Florida State University Policy 9-1

Title of Policy: Policy for Certificates, Specialized Studies, and Minors
Responsible Executive: Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement
Approving Official: Provost
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I. INTRODUCTION
Florida State University uses the following definitions, guidelines, and procedures for certificate programs, specialized studies, and minors in accordance with the regulations of the Florida Board of Governors and SACSCOC.

Definitions and Guidelines
The Florida Board of Governors (BOG) Regulation 8.011(7)(b) defines two types of certificates: a college credit certificate and a non-college-credit certificate.

1. A college credit certificate is “an organized curriculum of college credit courses offered as a distinct area of study that leads to specific educational or occupational goals, and for which the university awards a certificate, diploma, or similar form of recognition upon completion” [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7)(b)]. SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.4.4 refers to “certificates or other professional education outside a collegiate degree program.” Thus, certificates should be viewed as professional in nature.

Specifically:
- A college credit certificate is not intended as a degree, but as a supplement to a student’s specific educational goals or professional career preparation.
- Completion of a college credit certificate generally is related to a specific field, and usually associated with a limited set of occupations.
- College credit certificates may help prepare students for certain types of industry licensing, and to practice in or master technical aspects of an occupation.
• College credit certificates shall be noted on a student’s transcript as an official credential of the university.

• College credit certificate programs drawn from the existing approved curriculum for a degree or diploma program do not require separate approval by SACSCOC. However, to offer such a certificate at a new site does require approval of the site by SACSCOC.

• A college credit certificate that is a significant departure from previously approved programs must be approved in advance by SACSCOC.

2. A **non-college-credit certificate** is “an organized curriculum of study of any length that is offered for non-college-credit (as measured through clock hours, continuing education units, competency exams, etc.), which leads to specific educational or occupational goals…. [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7)(c)].

Specifically:

• Those programs of study that do not award credit, such as those offered as part of continuing education, may not be termed an undergraduate or graduate college credit certificate.

• Non-college-credit certificates will not be noted on transcripts.

• May not bear the official FSU seal.

• May issue a “Recognition of Completion” document.

The Florida Board of Governors (BOG) Regulation 8.011(7)(b) also cites other types of programs, including program minor, concentration, area of emphasis, track, or similar curricular offerings. Florida State University offers specialized studies and minors in accordance with this regulation, and as follows:

3. A **Specialized Studies program** refers to an organized curriculum that enhances or complements the degree to be awarded. “Such a curricular offering shall be as defined by the university with the credit-hour length set in accordance with the university policy, except that the number of credit hours shall not equal or exceed the number of credit
specifically:

- Specialized Studies may be offered at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- Specialized Studies will not be noted on transcripts.
- May not bear the official FSU seal.
- May issue a “Recognition of Completion” document.

4. a minor refers to an “organized curriculum that is offered as part of a degree program and enhances or complements the degree to be awarded in a manner which leads to specific educational or occupational goals. (T)he number of credit hours shall not equal or exceed the number of credit hours established for a program major at the same degree level” [BOG Regulation 8.011 (7)(a)].

specifically:

- Minors are to be offered at the undergraduate level only.
- In most cases, the courses used to satisfy Liberal Studies requirements and major requirements may not also be used to satisfy requirements of a minor.
- Minors will not be noted on transcripts.
- May not bear the official FSU seal.
- May issue a “Recognition of Completion” document.

II. POLICY

Procedures

Proposed college credit courses must be in compliance with these guidelines and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered. Only programs of study that involve credit coursework need to seek approval with this policy.
A. College Credit Certificates

In keeping with the Technical Assistance Guidelines issued by the Florida BOG, “Universities must develop a process for identifying credit hours associated with course requirements for certification to practice in a professional occupation (e.g., teacher certification) and those courses that may have technical certification embedded as a requirement for passing the course (e.g., network administrator, specific operating systems, etc.)” (BOG Regulation 7.003). Further, “Universities must implement a process for identifying undergraduate certificate programs and the students enrolled in them so that associated courses can be exempted…” from the state excess hour fee identified in BOG Regulation 7.001(3).

Hence, all proposed college credit certificates must be in compliance with all definitions and guidelines above, and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered.

1. **Initiation.** A proposal to create a certificate should be initiated by the director of the proposed certificate or the chair and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the proposed certificate, using the appropriate forms provided by the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The proposal shall be submitted using the following approval sequence:

   A. Department Curriculum Committee (or Advisory Committee for Institute or Center, if applicable)
   B. Department Chair(s) or Director(s) of Institute(s) or Center(s)
   C. Curriculum Committee(s) of School(s) and College(s)
   D. Academic Dean(s)
   E. Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate School, as appropriate
   F. SACS Liaison
   G. Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, for final approval.

Following approval, the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Advancement and Development shall notify the following offices that the certificate program is in effect:
A. Provost
B. Registrar
C. Department(s)
D. Academic Dean(s)
E. Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of the Graduate School, as appropriate
F. SACS Liaison
G. Director of Institutional Effectiveness
H. Budget and Analysis
I. Office of Institutional Research
J. Office of the Vice President for Planning and Programs

2. **Off-campus sites.** No credit hours for a credit certificate program may be earned at an off-campus site, except for Panama City, FL, unless the site is approved for the certificate by the university regional accrediting body.

3. **Proposal.** The requirements pertaining to each section below must be reproduced within the body of the proposal in order to ensure that all sections have been satisfactorily addressed. The credit certificate proposal should include the following elements:

   **A. Purpose.** The proposal should identify particular needs, which cannot be met by existing degree programs or certificates, identifying the particular target group for the program. It should specify the skills and knowledge base to be achieved through the program. It must identify the requirements for certification essential to practice in or master technical aspects of an occupation and establish how specific courses satisfy this requirement. Finally, it should provide the date it is anticipated the program will start, and the required director of the credit certificate program must be named.

   **B. Application Procedure.** The proposal should describe the process by which an individual student applies to the program. It should clearly indicate the individual or
position to which the application should be submitted and state that the certificate
credential is not intended as a diploma or a degree.

C. Admission Requirements. The proposal must state the requirements for admission
to the program. The admission process should specify whether an applicant must
be currently pursuing a degree or may be registered as a non-degree seeking
student. Other criteria for admissions may include previous educational
background, grade point average, or other qualifications. The admissions
requirements must clearly state that students must apply and be admitted to the
certificate program in advance of beginning the coursework. The proposal should
indicate the individuals or university positions that have the authority to admit a
student to the certificate program.

D. Program of Studies. The proposal should include the total number of credits
required and specify the courses to be taken. Credit hour requirements for each
certificate may vary from 12 to 21 credits. Specific courses may either be required
or elective. Each certificate program must include at least one common course or
capstone experience required of all its students. A matrix must be included that
illustrates which course is required or elective, and who is responsible for teaching
the courses. There should be a plan for approving the student’s course of study upon
admission to the program. If a certificate program includes courses common to
another certificate program, at least nine credits in the certificate program typically
must not be included in the other certificate program without justification provided
to and approved by the relevant academic dean(s). Coursework used to fulfill the
requirements of a certificate program may also be used to fulfill the requirements of
an undergraduate major or minor. An undergraduate certificate shall not require the
completion of graduate courses. Credit earned as part of a certificate program may
or may not be transferable towards an advanced degree program as determined by
criteria established in the advanced degree program.

E. Enrollment. The proposal should estimate the anticipated enrollment in the credit
certificate program at years 1 and 5. It should indicate what resources are necessary
to support the proposed certificate program and what impact, if any, the use of these resources will have on existing degree or certificate programs.

F. Certificate Requirements. The proposal should indicate the number of credits required and any time limits governing when such credits are earned. It should indicate whether or not transfer credits are accepted and whether any specific grade point average is required. The proposal shall clearly distinguish between the purposes and character of the proposed undergraduate or graduate certificate and any related undergraduate minor or graduate specialization.

G. Institutional Effectiveness. The proposal for a credit certificate shall identify at least three student learning outcomes along with appropriate assessment methods. The certificate outcomes will be assessed annually. Upon approval of the certificate program, the program faculty must enter these outcomes and assessment procedures into the university’s institutional effectiveness portal. Credit certificate programs awarding fewer than nine (9) certificates annually shall not enter outcome results, analyses or improvement plans in the portal, in order to avoid compromising student privacy, but this circumstance must be reported in the institutional effectiveness portal.

H. Off-Campus Locations. The proposal should indicate that no credit hours for a certificate program may be earned at an off-campus site except as stated in provision I(2) of this policy.

I. Design of Certificate and Wording. The proposal for a credit certificate should include the name of the certificate, the date awarded, and the school or college (and department or unit) awarding the certificate. It should indicate whether it is an undergraduate or graduate certificate.

4. Review. All certificate programs, their curricula and on-going status are to be reviewed by the curriculum committee(s) of the appropriate unit(s) at least every 7 years. Compliance with policy requirements and restrictions is mandated for continuation of
certificate programs. Any certificate program that has not awarded a certificate in the
previous 7 years will be closed.

5. **Termination or changes.** A credit certificate program may be terminated or changed by
sending a memo from the director of the certificate, as available, or the faculty, chair,
and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the certificate, to the Vice President for Faculty
Advancement and Development. The latter must approve termination of or changes to
certificate programs, and will notify the SACS liaison and other affected offices for
appropriate action.

Certificate programs will continue to be published in the *General Bulletin* until officially
terminated. Programs seeking termination that have students pursuing the certificate
must provide a teach-out plan to the Office of the Vice President for Planning and
Programs. Plans shall be submitted 4 months in advance of the proposed program’s
termination and must include a plan for notifying their current students at the time and a
map for certificate completion, as required by SACSCOC.

6. **Administration.** The following items apply to all undergraduate and graduate credit
certificates:

A. All credit certificates shall require an application for all students to enroll. The unit
offering the certificate and the dean or the dean’s representative must approve the
application.

B. Successful completion of an approved credit certificate will be posted to the academic
transcript. Units also may print and distribute affidavits to students earning credit
certificates.

C. Descriptions of approved credit certificates will be included in the appropriate
university publications and websites. The Office of Institutional Research will
maintain an updated list of all approved credit certificates.
D. Certificates will not be assigned a CIP Code and will not be included in the State University System Academic Degree Program Inventory as a stand-alone academic program.

E. The Registrar in cooperation with the Office of Institutional Research will publish the number of awards earned annually for each active credit certificate program.

F. General Information regarding credit certificate policies will be available on the website of the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Advancement and Development.

B. **Non-College-Credit Certificates**

All non-college-credit certificates must follow the relevant policy, guidelines, and procedures noted above. They are not required to seek approval with this policy.

C. **Specialized Studies Programs**

All proposed specialized studies programs must be in compliance with all appropriate definitions and guidelines above, and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered.

1. **Initiation.** A proposal to create a specialized studies program should be initiated by the director of the proposed specialized studies program or the chair and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the proposed program, using the appropriate forms provided by the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The proposal shall be submitted using the following approval sequence:

   A. Department Curriculum Committee (or Advisory Committee for Institute or Center, if applicable)

   B. Department Chair(s) or Director(s) of Institute(s) or Center(s)

   C. Curriculum Committee(s) of School(s) and College(s)

   D. Academic Dean(s)
E. Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of Graduate School, as appropriate

F. SACS Liaison

G. Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, for final approval.

Following approval, the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Advancement and Development shall notify the following offices that the certificate program is in effect:

A. Provost

B. Registrar

C. Department(s)

D. Academic Dean(s)

E. Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Dean of the Graduate School, as appropriate

F. SACS Liaison

G. Director of Institutional Effectiveness

H. Budget and Analysis

I. Office of Institutional Research

J. Office of the Vice President for Planning and Programs

2. **Proposal.** The requirements pertaining to each section below must be reproduced within the body of the proposal in order to ensure that all sections have been satisfactorily addressed. The specialized studies program proposal should include the following elements:

A. **Purpose.** The proposal should identify particular needs, which cannot be met by existing degree programs or certificates, identifying the particular target group for the program. It should specify the knowledge base to be achieved through the program. Finally, it should provide the date it is anticipated the program will start.

B. **Application Procedure.** The proposal should describe the process by which an individual student applies to the program. It should clearly indicate the individual or
position to which the application should be submitted and state that the specialized
studies program is not intended as a diploma or a degree or certificate.

C. Admission Requirements. The proposal must state the requirements for admission
to the program. The admission process should specify whether an applicant must
be currently pursuing a degree or may be registered as a non-degree seeking
student. Other criteria for admissions may include previous educational
background, grade point average, or other qualifications. The admissions
requirements must clearly state that students must apply and be admitted to the
specialized studies program in advance of beginning coursework. The proposal
should indicate the individuals or university positions that have the authority to
admit a student to the specialized studies program.

D. Program of Studies. The proposal should include the total number of credits
required and specify the courses or options of courses to be taken. Credit hour
requirements for each specialized studies program may vary from 12 to 21 credits.
Specific courses may either be required or elective. An undergraduate specialized
studies program shall not require the completion of graduate courses. Credit earned
as part of a specialized studies program may or may not be transferable towards an
advanced degree program as determined by criteria established in the advanced
degree program.

E. Enrollment. The proposal should estimate the anticipated enrollment in the
specialized studies program at years 1 and 5. It should indicate what resources are
necessary to support the proposed specialized studies program and what impact, if
any, the use of these resources will have on existing degree or certificate programs.

F. Requirements. The proposal should indicate the number of credits required and
any time limits governing when such credits are earned. It should indicate whether
or not transfer credits are accepted and whether any specific grade point average is
required. The proposal shall clearly distinguish between the purposes and character
of the proposed undergraduate or graduate specialized studies program and any
related undergraduate minor or graduate program.

G. Review. All specialized studies programs are to be reviewed by the curriculum
committee(s) of the appropriate unit(s) at least every 7 years. Compliance with
policy requirements and restrictions is mandated for continuation of minors. Any
minor that has not been awarded in the previous 7 years will be closed.

3. Termination or changes. A specialized studies program may be terminated or changed
by sending a memo from the director of the program, as available, or the faculty, chair,
and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the specialized studies program, to the Vice President
for Faculty Advancement and Development. The latter must approve termination of or
changes to specialized studies programs, and will notify other affected offices for
appropriate action. Specialized studies programs will continue to be published in the
*General Bulletin* until officially terminated.

4. Administration. Descriptions of approved specialized studies programs will be included
in the appropriate university publications and websites. The Office of Institutional
Research will maintain an updated list of all approved specialized studies. Specialized
studies will not be assigned a CIP Code and will not be included in the State University
System Academic Degree Program Inventory as stand-alone academic programs. General
Information regarding specialized studies policies will be available on the website of the
Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.

D. Minors

All proposed minors must be in compliance with all appropriate definitions and guidelines
above, and must undergo the approval process outlined below before being offered.

1. Initiation. A proposal to create a minor should be initiated by the director of the
proposed minor or the chair and/or dean of the unit(s) offering the proposed program,
using the appropriate forms provided by the Office of the Vice President for Faculty
Development and Advancement. The proposal shall be submitted using the following approval sequence:

A. Department Curriculum Committee (or Advisory Committee for Institute or Center, if applicable)
B. Department Chair(s) or Director(s) of Institute(s) or Center(s)
C. Curriculum Committee(s) of School(s) and College(s)
D. Academic Dean(s)

Following approval, the Dean’s Office notifies the following offices that the minor is in effect:

A. Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement
B. Dean of The Graduate School or Dean of Undergraduate Studies
C. University Registrar
D. Department

2. **Proposal.** The requirements pertaining to each section below must be reproduced within the body of the proposal in order to ensure that all sections have been satisfactorily addressed. The minor proposal should include the following elements:

A. Purpose. The proposal should identify particular needs, which cannot be met by existing degree certificates or minors, identifying the particular target group for the program. It should specify in what ways the minor will complement students’ degree programs. Finally, it should specify which fall semester the program will start (a fall start is required in order to be consistent with the *General Bulletin* publication schedule) and must identify the contact point for information regarding the minor.

B. Program of Studies. The proposal should include the total number of credits required and specify the courses to be taken. Minors typically require between 12 and 18 credit hours and may not require students to complete more credits than the
associated major. Specific courses may either be required or elective. An undergraduate minor may not require the completion of graduate courses.

C. Certification of Minor Completion. The unit responsible for the minor must ensure that the *General Bulletin* description of the minor requirements is clear and comprehensive enough for the student’s dean’s office to certify completion of the minor prior to graduation.

E. **Administration.** Descriptions of approved minors will be included in the appropriate university publications and websites. The Office of Institutional Research will maintain an updated list of all approved minors. Minors will not be assigned a CIP Code and will not be included in the State University System Academic Degree Program Inventory as stand-alone academic programs. General Information regarding minor policies will be available on the website of the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.

III. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The Florida State University Constitution (FSU Regulation 1.004) grants the Faculty Senate authority to “determine and define University-wide policies on academic matters.” The Faculty Senate has approved this policy.

The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement shall be responsible for periodic review and of this policy and for suggesting any necessary revisions to both the Faculty Senate and the Provost for their approval.

Garnett S. Stokes, Provost

Date