

ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATION POLICIES

Definitions and Guidelines for Graduate Certificate Programs

Definitions

A graduate certificate program is a focused collection of courses that, when completed, affords the student a record of academic accomplishment in a given discipline or set of related disciplines. Graduate certificate programs are a minimum of 12 credits.

Admission criteria for graduate certificate programs are the same as for graduate degree programs. While the courses in a graduate certificate program may be used as evidence in support of a student's application to a graduate degree program, the certificate itself is not considered a prerequisite, nor is it a guarantee of admission. Graduate certificate students are not eligible for graduate assistantships.

While taking the last course(s) of the certificate program, the student should apply for the certificate through their myWCU account.

Guidelines

1. Students are awarded a graduate certificate upon completion of a well-defined program of course work within an approved graduate program.
2. The didactic material encompassed within a graduate certificate program may represent a subset or extension of an existing graduate discipline.
3. For a graduate certificate program, the number of graduate credits is expected to be a minimum of 12. The number of credits must be appropriate to the learning objectives and focus of the program.
4. Graduate certificate programs may be at the post-baccalaureate or post-master's level. Post-master's graduate certificate programs must be designated as such.
5. Graduate certificate programs do not include a thesis.
6. All graduate certificate programs will be reviewed within the course of regular graduate program assessment and review.
7. Certificate programs also may be proposed for post-baccalaureate students that consist of undergraduate credit courses, professional credit courses, or noncredit courses. In such cases, the programs will not be considered to have met the standards for graduate certificate programs.
8. With the exception of courses offered in collaboration with another institution or expressly addressed in the certificate program requirements, a majority of credits for the certificate program must be completed at West Chester University. Graduate credits from another accredited institution may be accepted for transfer and are subject to the transfer of credit policy in place with approval of the department and the Dean of The Graduate School.
9. Students pursuing a graduate certificate will be required to meet the same admissions and academic requirements as those defined for degree-seeking students (e.g., maintenance of a 3.0 GPA).
10. The title of any graduate certificate program must contain the words "Graduate Certificate Program." Only Pennsylvania Department of Education certification programs may include the word "certification."

Additional Requirements for the Master of Education Degree

In addition to fulfilling these requirements, candidates for certain master of education degrees must give evidence of successful teaching experience approved by the department chairperson. Other experiences in lieu of this requirement must be approved by the relevant department and the vice provost and Dean of The Graduate School.

ACT 48

All educators holding Pennsylvania public school certification including Intern, Instructional I and II, Educational Specialist I and II, Administrative, Supervisory, Letters of Eligibility, and all vocational certifications are affected by the requirements of Act 48. Educators must maintain their certifications as active by earning six collegiate credits **or** six PDE-approved, in-service credits **or** 180 continuing education hours or any combination of the above every five calendar years. Note: Each collegiate or in-service credit is equal to 30 continuing education hours.

Education Specialist Certification

Commonwealth regulations also provide for certification as an educational specialist to those persons who successfully complete an approved program of study and have the recommendation of the preparing institution. The Educational Specialist Certification is issued on two levels.

Educational Specialist I (Provisional)

The Educational Specialist I Certification is issued for entry into a professional position in the public schools of the Commonwealth. The applicant must have completed an approved program of study, possess a baccalaureate degree, and been recommended for certification by the preparing institution.

Educational Specialist II

The Educational Specialist II Certification is a credential issued to an applicant who has completed three years of satisfactory service on an Educational Specialist I Certification, and who has completed 24 semester hours of post-baccalaureate or graduate study at a regionally approved institution. In addition, the applicant must have received the recommendation of the superintendent of the school district in which their most recent service was performed, or in the case of an intermediate unit, the executive director, or in the case of an approved nonpublic school, the chief school administrator.

Teacher Candidacy Policy

All candidates seeking either a degree or certification in teaching must apply for Teacher Candidacy, a process required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education that is different from being admitted to the University. This provision applies to those who have already received University admission to pursue majors in educator preparation. Achieving Teacher Candidacy enables educator preparation candidates to enroll in the advanced coursework required to complete degree and certification programs. According to the PDE guidelines for achieving Teacher Candidacy, effective August 1, 2015, candidates who complete 60 or more credits of college-level coursework may register for additional professional education courses as long as those courses are not designated as advanced-level professional education coursework (please contact your program chair or advisor for guidance).

The minimum standards for Teacher Candidacy to a WCU educator preparation program include the following:

1. Major in an educator preparation program or enrolled in an elective certification program
2. 48 semester-hour credits of college-level study
3. A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.9 on all college-level work
4. Six semester-hour credits of college-level (100 level or above) mathematics, three semester-hour credits of college-level (100 level or above) English composition, and three semester-hour credits in literature taught in English
5. Recommendation by the department of the candidate's major. (Department recommendation may be contingent upon completion of additional and/or more rigorous requirements than the minimum described above.)
6. Act 55 of 2022 signed into law by Governor Wolf on July 8, 2022, requires the Secretary of Education to waive the requirement to

satisfactorily complete the assessment of basic skills required under section 1207.3 and 22 Pa. Code § 49.18(c) (relating to assessment) for 3 years from July 8, 2022 through July 8, 2025. This applies to all students who enter preparation programs during this period as well as otherwise qualified candidates for licensure who make application during this period. After July 8, 2025 basic skills testing could be reinstated as a requirement for Teacher Candidacy.

WCU educator preparation candidates who achieve Teacher Candidacy must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.9 to retain Teacher Candidacy status. In most cases, a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 must be earned to qualify for Pennsylvania certification. Each program has designated, for its own majors, its advanced professional courses. Only those candidates who have completed the Teacher Candidacy process are eligible to take these courses. The Office of Candidate Services processes all applications for Teacher Candidacy.

Candidates who have Teacher Candidacy status and later fall below the required cumulative GPA are permitted to repeat advanced professional education course work to improve their GPA to the required level (2.9). Such candidates will not, however, be permitted to register for additional advanced professional education course work in their programs until they again achieve the minimum cumulative GPA required for Teacher Candidacy (2.9).

Teacher Candidacy for Certification

To supplement the prior Teacher Candidacy Policy section, this section provides additional details for the procedures required of candidates at the post-baccalaureate and/or graduate level. Upon entrance to the University, graduate students enrolled in educator preparation programs ("candidates") leading to Pennsylvania certification must meet with their academic advisor(s) to complete an "Approved Program of Study" (APS) form. This form outlines all of the candidates' certification requirements, indicates candidates' approval for Teacher Candidacy, and is signed by the University certifying officer attesting to their unique course of study at WCU. At present, to be eligible for and qualify for designated advanced courses, one must have a minimum 2.9 GPA (most programs have higher GPA requirements). The original APS is submitted to the Office of Teacher Certification during the first semester.

Periodic regulatory changes from the Pennsylvania Department of Education may alter these requirements for candidates seeking post-baccalaureate certification. Candidates are urged to remain aware of updates to Teacher Candidacy requirements through regular communication with their advisors.

Candidates with Teacher Candidacy whose programs culminate in a student teaching semester must apply to student teach during the first month of classes (September or January) one academic year prior to the intended student teaching semester.

Educator Preparation Degree

The primary mission of the undergraduate educator preparation programs at West Chester University is to prepare professionals (hereafter "educator preparation") for the classrooms of Pennsylvania. The College of Education and Social Work's conceptual framework (<https://www.wcupa.edu/education-socialWork/missionVision.aspx>) guides the preparation of educators who can ensure strong academic achievement for PK-12 students in schools and other educational environments in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The University is committed to excellence in educator preparation by preparing candidates to exhibit content knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions (<https://www.wcupa.edu/education-socialWork/dispositions.aspx>). Further, the University is committed to the preparation of exemplary professionals to assume roles and responsibilities as educators in a multicultural, global society; to pursue lifelong personal and professional development opportunities;

to support the continuing improvement of schools; and to embrace opportunities for leadership in the education community.

Instructional I Certification

A candidate who completes one of the University's educator preparation programs and satisfies all licensure tests required by the Commonwealth qualifies for an Instructional I Certification, which is issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). This certification is valid for six years of teaching in Pennsylvania. Recommendation for the certification is made by the Dean of the College of Education and Social Work, who serves as the certifying officer for the University.

To qualify for a Pennsylvania Certificate candidates must:

Complete an approved education preparation program at the Bachelors, Graduate or Post Baccalaureate level in your subject area. Your initial teacher preparation program must include a student teaching experience.

1. Meet all Certification Testing requirements (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Educators/Certification/CertTestingRequirements/Pages/default.aspx>) established by the PA State Board of Education.
2. Meet all other requirements established by the PA Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators.
3. Submit an online application for certification via PDE's TIMS - MyPDESuite (<https://www.mypdeapps.pa.gov/wfTims.aspx>) - with the state-mandated minimum grade point average of 3.0 or higher AND
4. Receive the recommendation of your preparing college/university.

The PA Department of Education considers the PDE430, (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Teachers-Administrators/Certifications/Fees%20and%20Forms/PDE%20430.pdf>) the PA statewide evaluation form for student professional knowledge and practice, which is part of the WCU Professional Education Unit-wide assessment, necessary for certification. WCU translates this content into the Assessment Management Software through the Danielson Framework evaluation, the Unit-wide assessment, and Candidate Signature Page. WCU University supervisors must complete the Danielson Framework evaluation so that candidates can review and complete the Candidate Signature Page assignment. Final ratings must be satisfactory, which means a minimum of 2 (Basic) in each category. Completion and minimum scoring requirements for both the Danielson Framework evaluation and Candidate Signature Page are required to earn an institutional recommendation for certification.

*Note: assessments are subject to change within the time span of one's University career due to changing requirements at national, state, and local level; and candidates may still be required to meet requirements.

Graduates Seeking Level II Certification

The Instructional II certification is issued to a person who holds level I certification and has completed three years of satisfactory teaching in a Pennsylvania public school as certified by the superintendent of the school district in which the person's most recent service was performed or, in the case of an intermediate unit, the executive director or, in the case of an approved nonpublic school, the chief school administrator.

In addition, the person must have completed 24 semester hours of collegiate credit at an approved baccalaureate or advanced-degree-granting institution subsequent to the conferring of the baccalaureate degree. The credits may be satisfied, in whole or in part, through in-service programs approved by the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education. Last, the person must successfully complete an induction program offered by a public school district and approved by the PDE.

Requirements Common to All Areas of Certification

On June 1, 1987, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education implemented revisions to the Pennsylvania Code. These revisions

require all undergraduate candidates who apply for Pennsylvania teaching certifications to pass state competency tests in basic skills, as well as general, professional, and specific knowledge of the subjects in which they seek teacher certification. Post-baccalaureate candidates are exempt from the basic skills tests.

As changes are made in requirements for all certification programs, it is the candidate's responsibility to satisfy the new requirements.

The Pennsylvania Teacher Intern Certification Program

West Chester University does not offer the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) teacher intern certification.