SUBECT	Non-credit certifications at Ohio University
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The purpose of this memo is to propose definitions and processes related to the implementation of non-credit certifications at Ohio University.

I. Background

The educational programs offered by Ohio University to students are categorized as *degrees*, *majors*, *minors*, and *certificates,* and the university awards corresponding **academic (or curricular) credentials** to students upon successful completion of such programs. These credentials are tied to specific academic programs in our formal curriculum, are vetted and approved through our shared governance process, and are recorded on official student transcripts. Thus, academic and non-academic units at Ohio University are prohibited by using the terms degree, *major*, *minor*, or *certificate* to refer to programs or credentials outside of the context of our formal curriculum.

On the other hand, units at the university may also offer experiences to students, faculty, employees, and the public that are NOT part of the formal curriculum, and the successful completion of such an experience frequently results in the awarding of a "credential", where the word is used in an informal sense. Such informal credentials are officially designated as **non-credit certifications**[1] in order to avoid confusion with the formal academic credentials offered by the university. They are intended to acknowledge the achievements of learners that have been documented and assessed (when appropriate) after participation in an activity or series of activities.

I. Categories of Certifications

Non-credit certifications offered by units at Ohio University fall into one of two categories.

Category 1: Participatory Certifications

Definition

This type of certification simply acknowledges that the recipient has successfully completed an activity or series of activities, and neither formal assessment nor any sort of external approval is required to offer these certifications.

Requirements

Units offering this type of certification must include the following information on any documentation (whether physical or electronic) given to the participant:

- Full title of the academic or non-academic unit (i.e., sponsoring unit).

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[1] See Faculty Senate Resolution "UCC Policy on Certificate Language" passed April 3, 2023.

- Reference to the title of the activity or series of activities.
- Reference to a time period (year, semester, or date) in which the activity or series of activities occurred.

Examples (hypothetical)

Certification of Attendance 2025 Spotlight on Learning Conference OHIO Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
Certification of Participation Workshop Presenter 2024-25 Inclusive Excellence Lecture and Workshop Series Ohio University – Division of Diversity & Inclusion

Approval Process

No approval required.

Category 2: Outcome-driven Certifications

Definition

This category comprises non-credit certifications bestowed on learners who successfully complete a non-curricular (that is, outside of a formal course) activity or series of activities that also incorporates a formal assessment. This assessment documents individual achievement of knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes learned or developed because of participation in the experience.

Such certifications are known by many different terms (e.g., badges, designations, micro-credentials, or achievements, etc.) but all arise from activities that

    a) incorporate at least one measurable learning outcome, and

    b) include formal assessment of learner achievement of any learning outcomes.

Requirements

Outcome-driven certifications require additional institutional oversight, both because of accreditation responsibilities as well as possible overlap and/or confusion with academic credentials arising from the curriculum.

Just as with the first category, units offering this type of certification must include the following in the title of the certification:

- Full title of the academic or non-academic unit (i.e., sponsoring unit).

- Reference to the specific, skill, and/or attitude learned or developed.

- Reference to a time period (year, semester, or date) for when the credential was awarded and/or the duration for which the certification is valid.

In addition, academic and non-academic units offering this type of certification must:

a) Avoid using certification titles that duplicate titles of Ohio University courses and credit-bearing programs (i.e., degrees, majors, minors, certificates, and general education).

b) Avoid using certification titles that exclusively utilize broad/generic terms (e.g., leadership, education) or OHIO common goals (e.g., critical thinking, ethical reasoning, written communication, etc.)

c) Develop and deliver appropriate formal assessment to measure learners' achievement of knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes, including the formulation of at least one measurable learning outcome. ***If the activity has a learning outcome that maps to a curricular learning outcome[2] then the corresponding assessment process will need to be documented through the institution's annual co-curricular assessment process.***

d) Be responsible for documenting, maintaining, and archiving a database of relevant information about learners who have earned the certification. Final details about unit responsibilities for maintaining records remain to be determined.

e) Submit the certification – including title, sponsoring unit, assessment plans, and certification management plans – for review and approval by the University Curriculum Council or by the Office of the Provost using the process described below.

Examples (hypothetical)

Achievement in GenAI Course Redesign Fall 2024 AI-enhanced Course Redesign Institute OHIO Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
Inclusive Pedagogy Designation 2023-24 Inclusive Pedagogy Academy OHIO Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Approval Process

Outcome-driven certifications undergo an initial review by either the University Curriculum Council (if the certification is available to Ohio University students or external stakeholders) or by the Office of the Provost (if available only to Ohio University faculty or employees). This review is used to determine if the proposed activity meets the requirements above and whether it will need to participate in the co-curricular assessment process. Please see the appendix for the corresponding submission form.

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[2] Defined as the Common Goals of our general education, or the learning outcomes of a specific academic program.

II.   Appendix: Certification Submission Form

Instructions: Please complete the form below and submit to the form to:
- o University Curriculum Council (if available to OHIO students or external stakeholders) at email
- o Office of the Provost (if available only to OHIO faculty or employees) at provost@ohio.edu.

Certification Title	
Description[3] (<50 words)	
Audience / Eligibility[4]	
Learning outcomes	[please also indicate if a learning outcome supports one of the general education common goals or the outcomes of a specific academic program]
Method of Instruction[5]	
Planned Assessment[6]	
Planned Assessor(s)[7]	
Completion Requirements[8]	
Average Time to Completion[9]	
Issue Date(s)[10]	
Sponsoring Unit Name	
Sponsoring Unit Contact (name, title, email)	

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[3] Example template: This certification focuses on learner achievement in [specific topic]. To earn the certification, learners are expected to [description of learner activities]. Learners who earn this certificate have demonstrated [list of specific knowledge, skill, or attitudes achieved in the specific topic].

[4] Examples: Current OHIO students only; Current OHIO faculty and staff only; Anyone (including students and stakeholders)

[5] Examples: In-person, Hybrid (online and in-person), Synchronous Online, Asynchronous online

[6] Examples: Pre-Post Survey; Exam; Self-Reflection; Portfolio of Work; Observation; Essay

[7] Examples: Sponsoring unit staff or faculty; faculty or staff peers; students

[8] Example template: To earn this certification, learners must [list of minimum accomplishments learners must demonstrate to earn the certification].

[9] Examples: varies; estimated number of hours (range), one semester, one academic year

[10] Examples: ongoing, semi-annually, annually