

Duke University

Certificate Programs: Definitions and Requirements

Certificate programs are a unique aspect of Duke University undergraduate education. They reflect the University's understanding of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of research and education, not only at Duke, but in higher education generally. Certificate programs provide an opportunity for undergraduates to take advantage of Duke's status as a research university with a variety of research institutes and centers. Certificate programs may have a home in traditional departments, but they may also be housed in research centers, institutes, and programs, thereby showing Duke's commitment to building an infrastructure that supports, encourages, and sustains interdisciplinary education and research.

DEFINITION: A Certificate Program is a course of study that affords a distinctive, usually interdisciplinary, approach to a subject matter that is not available within any single academic unit. Courses are offered across two or more departments, and no more than half of the courses can originate in any one department. All certificate programs have a required introductory course as well as a required culminating capstone course. New certificate programs are reviewed after the third year, and thereafter every five years.

There are two versions of certificate programs: Version 1, the traditional certificate, consisting primarily of academic coursework, and Version 2, the experiential certificate, consisting of a combination of coursework and immersive co-curricular experiences.

Version 1: The traditional certificate is a course of study consisting of no fewer than six courses, including an introductory and a culminating capstone course. Courses must be offered across two or more departments or programs. No more than half of the courses can originate in any one department or program. Eligible undergraduates electing to satisfy the requirements of a certificate program may use for that purpose no more than two courses that are also used to satisfy the requirements of any major, minor, or other certificate program; individual programs may prohibit such double counting or restrict it to one course. At least half the courses taken to satisfy a certificate must be taken at Duke although individual programs may require that a greater proportion be taken at Duke.

Version 2: The experiential certificate is a course of study consisting of no fewer than four courses, including an introductory or foundational course and a culminating capstone course, plus two immersive co-curricular experiences and a public facing electronic portfolio. Eligible undergraduates electing to satisfy the requirements of a certificate program may use for that purpose no more than one course that is also used to satisfy the requirements of any major, minor, or other certificate program; individual programs may prohibit such double counting altogether. This variant of a certificate program is designed to encourage students to creatively approach their full four-year experience at Duke. But it is a structured and highly sequential experience, and as such, it may well not be for everyone. Sequencing requirements are a critical aspect of this variant precisely because these more experiential programs are about lending broad coherence, intentionality, and integration to the undergraduate Duke experience. There

can be no exceptions to the sequencing requirements (described below). There are five core elements of these certificates. These include: (1) Timing; (2) Thematically related experiential learning activities; (3) Foundational academic coursework; (4) Elective academic coursework; and, (5) The Capstone course.

- **Timing.** The objective is for these non-traditional certificates to serve as coherent pathways that shape a student's experience at Duke. Students will be encouraged to declare their intention to pursue the certificate as early as possible. However, students must declare no later than the end of the drop/add period of the fall semester of the junior year. The declaration deadline is fixed and there will be no exceptions. The deadline will ensure that the pathway and trajectory identified by the student were truly done in a deliberative and intentional manner. The declaration will include four components: (1) writing an essay outlining the logic and rationale for the pathway, (2) identification of the four courses and two thematically related experiences that the student plans to complete in the program, (3) establishment of a public facing e-portfolio, and (4) selection of a three person faculty advisory committee (note here that a certificate program may prefer to have a single standing faculty committee to vet student declaration proposals). In the essay, the rationale for academic coursework and experiential learning activities needs to be articulated as well as the ways in which the curricular and co-curricular dimensions form a coherent pathway.
- **2. Thematically Related Experiential Learning Activities.** Two sets of different but thematically related experiences—generally not for credit -- are required. Experiences can be through a variety of means, including, but not limited to, experiences gained through through research in a lab, through a fellowship, field research, work in a clinic, service-learning coursework, apprenticeship in a theater, independent project, and immersive civic engagement experiences—like SOL or DukeEngage. These are imagined to perhaps be most easily done during the summer, but can certainly happen during the academic year too. One set of experiences needs to exceed 300 hours; the second set of thematically related experiences needs to exceed 150 hours. What counts as a valid set of experiences, the order in which experience one and experience two are completed, and other aspects of the thematically related experiences will be determined by each individual certificate program. Guidelines and policies for vetting and documenting hours of experience will be established on a program by program basis.
- **3. Foundational Academic Coursework.** Students must complete either a Foundations or a Gateway course. Students can complete a Foundations course (a Focus course, writing class, first-year seminar, or other type of foundational course) in the first year at Duke, prior to completion of the two thematically related experiential learning activities. Or, students may choose to complete a Gateway course taken no later than the first semester it is offered following the student's first thematically related learning experience. Certificate programs must offer Gateway courses at least once each academic year. Certificate programs are encouraged to use existing Duke strengths in Focus, first-year writing, and the First Year Seminar series as the site of the new Foundations courses. As with the declaration timing, there will be no exceptions to this sequencing of the Foundational or Gateway course. Students will need to be attentive

to timing when creating their long range plans as there are apt to be implications for study abroad, Duke Engage, internships, and other planning decisions. Again, this program is designed for the subset of students who want an integrative, thematic, or analytic framing for their Duke experience and is not intended for everyone.

- **4. Elective Academic Coursework.** Students will select two electives from a carefully selected and short list of options provided by the certificate program. No electives can count toward the certificate that precede the Foundations course or the Gateway course. No more than one of the four courses (Foundations or Gateway; two electives; Capstone) can overlap with another major, minor, or certificate.
- **5. Capstone Course.** The Capstone course for this certificate is imagined as a seminar structured as an intellectually engaging workshop. One of the goals of the Capstone course (similar to a thesis seminar) is to facilitate completion of each student's individual culminating project. Projects for the capstone can and will likely vary wildly—a research project, a community-based project, a play, an exhibit, some form of performance art, a scholarly presentation at a national conference, publication of an article—are a few examples that come to mind. However, the Capstone course will be much more than a mechanism for supporting students' work on culminating projects. The course structure will create both a critical sense of community and cohort which are important elements of certificate programs. The Capstone will also provide opportunities for team-based learning, critical reflection, and analysis and integration of the learning that has occurred throughout the Certificate Program. The Capstone cannot be taken until the Foundations/Gateway course, two elective courses, and the two thematically related experiences are completed.