

UT Tyler Internal Planning Guidelines and Definitions for Microcredentials

Certificates, Microcertificates, Digital Badges, and Recognition of Completion

Policy Statement

The University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler) offers various pathways for learners to earn credentials that meet the current workforce needs. Learners include UT Tyler enrolled students desiring proficiency in certain disciplines, UT Tyler alumni who need to update their skills and abilities to remain current in their chosen fields, and prospective learners who may or may not possess a degree but need to earn credentials quickly to pursue employment opportunities and to advance their careers. Irrespective of their status, learners' skills and accomplishments are recognized in verifiable and identifiable methods, including official academic transcripts, co-curricular transcripts, and digital badges. All UT Tyler microcredentials meet quality assurance criteria in compliance with institutional accreditation and professional accreditation organizations.

Definitions

Learner: A more inclusive term that encompasses a variety of target audiences, including those who are taking part in the educational process whether it be a microcredential or a full degree program. UT Tyler welcomes learners to learn new competencies and skills whether they are currently enrolled students, alumni, or have never been associated with UT Tyler but seek opportunities to enhance their current skills to secure employment opportunities and/or advance their careers or their subject matter knowledge.

Academic Certificates: Consist of semester-based, credit-bearing, and graded UT Tyler courses offered on the undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate levels. UT Tyler academic certificates typically have a minimum of semester credit hours (SCH), ranging from 9 to 18 SCH. Completed certificates are recorded on official academic transcripts. Admission to an academic certificate program does not constitute admission to a degree program. Academic certificate types include the following:

- **Embedded Academic Certificates:** Some of UT Tyler' degree programs have embedded certificates that could lead to the completion of degree programs. Learners who enroll in embedded academic certificates are considered degree-seeking students at UT Tyler.
- **Stand-alone Academic Certificates:** Consist of free-standing bodies of knowledge within organized, graded UT Tyler courses and may be offered in an interdisciplinary manner. Generally, learners are certificate-seeking students although some of them may choose to apply to be degree-seeking students and enroll subsequently into degree programs.
- **Academic Microcertificates:** Consist of a smaller subset of credit-bearing UT Tyler courses or modules that are less than a full academic certificate with a maximum of 6 SCH. If these microcertificates are embedded within academic certificate programs, they may lead to the completion of academic certificates. Completed microcertificates are reported on the student's official UT Tyler transcript. In some cases, an academic microcertificate could have an associated digital badge. Academic microcertificates may need to be renewed and approved on a periodic basis.

Digital Badges: Consist of online digital visual representations that recognize competencies, skills, achievements, and participation earned by learners. These badges must include verifiable and identifiable data associated with specific learners. Learners will receive awarded badges that are **not** recorded on the UT Tyler academic transcript. Faculty who choose to offer a digital badge associated with any microcredential must request badge approval as described in the following section.

Professional Microcredentials (Google, Microsoft, etc.): Consist of competency or skills-based criteria that allow learners to develop proficiency in particular areas. Like professional certificates, credentials are earned in a short timeframe within a year or less. Learners receive awarded certificates that are **not** recorded on the UT Tyler academic transcript. Professional microcredentials may need to be renewed and approved on a periodic basis.

Professional Workforce Certificates (Continuing Education): Non-traditional and digital credentials are offered by UT Tyler or through partnerships with approved third-party vendors. These alternative credentials may be viewed as pathways to obtain attainable and accessible education. Such courses or modules may be used as supplemental materials to instruction provided within UT Tyler graded, organized courses or may be offered as a stand-alone program. Digital badge awards do not come with letter grades upon completion, and

therefore do not add or subtract to an enrolled student's GPA or produce a GPA for non-enrolled students. The section on Transfer Credit provides additional information regarding credit earned within these platforms. Learners will receive continuing education credit that will **not** be recorded on the UT Tyler academic transcript.

Planning Processes

Certificate Program and Microcertificate Approvals

Academic certificate programs or microcertificates, including digital badges, must be approved according to UT Tyler curricular approval processes before advertising or enrolling students. Curriculum workflows, resource documents, and Certificate Templates are located on the [Faculty Resources webpage](#).

Notification of new certificates are sent to The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board no later than 90 days after the certificate is offered effective September 1, 2023. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness assists in the notification.

Certificate programs, regardless of semester credit hour length, may only be offered in areas and at levels authorized by an institution's Program Inventory in compliance with Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy and [Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Section 5.48](#).

Changing the academic certificate program's length (semester credit hours), modality, or content may be subject to the THECB notification process and in accordance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

Closing a Certificate or Microcredential Program

Closure of an academic certificate or microcredential program may require notification with a Teach-Out Plan to SACSCOC in accordance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures. The Teach-Out Plan includes the rationale for closure (such as low enrollments or shifts in market demand) and a teach-out plan for currently enrolled students. The department chair or program coordinator should notify the Associate Provost for Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness as soon as possible after a decision to close the program.

A Teach-Out plan is *not* needed when closing a third-party professional certificate or microcredential program. The department chair or program coordinator should notify the Associate Provost for Online and Continuing Education to update the University's comprehensive authorized offerings list.

Certificate Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Embedded Certificates: Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are assessed using the existing degree program assessment methods and improvement planning for academic certificates and microcredentials embedded in degree programs.

Stand Alone Certificates: Student Stand-alone certificate programs are assessed as separate programs in compliance with SACSCOC.

Assessment Requirements: Microcredentials comprised of 3-9 SCH must include direct assessment of student learning outcomes in at least one course. Microcredentials comprised of 10 to 15 SCH must include direct assessment of student learning outcomes in at least two courses. Microcredentials above 15 SCH must include direct assessment of student learning outcomes in at least three courses.

Registrar Policies

Admission into a Certificate Program and Reporting

Admission to an academic certificate program does not constitute admission to a degree program.

To automate the academic certificate program and the academic microcredentials completion audits, students will be required to declare admission into an academic certificate and/or academic microcredentials program to be tracked within the University's student data system as an academic certificate/microcredentials program student. The Dean of the Graduate School will certify that all graduate certificate program requirements have been met and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies will certify that all undergraduate certificate program requirements have been met. The Office of the Registrar will certify that all undergraduate and graduate academic certificate programs requirements have been met and will award the student's certificate.

Degree Requirements for UT Tyler Microcredentials

All UT Tyler undergraduate and graduate level microcredential programs must be completed within a six-year period. Credit transferred from another institution must meet the limitations imposed by each degree program. Exceptions to the six-year time limitation must be approved by the academic advisor, dean of the college or school offering the microcredential, and Associate Provost for Academic

Success and Dean of Undergraduate Studies or the Senior Vice President for Research and Dean of The Graduate School.

Non-Academic Transfer Credit Petition

Students may petition for transfer credit when they provide documentation of their non-academic credit coursework to the program and/or school of their declared majors or academic certificate program after being admitted to UT Tyler. Petitions should ideally be completed within the student's first semester, but no later than the first day of the student's graduating term. Upon admission, academically qualified UT Tyler faculty in the program will review the student's documentation to determine the content provided by the alternative credential platform(s) is comparable in both content and rigor for the awarding of an equivalent credit in the respective certificate and/or degree program. As credit is petitioned after admission, non-academic credit will not be considered as part of an applicant's transferable GPA or transfer hours for admission. The dean or dean's delegate will determine final approval of individual cases based on recommendations from the department chair and/or program coordinator/faculty. Schools or programs may opt not to allow individual petitions for awarded digital badges as specified on their departmental websites.

Recognition of Certificate Completion on Student Transcripts

Undergraduate academic certificates: The student's transcript will reflect that the student has completed the undergraduate level academic certificate program, if the student (a) has a grade point average of at least 2.0 in the organized courses that constitute the undergraduate academic certificate program; (b) all academic standards are met as required by the school and stated in the catalog; and (c) the certificate program and the courses constituting such program are listed in the catalog.

Graduate academic certificates: The student's transcript will reflect that the student has completed the graduate level academic certificate program, if the student (a) has a grade point average of at least 3.0 in the organized courses that constitute the graduate academic certificate program; (b) all academic standards are met as required by the school and stated in the catalog; and (c) the certificate program and the courses constituting such program are listed in the catalog.

Recognition of Earned Credentials on Other Institutional Documents

The UT Tyler academic transcript remains as the official document and will list the degree and major, and if applicable, second major, double degree, minors, concentrations, designations, academic certificates, and academic honors. Other institutional documents may include the following:

1. **Digital badge:** an official record shareable across the web that verifies competencies, skills, achievements, and participation earned by learners and awarded upon completion.
2. **Co-Curricular Transcript/Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR):** an official portable document that captures different methods of learning, both in and outside of the classroom, by recording career ready skills and experiences earned by learners. The document may include one or more credentials, such as badges and other experiences.

Resource Links

- [UT System Taskforce on Higher Education and Opportunity – Goal 1 Initiative: Texas Credentials for the Future](#)
- [Counting U.S. Postsecondary and Secondary Credentials](#)
- [SUNY: The Power of Microcredentials](#)
- [SUNY and UT System Announce Microcredentials Initiatives](#)