Committee on Educational Policy
Policy on Undergraduate Academic Certificate Programs

An undergraduate academic certificate (UAC) is a supplemental educational opportunity. Students earn UACs by completing a structured group of courses offered at UC Santa Cruz. These courses typically focus on areas of study outside the purview of any single department, major, minor, or concentration. UAC programs support UC Santa Cruz undergraduate students in their intellectual, academic, employment, and other ambitions. UAC programs have been reviewed and approved by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) in consultation with the Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB) and the Committee on Courses of Instruction (CCI), as specified in this document. Undergraduate academic certificates are specific to the UC Santa Cruz main campus, and they are entirely distinct from professional certificate programs, such as those offered at UC Santa Cruz Silicon Valley Extension.

General Policies
Undergraduate academic certificates (UACs):

1. Are only available to students registered and enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at UC Santa Cruz.
2. Are made up of regular UC Santa Cruz courses. These courses must be reviewed and approved by the Committee on Courses of Instruction.
3. Consist of a minimum of 14 credits; these credits should not count toward any other major or minor.[1]
4. Have clearly defined Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).
5. Focus on areas of study outside the purview of any single department, major, minor, or concentration. Certificates should identify unique curricular needs and minimize redundancy with existing program requirements. CEP assesses certificates on a holistic basis and may recommend that proposed certificates be resubmitted as proposed minors or concentrations.
6. Are not recorded on a student's transcript.*
7. Are not subject to catalog rights.
8. Must have a sustainable governance structure.
9. Must have a sustainable administrative plan.
10. Must be reviewed and approved by the Committee on Educational Policy in consultation with the Committee on Planning and Budget and the Committee on Courses of Instruction, as specified in this document, before being advertised or added to departmental or divisional web pages.
11. Are entirely distinct from professional certificate programs, such as those offered at UC Santa Cruz Silicon Valley Extension.
12. Are reviewed on an annual basis through the program statement review process.

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[1] Please review CEP's Double Counting policy

13. Are subject to the discontinuance guidelines for non-degree programs as indicated by the APU.

* CEP reserves the right to revise the UAC transcript policy, pending further discussion and consultation.

Approval Criteria

In assessing whether to approve newly proposed certificates, CEP takes many different factors into account. These factors include:

(a) whether the area of study is already, or might be, offered by a major, minor, or concentration at UC Santa Cruz;

(b) the distinctiveness of the structured curriculum and the avoidance of redundancy in coursework;

(c) the value of the certificate to undergraduate students: intellectual, academic, employment, or other values;

(d) student demand;

(e) feasibility and resilience with respect to governance;

(f) feasibility and resilience with respect to administration;

(g) impact on time to degree; and

(h) impact on campus and unit resources and overall resource requirements; new certificate programs must be either resource neutral and/or entirely sustainably resourced.

How to Propose an Undergraduate Academic Certificate

Timing: Certificate proposals should be received by CEP's posted program statement deadlines in the fall, for publication in the forthcoming general catalog, pending approval. Later submissions will likely not be reviewed until the subsequent year. Text should be developed and initially submitted in document format (Google doc or Word), prior to submission into the CAT system. Please submit proposals to CEP (cep@ucsc.edu) and the Office of the Registrar (via curric@ucsc.edu).

Proposals for UACs should address the following:

1. Description of the Undergraduate Academic Certificate Program:

   a. Certificate program name.

   b. Description of the certificate's purpose and distinctive features:

      i. Who is the target audience?

      ii. How would the certificate differ from other academic programs (e.g., majors, minors, concentrations, certificates) offered on the UC Santa Cruz campus?

      iii. What is the student demand for this program?

      iv. How would the program support students in their intellectual, academic, employment, and/or other prospects?

    c. List of certificate Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). These PLOs should be clearly defined and readily assessable. They should demonstrate the distinction of the certificate with respect to existing academic offerings on campus.

    d. Calendar:

        i. When would the program ideally begin to be offered?

        ii. How fast is the program expected to grow?

        iii. How many students are expected to participate in this program initially and how many once the program reaches its full enrollment target?

    e. Certificate curriculum and courses

        i. Certificate curriculum: The initial proposal must include a list of all certificate requirements, including a minimum of 14 credits. The content of each course that counts for the certificate must be reviewed and supported by CCI, and the overall requirements for the certificate are reviewed by CEP. Courses should be proposed and submitted through the campus curriculum system (currently CAT, Curriculum Approval and Tracking) by the appropriate course sponsoring agency. The course approval process follows after approval of the certificate. If CEP approves the certificate proposal and content, the Office of the Registrar will generate a CAT program statement form for the catalog.

        ii. What efforts have been made to ensure that the certificate minimizes redundancy in campus curricular offerings and/or student coursework? (Note that CEP may recommend that proposed certificates be resubmitted as proposed minors, concentrations, or other programs.)

    f. Documentation demonstrating review and approval of the certificate proposal by stakeholders and any relevant academic units.

    g. Documentation demonstrating student demand.

    h. An overview of the plans for administering the certificate, including advertising the option to students and updating students pursuing the certificate on opportunities and changes.

    i. An overview of the plan for governance (including the certificate-sponsoring agency) of the certificate program.

2. Admissions Criteria

    a. Please acknowledge that applicants must be registered and enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at UC Santa Cruz.

    b. Discuss and provide justification for any additional program criteria, such as prerequisites.

3. Program Resources

    a. Instructors:

        i. Who will teach the courses required for the certificate program?

        ii. For all UC Santa Cruz faculty teaching in the program, would this assignment be part of their regular workload for the academic year?

    b. Space: What are the classroom space needs for this certificate?

   c. Staff: What resource requirements would there be with respect to advising, identifying prospective students, and administrative oversight?

   d. Is this program resource neutral or sustainably resourced?

 4. Certificate Award

   a. How will certificates be awarded / presented to students?

Approved by the Committee on Educational Policy on November 20, 2024