

Adopted: March 8 2011

**ACADEMIC SENATE  
of  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA**

**AS-726-11**

**RESOLUTION ON GUIDELINES FOR  
ACADEMIC GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

- 1 **RESOLVED:** That the Academic Senate acknowledge the attached FAQ on Academic Certificate  
2 Programs; and be it further  
3  
4 **RESOLVED:** That the Academic Senate endorse the attached proposal University Guidelines for  
5 Academic Graduate Certificate Programs.

Proposed by: Academic Senate Curriculum Committee  
Date: January 25, 2011

# University Guidelines for Academic Graduate Certificate Programs (Guidelines Based on Executive Order 806)

Prepared by the Task Force for Certificate Programs and the ASCC, January 24, 2011

## Scope

This policy does not apply to Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or other non-credit certificate programs offered by Continuing Education. This policy does not apply to existing academic certificate programs at Cal Poly, including Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Technical Communication, and Gerontology.

## Definitions

An academic graduate certificate program:

1. declares that a student has satisfactorily completed a sequence of advanced academic courses that provide instruction in a stand-alone, coherent body of specialized knowledge; and
2. is designed to meet requirements for professional competence, expand access to specialized knowledge, or meet occupational needs for advanced interdisciplinary work.

An academic graduate certificate program:

1. is a stand-alone program that is distinct from a specialization taken in conjunction with or as part of a degree program;
2. provides a set of learning experiences with a specific set of educational objectives;
3. consists of 12-24 quarter units (3-6 courses);
4. may be provided via Special Sessions (self-support) through Continuing Education (see Executive Order 1047); and
5. has a formal application process and a distinct matriculation.

## Specific Requirements

1. The educational background and prerequisites for admission into the graduate certificate program must be clearly stated.
2. The graduate certificate program advisor must verify that applicants have the appropriate and relevant background to meet the prerequisites of the program and to be successful in the program.
3. Admission to a graduate certificate program requires a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a major in a relevant field of study. The applicant must have attained a minimum GPA of 2.5 in the last 90 units attempted or have earned a GPA of at least 2.5 in the last degree completed. Work experience may substitute (at the discretion of the program) for the relevancy of the bachelor's degree and for the minimum GPA requirements.

4. Courses taken to satisfy the requirements of a graduate certificate program may be applied to the requirements of a graduate degree program; however, students must apply separately for admission into a graduate degree program.
5. Students who are enrolled only in a graduate certificate program are exempt from the continuous enrollment requirement for graduate students.
6. The graduate certificate program may allow a maximum of one 4-unit course in transfer credit, as determined by the graduate certificate program advisor.

### **Establishing Academic Graduate Certificate Programs**

1. An academic graduate certificate program, and all its courses, must be approved by the Provost upon the recommendation of the Academic Senate through the regular curriculum approval process.
2. A graduate certificate program will generally consist of courses at the 500 level. No more than half of the courses may be at the 400 level. No course-work may be below the 400 level.
3. A proposal template, similar to that used for Specializations, will be used.
4. The Financial Aid Office should be contacted prior to the establishment of a new graduate certificate program to ensure that federal regulations regarding “Gainful Employment” are satisfied.
5. Academic graduate certificate programs do not require approval by the CSU Chancellor’s Office
6. Typically graduate certificate programs do not undergo WASC review; however, the WASC Accreditation Liaison Officer should be contacted to determine if the new graduate certificate program is subject to a WASC Substantive Change Review.
7. Academic graduate certificate programs will be published in the catalog.
8. A graduate certificate program will be required to undergo program review at a frequency determined by Academic Programs.

### **Awarding an Academic Graduate Certificate**

1. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for successful completion of a graduate certificate program. Students may not elect to take courses required for the certificate as credit/no credit.
2. A graduate certificate program must be completed within 3 years.
3. The title of the graduate certificate will appear on the student’s official transcript.
4. Completion of the graduate certificate program will be commemorated by a document bearing the University seal and signed by the program’s college dean(s).

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## Frequently Asked Questions regarding Academic Graduate Certificate Programs

January 24, 2011

Prepared by: the Task Force for Academic Graduate Certificate Programs and  
the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee

This document is intended to elaborate on the requirements of the policy titled *University Guidelines for Academic Graduate Certificate Programs*

1. *Why are Academic Graduate Certificate Programs needed?*

Academic graduate certificate programs are designed to provide a specialized area of study that meets the requirements for professional competence and to expand access to specialized knowledge. The subject matter is advanced and narrow in focus.

The programs are typically designed for working professionals who are seeking to advance their career opportunities by obtaining specialized knowledge in their field or in a new field.

2. *Are we authorized to establish academic graduate certificate programs?*

Per Executive Order 806 and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, Cal Poly is authorized to establish academic certificate programs and to award academic certificates to students who have completed a prescribed course of study.

3. *Why does the Academic Senate have to approve academic graduate certificate programs?*

According to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, “the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the faculty on campus, shall issue the appropriate diploma, certificate, or degree to a student who has completed the prescribed course of study.”

Therefore, the recommendation of the faculty is provided through the curriculum approval process of the Academic Senate. Once the Academic Senate approves the prescribed course of study, the Registrar is authorized to issue academic certificates to students who complete this course of study.

4. *What are examples of career development opportunities available through academic graduate certificate programs?*

Academic graduate certificate programs are designed to provide new career opportunities for students who complete the course of study. The programs may prepare students for career advancement by:

- increasing their knowledge and abilities in a career area;

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- introducing them to new developments in a field;
- providing them with the initial knowledge/skills needed to enter a new field;
- providing them with the knowledge/skills needed to make a significant change in an existing career;
- providing them with the knowledge/skills for positions in new and emerging employment fields;
- providing them the opportunity to acquire skills needed for interdisciplinary work.

5. *Why do students have to be formally admitted to pursue an academic graduate certificate program?*

Since an academic graduate certificate program is a stand-alone program, an admissions process is required to ensure that the applicants have the appropriate prerequisites to be successful in the program.

6. *Does this policy apply to non-academic certificates?*

This policy does not apply to non-academic certificates, for example, Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or non-credit courses offered through Continuing Education.

7. *Why do graduate students have to apply separately for admission into a degree program after acceptance into an academic graduate certificate program?*

Even though the course-work for an academic graduate certificate program and a graduate degree might overlap, the degree program might have different admission standards. Therefore, an academic graduate certificate program is not intended as a way to be admitted to a degree program. However, course-work completed in a certificate program may be transferable to a graduate degree program.

8. *Are international or exchange students eligible to pursue academic graduate certificate programs?*

Yes, but only if international students are admitted into an academic graduate certificate program. International or exchange students may also pursue non-academic certificates offered through Continuing Education.

9. *Are students admitted to an academic graduate certificate program eligible for financial aid?*

Yes. However, when proposing new academic certificate programs, there are federal regulations regarding “Gainful Employment” that must be adhered to. The information that must be reported to the Department of Education is generally related to demand and career opportunities. When proposing an academic graduate certificate program, clarification should

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be obtained from the Financial Aid Office on the information that must be submitted and this information should be included on the certificate proposal form.

*10. Does this policy apply to academic undergraduate certificate programs?*

No. This policy only addresses academic graduate certificate programs. Policy may be developed for academic undergraduate certificate programs.

State of California  
**M e m o r a n d u m**

To: Rachel Fernflores  
Chair, Academic Senate

Date: March 16, 2011

From: Jeffrey D. Armstrong  
President



Copies: R. Koob, E. Smith,  
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Subject: Response to Academic Senate Resolution AS-726-11  
Resolution on Guidelines for Academic Graduate Certificate Programs

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This memo formally acknowledges receipt and approval of the above-entitled Academic Senate resolution.