

Nipissing University

Policy Category	Academic
Policy Number	
Policy Name	Certificates and Diplomas
Responsible Department	Office of the Registrar
Original Approval Date	
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Introduction

Individual Faculty members and Division Chairs have expressed an interest in certificates and diplomas. A draft policy was sent to both faculties in December 1997. The printed policy that follows has been approved by both the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Faculty of Education.

Preamble

This document proposes criteria and procedures for the evaluation and approval of certificate and diploma programs by the University Curriculum Committee. It is intended to provide a framework which will enable better quality control and unambiguous communication to students and prospective students concerning the academic value of certificates and diplomas.

The intention is to provide minimum academic criteria which must be met if programs are to be approved as Nipissing certificates and diplomas. Even those whose primary goal is professional development must meet these minimum criteria. With the minima clearly set, program designers will be free to build creatively around them to provide programs appropriate to their constituencies. The academic criteria proposed are intended to maintain the high academic standards of Nipissing and enable certificates and diplomas to continue their traditional functions of providing studies complementary to degree programs, professional preparation or upgrading, and bridging into undergraduate degree programs.

These criteria and procedures are also designed to make it easier for Nipissing to mount new, innovative certificate and diploma programs. The number of criteria has been kept to a minimum and the procedures have been made as simple as possible in order to allow us to move quickly with initiatives while subjecting them to clear, rigorous academic scrutiny. The quarters from which initiatives can come have been left very open in order to

encourage all parts of the university to participate and to foster multi-disciplinary initiatives. These criteria and procedures are intended to engender speed, flexibility, quality and clarity.

Academic Credit for Diploma and Certificate Courses

Before defining diploma and certificate programs, it will be useful to discuss the academic credit given to courses in those programs. In this context, Academic Credit Courses are courses of an academic calibre consistent with those offered in undergraduate degree programs here at Nipissing. The most common kind of Academic Credit Course is that included in the curricula of undergraduate degree programs. These provide a benchmark against which other Academic Credit Courses can be evaluated. It is proposed here that diploma and certificate programs include courses which are determined by the University Curriculum Committee to be of an academic calibre consistent with courses offered in undergraduate degree programs, but are not offered in any degree program. While credit for courses in degree programs is normally given in blocks of three or six units, credit for these other academic credit courses can be at the one, two, three or any other unit level. This provides a flexibility appropriate for programs which often have professional development goals as well as academic ones. Credit may be given for such courses even when there are no degree program courses directly equivalent to them.

To receive approval as an Academic Credit Course, a course which is not part of a degree program must:

- Be at a level of intellectual rigour comparable to that found in undergraduate degree program courses in the same or similar fields and be equivalent to a minimum of one unit. This can be ascertained by examination of the text, course outline and other materials used in teaching the course.
- Include an explicit evaluation of students' performance by the methods normally used in degree courses such as tests, essays, reports and other assignments.
- Be taught by an instructor capable of teaching degree level materials. This capability may be ascertained by considering the professional work experience and professional development learning, as well as the academic credentials, of the instructor.
- Have admission requirements which demand, as a minimum, that the student have at least one of the following: (1) an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent; (2) be a mature student as defined in the Undergraduate Calendar of Nipissing University; or (3) be deemed an exceptional case by the admissions committee for the certificate or diploma program of which the course is a part.

- Include a systematic student evaluation of the course using such methods as multiple-choice questionnaires, narrative responses and/or interviews.

Nipissing Diploma

A Nipissing Diploma is a program of study involving a significant body of academic work coherently organized around clear learning objectives. Diplomas may be focused primarily upon academic or professional development objectives, but all must meet a minimum criterion of academic content. Diplomas serve such functions as: study complementary to degree programs; professional preparation or upgrading; and bridging into undergraduate degree programs.

Academic Course Requirements

All Nipissing Diplomas must include Academic Credit Courses equivalent to at least 24 units of undergraduate study at Nipissing. In addition to their academic content, diploma programs may include courses and other forms of learning which are not suitable for academic credit.

Admission Requirements

There are two sets of admission requirements.

1. General Diploma Admission Requirements. Student who wish to enter a Nipissing Diploma program must have at least one of: (1) an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent; (2) be a mature student as defined in the Undergraduate Calendar of Nipissing University; or (3) be deemed an exceptional case by the admissions committee. These requirements ensure that students have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the academic credit courses in diploma programs and bear in mind the bridging function that some diplomas play.
2. Diploma Specific Admission Requirements. Any particular diploma program may have other admissions requirements which are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisites specific to particular Academic Credit Courses included in the diploma.

Credit Towards Degree Program Studies

The Academic Credit Courses included in a diploma program can be used for credit towards degree program studies in accordance with the normal academic rules specified by the Faculty offering the degree. Such credit will be given only when all the work required by the diploma is completed.

Advanced Standing

Upon admission to a diploma program, a student may receive credit for up to two thirds of the units of academic credit in the program. For a diploma which included 24 units, this is 16 units of advanced credit. The courses used for such credit must be equivalent to undergraduate courses at Nipissing. This ensures that any student who receives a Nipissing Diploma is capable of completing at least 24 units of undergraduate study at Nipissing. It also allows us to continue the tradition of offering diplomas which require less than 24 units of direct work, to students who already have degrees and/or who have already done a considerable amount of undergraduate work.

Double Counting

Diplomas may include courses which a student uses for credit towards some other program at Nipissing, such as a degree. However, at least one third of the units used for credit towards a diploma must be unique to that diploma. For a diploma that consists of 24 units, this is 8 units of work that must be completed uniquely for that program.

Academic Approval Criteria

When approving a program as a Nipissing Diploma, the University Curriculum committee must ensure that it appropriately fulfills all of the following criteria. It has:

- a coherent set of learning objectives;
- courses which collectively meet those objectives;
- Academic Credit Courses equivalent to at least 24 units of undergraduate study;
- a statement of admission requirements;
- a statement of the advanced standing rules for students who enter the program;
and
- a statement of the credit towards degree studies provided by courses in the program

Nipissing Certificate

A Nipissing Certificate is a program of study coherently organized around clear learning objectives and having academic content equivalent to a minimum of half a year of full-time undergraduate study at Nipissing. Nipissing Certificates may be focused primarily upon academic or professional development objectives, but all must meet this minimum criterion of academic content. Certificates serve such functions as: bringing into undergraduate degree programs; professional preparation or upgrading; and study complementary to degree studies.

Academic Course Requirements

All Nipissing Certificates must include Academic Credit Courses equivalent to at least 15 units (half a year) of undergraduate study at Nipissing. In addition to their academic content, certificate programs may include courses and other forms of learning which are not suitable for academic credit.

Admission Requirements

There are two sets of admission requirements:

1. General Certificate Admission Requirements. Students who wish to enter a Nipissing Certificate program must have at least one of: (1) an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent; (2) be a mature student as defined in the Undergraduate Calendar of Nipissing University; or (3) be deemed an exceptional case by the admissions committee. These requirements ensure that students have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the academic credit courses in certificate programs and bear in mind the bridging function that some certificates play.
2. Certificate Specific Admission Requirements. Any particular certificate program may have other admissions requirements which are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisites specific to particular Academic Credit Courses included in the certificate.

Credit Towards Degree Program Studies

The Academic Credit Courses included in a certificate program can be used for credit towards degree program studies in accordance with the normal academic rules specified by the Faculty offering the degree. Such credit will be given only when all the work required by the certificate is completed.

Advanced Standing

Upon admission to a certificate program, a student may receive credit for up to 60% of the units of academic credit included in the program. For a certificate which includes 15 units, this is 9 units of advanced credit. The courses used for such credit must be equivalent to undergraduate courses at Nipissing. This ensures that any student who receives a Nipissing Certificate is capable of completing at least 15 units of undergraduate study at Nipissing.

Double Counting

Candidates may simultaneously count all credits used towards a certificate towards a degree program.

Academic Approval Criteria

When approving a program as a Nipissing Certificate, the University Curriculum Committee must ensure that it appropriately fulfills all of the following criteria. It has:

- a coherent set of learning objectives;
- courses which collectively meet those objectives;
- Academic Credit Courses equivalent to at least 15 units of undergraduate study;
- a statement of admission requirements;
- a statement of the advanced standing rules for students who enter the program;
and
- a statement of the credit towards degree studies provided by courses in the program be required to include, where applicable, comparative information from other such program elsewhere

Certificate of Attendance

A Certificate of Attendance issued by Nipissing University acknowledges that an individual has participated in a set of activities at Nipissing that does not have the status of a program. Such activities are designed to meet the interests and objectives of participants who may want to acquire general knowledge or training for general interest purposes, but who neither require or seek any form of professional or academic recognition. This category will be suitable for various types of life-long learning courses and programs.

Admission Requirements

Normally there are no specific admission requirements.

Credit Towards Degree Program Studies

Normally there is no credit granted towards degree program studies.

Approval Criteria

Although administrative and academic units at Nipissing do not need approval to issue Certificates of Attendance, it is expected that such Certificates will be granted only when the activities are of benefit and/or interest to the community and are consistent with the objectives of Nipissing University.

Procedures for the Evaluation of Certificate and Diploma Programs and Academic Credit Courses

It is the mandate of the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty to ensure that the academic value of certificate and diploma programs, and the academic credit courses included in them, are clearly specified and correctly and effectively communicated to students. It develops procedures and criteria for evaluating certificates, diplomas and academic credit courses which are not part of degree programs. It coordinates the process leading to approval by the University Curriculum Committee.

All proposals for certificates, diplomas, and academic credit courses must be presented to the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty. Such proposals need to be approved by the University Curriculum Committee. Although such proposals will normally be sponsored by academic units, any individual or body may sponsor a proposal by presenting it to the Chair of the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty. It is the sponsor's responsibility to provide a complete proposal.

When the Division(s) or Faculty is satisfied that the academic merit of a proposed certificate or diploma program has been appropriately evaluated, it will take it to the University Curriculum Committee for approval.

Contents of Proposals for Certificate and Diploma Programs

A complete proposal for a certificate or diploma program includes three parts: (1) a statement of academic merit; (2) a statement of financial viability; and (3) a statement of administrative responsibility.

Statement of Academic Merit

The purpose of the statement of academic merit is to make the case that a particular program merits the designation of certificate or diploma by reason of meeting the criteria specified in this document.

The cornerstone of a statement of academic merit is normally an attestation from a Division(s) or Faculty, at Nipissing University, stating that the proposed program has been reviewed and found to meet the criteria for the designation proposed. That statement will also include a general description of how the academic merit of the proposal was evaluated, including such things as which academic departments were involved and the procedures used. This statement will be supported by other information relevant to the criteria in sections 4.6 and 5.6 so that a complete statement of academic merit includes the following parts:

- a statement from a Division(s) or Faculty;
- a statement of the learning objectives of the program, a brief general explanation of how the courses in the program contribute to meeting those objectives, and a brief explanation of why the program is being offered;
- a list of the courses in the program. For each new course, a course description is provided along with a statement of the number of units of academic credit provided by the course. If credit is to be given by more than one academic unit, the amounts for each are to be provided;
- an accounting of the total unit value of the academic credit courses in the program;
- a statement of admission requirements for the program;
- a statement of the advanced standing rules for students who enter the program;
- a statement of the credit towards degree studies given by the courses in the program; and
- instructions on how to get more details concerning the evaluation of the courses in the program in terms of the criteria given in section 3.0 above

Statement of Financial Viability

The Academic Planning Committee and the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty should have some assurance that any program they are evaluating has been vetted by an appropriate agent, at least in a preliminary way, and found to be financially viable. To this end, program proposals presented to the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty must include a statement, no longer than one page, from an appropriate agent (e.g., Division Chair, Dean) attesting to the financial viability of the proposed program and outlining the basis for that attestation, including consideration of the administrative costs. The details of these statements will not necessarily be the subject of discussion for academic bodies or the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty. Those who have concerns about the contents of such statements can address them directly to the attestor. Approval of a certificate or diploma by the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty and the University Curriculum Committee does not imply that either of those bodies necessarily endorses the statement of financial viability included in the proposal.

Statement of Administrative Responsibility

The University Curriculum Committee and the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty should have some assurance that the administrative arrangements for any program they are evaluating have been considered, and that plans of at least a preliminary sort have been

made. To this end, program proposals presented to the appropriate Division(s) or Faculty must include a statement, no longer than one page, from an appropriate agent (e.g., Division Chair, Dean) outlining the administrative arrangements for the proposed program, and how their costs will be covered.

Proposals for Academic Credit Courses

Proposals for new academic credit courses, which are intended to be part of a certificate or diploma proposal, and which are not to be part of any degree program will follow the normal university curriculum approval process.