



Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Programs Criteria for Review

DRAFT: November 3, 2021

A certificate is a prescribed set of courses leading to a college-approved credential that is focused on a defined set of skills or subject expertise. Westmont College will offer a judicious selection of post-baccalaureate certificates that are designed to provide intellectual enrichment and the development of a coherent set of skills and aptitudes. Certificates are not degrees, are usually completed in one year or less, and consist of 24-32 hours of coursework. A certificate issued with the Westmont seal indicates that the student has successfully achieved the objectives of the program.

Certificates must be approved by the Academic Senate and by the full faculty via Faculty Meeting and shall meet the following criteria:

- Consistency with the mission of the college.
- Each course or module must have the academic rigor of upper-division curricula.
- Each course or module must have 1-3 distinct learning objectives and a means of measuring students' achievement of those objectives.
- Each program must reflect and draw upon the liberal arts commitment of the college, primarily in its emphasis on qualities such as interdisciplinary study, civil discourse, and critical and creative thinking.
- Each program must engage students in exploring the relationship of Christian thought and practice to the subjects of the certificate.
- Each course or module must be taught by a Westmont faculty member, either an approved adjunct or a full-time faculty member.

The Academic Senate will reserve the right to ask particular academic departments to review and approve courses or modules of a proposed certificate that fit into the department's disciplinary scope.

Some additional comments (by Rick Ostrander)

1. Certificates exist at both the graduate level and undergraduate level. Wheaton College primarily issues undergraduate certificates; Messiah University originally offered certificates at the graduate level but expanded them to undergraduate in 2019. I have retained the classification of “post-baccalaureate” for Westmont’s criteria, but obviously it’s for Senate to decide whether to allow for the possibility of undergraduate certificates as well.
2. The number of required hours for certificates varies widely. For example, Messiah’s parameters are 9-15 hours; Wheaton prescribes 24-30 hours. To accommodate Westmont’s proposed Theological Leadership certificate, I revised our parameters to be 24-32 credits (or 6-8 four-credit courses). That keeps the total number of credits higher than a typical minor but lower than an major.
3. According to Wheaton, the Higher Learning Commission has been informing institutions in the Midwest that certificates should only be offered at the graduate level and should include job placement reporting, but Wheaton is continuing to use the “certificate” label for now. Westmont would be well advised to consult WASC about any relevant guidelines regarding certificates.