

FAQ for Certificate Programs at UHD

As of November 2023

Certificate Planning Tips—PLEASE READ BEFORE you start planning

As you are planning your certificate, please budget sufficient time to carry out all required steps. Much will depend on the number of new courses you include in the certificate and whether it is financial aid eligible. Below are some questions for you to consider as part of your planning process:

1. How many credit hours and graduate or undergraduate?

Per policy, undergraduate certificates can be 9-12 hours. Graduate certificates should be at least 9 hours..

2. Who is the target audience?

If you are planning to attract new applicants who are not already students at UHD, you will need to consider admissions requirements and what kind of preparation students would need to succeed in your courses. Right now, we have focused our undergraduate certificates on currently enrolled students.

NOTE: any new admissions procedures for direct-to-undergraduate certificate applications will depend on discussion with the admissions office and must be consistent with any general university requirements.

3. Is there market demand?

All certificates will require justification based on market demand, even if it consists of all existing courses. This should take into account comparison with offerings at local institutions.

4. Will it require new courses?

If new courses are needed, consider whether these courses might also serve an existing program; if not, will you have enough enrollments from the certificate to sustain the courses? If new faculty will be needed, you'll likely need to demonstrate sufficient income in the pro forma to justify the request.

5. Will it be part of an existing program (or closely aligned)?

If this certificate is stackable into an existing program, be sure that the courses and pathways for counting toward a larger credential are clearly identified, along with any requirements for admission (e.g., a certificate admission does not necessarily guarantee full degree program admission).

6. How long to completion?

The advantage of many certificates is a compressed/efficient timeline for completion—often in a year or less. Thus, as you think about your courses, consider whether you can staff/schedule the needed courses in a rotation and delivery method that is timely and attractive to applicants, especially if they are not already students at UHD.

7. Are you prepared to do additional assessment?

All certificates that can be earned and listed separately on a transcript will require their own assessment plans and assessment reporting annually.

8. Can you devote the time/effort to marketing the certificate?

As with all programs, advertising and visibility is critical for success—the university may or may not be able to provide funding/advertising support; it will depend on resource availability and other institutional priorities. Costs and effort may need to be addressed at the department level.

9. Would your program be better suited to continuing education?

Depending on your target audience, you should consider whether for-credit existing UHD courses are the best fit. For example, if you are aiming to provide a skills set that is not captured easily in academic coursework or a timeline (e.g., weekends or within a few weeks) that doesn't map to existing academic calendars, you might consider a continuing education program. Please note that with continuing education, the courses do not count toward degrees and are not considered credit-bearing; they also cannot be taught as part of a faculty member's load. However, there are potential financial benefits for faculty and programs.

10. How will this advance a program or enrollment?

Any certificate should be designed to enhance current offerings, meet student needs, and support university enrollment and retention targets. Please consider the market studies component very carefully and weigh also the time, effort, and human/financial resources required to establish and maintain the certificate. We also need to be careful about overlap of courses among many credentials—consult policy and UCC leadership as needed.

11. Have you considered the financial costs/benefits?

Undergraduate certificates are not eligible for any additional fee structures—only regular tuition (and UG DDT) and fees can be charged. Graduate certificates can generate additional graduate fees that are much more substantial than undergraduate certificates or courses.

12. Do you have a good sense of the timeline for the paperwork?

Please review timelines below for certificate approvals—the process can take up to 1.5 years if approvals at SACSCOC and federal level for financial aid are required.

13. Are certificates financial-aid eligible?

There are a number of variables and processes that affect financial aid eligibility, including current status of the student, the level of certificate, and the number of credit hours in it.

If students are already degree-seeking at UHD they are automatically financial-aid eligible. Thus, if classes in your certificate program can count towards their degree plan, they should be covered. If students come to UHD to take the certificate only, then they will get financial aid only if the certificate itself is financial-aid eligible. In ALL cases, the university must apply to the DOE for eligibility before financial aid can be advertised or offered.

Below are the requirements from the DOE for establishing eligibility taken directly from the DOE application:

Undergraduate Certificate of 8-15 hours:

- leads to a certificate or other recognized educational credential,
- prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation,
- lasts at least 10 weeks, and
- provides at least 8 semester or trimester credit hours, 12 quarter credit hours, or 300 clock hours of instruction.

AND

- requires an enrolling regular student to have an associate degree or higher degree.

Graduate Certificate of 9-15 hours, aligned with an existing program, is eligible.

Graduate Certificate of 16+ hours is eligible.

Graduate Certificate of 9-15 hours that are NOT aligned with an existing program is NOT eligible.