**Academic Certificates AA/PPS No. 02.01.11**

**Issue No. 5**

**Effective Date: 05/01/2023  
Next Review Date: 04/01/2025 (ONY)**

**Sr. Reviewer: Assistant Vice President for Curriculum and Academic Programs**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

*Texas State University is committed to promoting proper processes for developing and awarding academic certificates.*

**01. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

* 1. Texas State University is committed to maintaining a well-designed effective process for curricular development of academic certificates and for accurate reporting from those certificate programs, as required by state and federal regulatory agencies. Faculty has primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum. The route for curriculum approval at Texas State is through a process controlled by faculty, which begins at the department, program, or school level followed by appropriate approvals within and external to the institution. Typically, new certificate programs are developed within the framework of the six-year strategic planning processes. The finalized list of all new academic programs approved for further development and potential launch is contained in the Academic Affairs division strategic plan within the university plan.

This policy summarizes the key elements of that process and provides guidance for preparing proposals for new programs and for changing or deleting existing programs. This document also provides guidance for adding, changing, deleting, and reporting certificate data and is intended to help ensure the academic integrity of curricular development. Certificates, as defined in this document, are independent academic credentials subject to the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), including those for academic program coordination, faculty qualifications, administrative oversight, and outcomes assessment.

* 1. All academic programs offered at Texas State are directly connected to the university’s mission. Initiating a new academic program at Texas State is intricately tied to the university’s strategic planning and master planning processes. This academic programming process is faculty-driven and begins at the academic unit where ideas for new academic programs are generated by faculty, in consideration of job market or workforce needs. Departments and schools review various proposal ideas for new programs and forward priorities to the college dean. At the college level, the priorities are vetted by the college leadership and a consolidated list of college planning priorities is submitted to the provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs during the strategic planning time period. The provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs reviews all the college-level priorities to formulate the Division of Academic Affairs’ strategic plan. The provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs and the college deans formally present their plans to the campus for a university-wide process that is inclusive to the university plan. Reviews at each level focus on multiple criteria to include the job market or workforce need, supply of similar certificates from other public institutions in Texas, resources required, existing capacity and quality at the unit level, ability to meet the requirements of the [60x30TX, Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015-2030](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/TXHigherEdStrategicPlan.PDF), Texas State’s National Research University Fund (NRUF) aspirations, projected enrollment, etc.
  2. The curricula in Texas State’s academic programs embody a coherent course of study in which, as a student progresses through a curriculum, the content of the program demands increasing levels of integration of knowledge. Academic programs demonstrate an appropriate sequencing of courses relevant to the field or discipline, so that course work is progressively more rigorous and demonstrates progressive advancement in a field that allows students to synthesize knowledge and grow in critical skills.
  3. When considering a request for adding, changing, deleting, or reporting of an academic certificate, faculty members should consult the department chairs, program directors, school directors, and college deans in their academic administrative unit and in other related programs, and if necessary, with outside experts. The college dean should then meet with the associate vice president for Academic Affairs and the dean of The Graduate College (if applicable for a graduate program) for an informal discussion about the program and to ensure consideration of the proposed addition, change, or deletion in appropriate strategic plans. For each certificate, a faculty program coordinator academically qualified in the field must be assigned for purposes of program coordination, curriculum development, and review. Educator preparation programs for teacher certification are handled in [AA/PPS No. 02.01.10](https://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-01-10.html), Academic Programs: Additions, Changes, and Deletions.

01.05 This document conforms to the policies, procedures, rules, and regulations of The Texas State University System (TSUS), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), SACSCOC, and the U.S. Department of Education.

**02. DEFINITIONS**

02.01 Academic Administrative Unit – a program, department, college, or school that has administrative authority over the certificate.

02.02 Academic Certificate – any grouping of courses other than a degree, that when satisfactorily completed by a student, shall entitle the student to a certificate or documentary evidence of completion of a post-secondary course of study. Certificates must meet the needs of the workforce by preparing students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation. Certificates must also meet the standards of all relevant state agencies or licensing bodies that have oversight over the certificate.

02.03 Baccalaureate-Level (Undergraduate) Certificate – a certificate that consists primarily of upper-division courses in disciplinary areas where the university usually offers an undergraduate degree program. Undergraduate certificates require completion of a formal program of study that generally includes at least 16 weeks of instruction, prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation, and leads to a recognized educational credential.

02.04 Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code – Each academic certificate is assigned a Texas CIP code that corresponds to the subject matter of the certificate. The Texas adaptation of the CIP taxonomy is developed by the National Center for Education Statistics and is used nationally to classify instructional programs and report educational data. CIP codes reflect the content of the certificate and not the academic administrative unit in which the certificate is offered. The CIP code of baccalaureate-level and graduate-level certificates must match the CIP code assigned to the degree program of the same academic discipline and level that is found in the program inventory. The CIP codes and the national manual definitions are available on the [THECB website](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/CIP/).

02.05 Credit Hour – For purposes of this policy and in accordance with federal regulations, as defined by SACSCOC in the [Credit Hours Policy Statement](http://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/Credit-Hours.pdf) regarding the definition and assignment of credit hours, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally-established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

1. no less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

b. at least an equivalent amount of work as outlined above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internship, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

A semester credit hour is defined by THECB as a unit of measure of instruction consisting of 60 minutes, of which 50 minutes must be direct instruction over a 15-week period in a semester system. Credit hours must be presented in whole numbers.

02.06 Gainful Employment Program – an education program that must lead to a recognized occupation.

02.07 Graduate-Level Certificate – a certificate that consists primarily of graduate-level courses in disciplinary areas where the university usually offers a graduate program. Graduate-level certificates require completion of a formal program of study that generally includes at least 10 weeks of instruction, prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation, and leads to a recognized educational credential. All certificate course work must be completed within four years of initial enrollment.

02.08 Graduate-Level Courses – academic credit courses that are offered at the master’s level.

02.09 Learning Outcomes – the knowledge and skills a student is expected to acquire or achieve upon completion of the program. Measurement may be quantitative or qualitative, depending upon the subject matter.

02.10 Marketable Skills – as discussed in the [60x30TX, Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015-2030](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/TXHigherEdStrategicPlan.PDF)*,* skills valued by employers that can be applied in a variety of work settings including interpersonal, cognitive, and applied skill areas. Those skills can be either primary or complementary to a certificate and are acquired by students through education, including curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities.

02.11 Program Inventory – the official list of all approved degree programs for the university.

02.12 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) – the name of the U.S. Department of Labor’s code of occupations that the certificate prepares students to enter.

02.13 Teach-Out Plan – a written plan that provides for the equitable treatment of students who may be affected by a program closure or deletion.

02.14 Upper-Division Courses – academic credit courses that are offered at the junior and senior level.

02.15 Workforce Need – There should be a demonstrated and well-documented need for the certificate in terms of present and future workforce needs. The certificate should provide the students with skills and knowledge that shall be useful for their lives or careers.

**03. ACADEMIC CERTIFICATE PROPOSALS**

03.01 Proposals – Certificate forms are available at the CATSWEB Program Inventory Management (PIM) [login page](http://www.catsweb.txstate.edu/faculty-staff.html).

03.02 Certificate Additions and Changes – [Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule 5.48](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=5&rl=48) provides Criteria for Certificate Programs at Universities and Health-Related Institutions. All new and changed certificates must comply with these criteria. Faculty developing certificate proposals should pay close attention to these criteria. Additional information and instructions from THECB can be found in the [New Certificate Requests website](https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/supporting-our-institutions/program-development/new-certificate-requests/).

03.03 Program Deletions – [SACSCOC’s Good Practices for Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution](http://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/CloseProgramSite.pdf) states, “A decision to close an educational program, site, branch campus, or the entire institution requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency, as fully as possible, about the conditions compelling consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. As much as possible, the determination to close a program, site, branch campus, or the institution should be made through a consultative process and only after alternatives have been considered, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the institution’s governing board. Because the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive and timely attention and involvement.”

**04. PROCEDURES FOR PROPOSAL ROUTING**

04.01 Certificate proposals must be submitted for review through the channels listed below in the following order:

a. department or school faculty (from the unit proposing the program addition, change, or deletion);

b. department or school curriculum committee, or department or school faculty designated as the curriculum committee (if a department or school curriculum committee doesn’t exist);

c. department chair, program director, or school director;

d. college curriculum committee;

e. college council;

f. college dean;

g. dean of The Graduate College (if applicable for graduate programs);

h. associate vice president for Academic Affairs;

i. University Curriculum Committee;

j. Faculty Senate;

k. Academic Affairs Council;

l. provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs;

m. president;

n. TSUS Board of Regents;

o. institutions within a 50-mile radius;

p. THECB; and

q. SACSCOC (if applicable as defined in [P/PPS No. 02.01](https://policies.txst.edu/division-policies/president/02-01.html), Reporting Substantive Changes to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)).

04.02 Detailed instructions for adding, changing, deleting, or reporting programs are maintained on the [Office of Curriculum Services website](http://www.txstate.edu/curriculumservices/), along with review flow charts and timelines.

04.03 The university does not offer financial aid for certificate-only students (i.e., students not concurrently enrolled in a degree program at the university).

04.04 After a program proposal has been fully approved, the curriculum coordinator and the assistant vice president for Curriculum and Academic Programs make all necessary additions, changes, and deletions in the catalogs and Student Information System (SIS). The undergraduate academic advisors and The Graduate College staff work with the Degree Works coordinator to make all necessary additions, changes, and deletions in the Degree Works system for degree programs.

04.05 In the event that a certificate proposal is denied at any level, the proposal will be returned to the originating faculty for review and possible revision and can be resubmitted for future consideration.

**05. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

05.01 After the proposed certificate is approved, certain curriculum-related data will be entered in the SIS system by Curriculum Services.

05.02 Undergraduate students interested in pursuing a baccalaureate-level certificate must notify the department or school staff member and academic program coordinator administering the program of their intent to enroll in the certificate program. The department or school staff member reviews the student’s admission eligibility according to the approved proposal to enroll in the certificate. If the undergraduate student is approved for admission to the baccalaureate-level certificate program, the department or school staff member notifies the undergraduate academic advisor to assign the certificate code into the interested students’ SGASTDN record (student curriculum form) in the SIS system. Post-baccalaureate students interested in pursuing a graduate-level certificate should complete an admission application through [Apply Texas](https://www.applytexas.org/) for the graduate-level certificate. The Graduate College staff will follow the regular process of calculating grade point averages and entering admissions decisions in the SIS system according to the approved proposal.

05.03 The academic program coordinator and the academic advisor for the program will advise interested students to enroll in the required and elective courses for the certificate.

05.04 After the undergraduate student completes the required and elective courses in the certificate, the student will submit a graduation application to the department or school staff member, who will then verify that all requirements for the certificate have been satisfied by the student. Post-baccalaureate students will submit the graduation application to The Graduate College. The Graduate College staff will follow the regular process used for clearing candidates.

05.05 Upon approval of the graduation application for undergraduate students, the department or school staff member will notify the undergraduate academic advisor that all requirements have been met. The academic advisor will enter the graduation information in the SIS system.

05.06 The Registrar’s Office will print the certificate after receiving the graduation workflow report from the SIS system. The certificate will also be noted on the student’s transcript.

05.07 Institutional Research is responsible for reporting the necessary enrollment and graduation information for the certificate programs to the THECB and the U.S. Department of Education per the deadlines as stated by the agencies.

**06. REVIEWERS OF THIS PPS**

06.01 Reviewers of this PPS include the following:

Position Date

Assistant Vice President for April 1 ONY

Curriculum and Academic Programs

Chair, University Curriculum April 1 ONY

Committee

Chair, Faculty Senate April 1 ONY

**07. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

This PPS has been approved by the following individuals in their official capacities and represents Texas State Academic Affairs policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Assistant Vice President for Curriculum and Academic Programs; senior reviewer of this PPS

Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs