

Degree: Bachelors (18-hour certificates)

- 1) Certificate 1 = 18 hrs
 - 2) Certificate 2 = 18 hrs
 - 3) Certificate 3 = 18 hrs
 - 4) Certificate 4 = 18 hrs
- +
- 6 credit hour electives