

Complete Policy Title

Certificates, Diplomas & Microcredentials Policy

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Responsible Executive

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Policy Specific Enquiries

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General Policy Enquiries

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

PREAMBLE

1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide minimum academic criteria which must be met for the approval of Certificates, Diplomas and Microcredentials at McMaster University. The criteria are intended to maintain the University's high academic standards and enable certificates, diplomas, and microcredentials to provide studies and skills complementary to degree programs, professional preparation or upgrading, and/or transferring credit into degree programs.
2. This document also outlines the process which departments and Faculty offices may follow to develop new certificates, diplomas, and microcredentials for approval by the University's governing bodies.
3. The evaluation, approval, and monitoring of certificates, diplomas, and microcredentials is the responsibility of the University's governing councils, namely, Graduate Council, Undergraduate Council, and the University Planning Committee (as applicable). The relevant Council shall report to the Senate the establishment, closure, and/or substantial revisions of academic certificates, diplomas, and microcredentials. See *Section IX: Procedures for Approval* and *Appendix A: Approval Path for Certificates, Diplomas & Microcredentials* for more information about the approval and governance of these credentials.
4. Academic certificates, microcredentials, and diploma programs are operated in accordance with normal academic regulations as outlined in this Policy and published in the *Undergraduate Calendar* or *Graduate Calendar* (as applicable). Non-academic microcredentials are subject to the policies and procedures maintained by the Inspire Office.
5. The terms **certificate**, **diploma**, and **microcredential** shall only be used by McMaster courses, learning activities, and programs within the guidelines of this Policy.

TYPES OF CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMAS AND MICROCREDENTIALS¹

6. Academic Certificates:
 - a) Graduate Academic Certificate
 - b) Undergraduate Academic Certificates (approved by Senate through UGC or GC):
 - (i) Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate
 - (ii) Stand-Alone Certificate of Professional Learning
 - (iii) Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate
7. Non-Academic Certificates:

¹ **Non-McMaster Certificates:** McMaster collaborates with other organizations and institutions to offer programming toward a credential issued by that other entity. Such externally-issued credentials are outside the scope of this Policy.

- a) Certificate of Completion
 - b) Certificate of Attendance
8. Diplomas:
- a) Graduate Academic Diploma
 - b) Undergraduate Academic Diploma
9. Academic Microcredentials:
- a) Graduate Academic Microcredential
 - b) Undergraduate Academic Microcredential
10. Non-Academic Microcredentials

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

11. For the purpose of interpreting this document:
- a) Words in the singular may include the plural and words in the plural may include the singular;
 - b) **Academic Credit Course** or **Learning Experience** is a course or learning experience of an academic calibre consistent with those offered in undergraduate or graduate degree programs. The most common kind of academic credit course is that included in the curricula of undergraduate or graduate degree programs. These provide a benchmark against which other academic credit courses can be evaluated;
 - c) **Calendar Copy** is the precise content to be published in the *Undergraduate* or *Graduate Calendar* and provides an overview of the credential, its admission requirements, academic/curriculum requirements for completion, and whether a Student or Learner may use the credential as credit toward degree or other program studies;
 - d) **CDM Committee** means the Joint Committee on Certificates, Diplomas and Microcredentials;
 - e) **Faculty office** means the Faculties of Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, Science, Social Sciences, and the Arts & Science Program;
 - f) **Inspire Office** means the Inspire Office of Flexible Learning, which provides support and resources to units developing microcredentials;
 - g) A **Learner** is an individual recorded by a Faculty office, the Inspire Office, MCE, or a department as enrolled in a Non-Academic Credential. As members of the University Community, certain University policies apply to Learners (e.g., *Discrimination and Harassment Policy*, *Accessibility Policy*, etc.).

See also the definition of **Student** and *Section II: Procedural Requirements: Appeal Procedures and Access to University Services and Policies*.

- h) A **Mature Student**, as defined in the *Undergraduate Calendar*, has not attended secondary school or college on a full-time basis for at least two years and has not previously attended university.
- i) **Microcredential** means a designation of achievement of a coherent set of skills, competencies, or knowledge, specified by a statement of purpose, learning outcomes, and potential need by employers and/or in the community;
- j) **MCE** means McMaster Continuing Education;
- k) A **Parchment** is documentation provided to a Student or Learner attesting to the successful completion of a credential, whether electronic or paper-based.
- l) **Student** means any individual recorded by the University Registrar as enrolled in an educational course of study recognized by the Senate and for whom the University maintains education records. See also the definition of **Learner** and *Section II: Procedural Requirements: Appeal Procedures and Access to University Services and Policies*.

POLICY REVISIONS

12. As per the [McMaster University Policy Framework](#), the executive responsible will typically review this Policy every five years. Smaller and more frequent reviews may occur to ensure that this Policy is current and compliant with relevant standards and legislation.

SECTION II: PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

13. Academic certificate and diploma programs are operated in accordance with normal academic regulations as outlined in this Policy and as published in the *Undergraduate Calendar* or *Graduate Calendar* (as applicable).
14. Academic microcredentials are operated in accordance with normal academic regulations and to the same standards as academic certificate and diploma programs. For the purposes of this Policy, microcredentials are included under the umbrella of *certificates* with respect to the *McMaster University Act, 1976*;
15. A microcredential has fewer requirements and credit hours than traditional academic qualifications and focuses on competencies that are:
 - a) not defined in existing programs;
 - b) not accessible outside of limited enrolment programs;
 - c) complementary to existing programs; and/or
 - d) available as optionally stackable modules.
16. Student records for Academic Credentials, including grades, are maintained by the Office of the Registrar. Learner records for Non-Academic Credentials may be maintained by the Faculty office, Inspire Office, MCE, or department offering the Non-Academic Credential.
17. An academic microcredential shall not show by default on a transcript unless approved as part of a degree.
18. Academic and non-academic certificates, diplomas, and microcredentials are issued by the academic unit offering the program or learning activity to the Student upon completion of all academic requirements. Academic and non-academic microcredentials are issued by the Inspire Office (unless the offering Faculty has previously stated its intent to issue the credential instead of the Inspire Office), or MCE.
19. The learning activity for a microcredential may generate its own credential (unlike certificates and diplomas, which require multiple courses) and it may be counted as part of a corresponding diploma or certificate.

Appeal Procedures and Access to University Services and Policies
20. See definitions of **Student** and **Learner** in 11 (g) and (l) above.

21. Under this Policy, individuals registered in an Academic Credential, namely a Graduate Diploma, Graduate Academic Certificate, Undergraduate Diploma, Undergraduate Academic Certificate, or an Academic Microcredential, are **Students**. Students have access to specific University resources (including, but not limited to, library resources, Learning Management Systems, Microsoft 365 (including Teams) or University services where supplemental fees are paid alongside tuition). Students have rights and responsibilities under Student-specific University policies, including the ability to appeal under *Student Appeal Procedures* (see also *Appendix B: Related Policies and Legislation*). Learners do not have access to these services or Student-specific University policies.
22. Individuals registered in a Certificate of Completion, Non-Academic Microcredential, or Certificate of Attendance, are **Learners**. Learners may also be Students (if they are simultaneously registered in an Academic Credential (see *article 21* above)). As members of the University Community, certain non-academic University policies apply to Learners (e.g., *Discrimination and Harassment Policy*, *Accessibility Policy*, etc.). However, **Learners are not Students** and therefore Student-specific policies do not apply. Learners do not have appeal rights under the *Student Appeal Procedures*, nor do they have access to specific University resources (including, but not limited to, library resources, Learning Management Systems, Microsoft 365 (including Teams) or any University service in which a McMaster Student pays supplemental fees alongside tuition).
23. Learners enrolled in a non-academic microcredential may request a review of their evaluation to the Faculty Standing Committee on Microcredentials or to MCE within four (4) weeks of the submission of their final grade. Learners in this category will not have access to existing Student appeal procedures beyond the Faculty or MCE Standing Committee. The Learner must be informed of the decision within three (3) weeks from the date of the review request. The decision made by the Faculty or MCE Standing Committee will be final without the right of appeal.

ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR DIPLOMA AND CERTIFICATE COURSES AND MICROCREDENTIALS

24. Academic certificate and diploma programs include courses which are determined to be of an academic calibre consistent with courses offered in undergraduate or graduate degree programs (as appropriate).
25. Academic microcredentials must provide the same academic calibre as courses offered in degree programs but are expected to be shorter in duration and may have non-traditional delivery modes.
26. These microcredentials have fewer units than a course; credit may be a fraction of a unit and normally shall not exceed one unit level. As a general guideline, one academic unit normally corresponds to 10-15 academic contact hours.
27. See also *Section IX* and *Appendix A* for more information about the approval criteria and governance of Academic Credentials.

Stacking and Transferring between Credentials

28. Academic credit may be applied to another credential. Examples include, but are not limited to, transfer of credit from a certificate to a degree or from a degree to a diploma. Normally, credits can be applied to a maximum of two credentials. Refer to the details for each credential listed in this Policy for allowances and restrictions for applying credit from one credential to another.
29. Students may use up to 100% of the academic credit courses completed toward undergraduate diploma and certificate programs for advanced credit toward another credential. Academic microcredentials may be stacked together to be used toward another credential. The academic unit offering the subsequent credential shall apply credit at its discretion and per that credential's normal academic rules.
30. In some specific cases, academic microcredentials or courses taken for credit as part of a graduate diploma program may be considered for credit toward a subsequent Master's degree program.

ACADEMIC APPROVAL CRITERIA

31. See *Section IX* and *Appendix A* for more information about the approval criteria and governance of Academic Credentials.

SECTION III: GRADUATE DIPLOMAS

32. A Graduate Diploma is based on Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs) and prepares Students for employment requiring sound judgment, personal responsibility and individual initiative, in complex and unpredictable professional environments.
33. The review and approval process for Graduate Diplomas is covered in the [Policy on Academic Program Development and Review](#).
34. There are three types of Graduate Diplomas:
 - a) **Master's Level Diploma (Type 1)** programs require Students to develop a conceptual understanding of fundamental aspects of the discipline. Some programs require Students to demonstrate Master's-level analytical, interpretative, methodological and expository skills through course-specific applications, while some may also require Students to demonstrate these skills in applied activities;
 - b) **Master's and Doctoral Level Diploma (Type 2)** programs are offered in conjunction with a Master's or doctoral degree and represent an additional, usually interdisciplinary, qualification. Programs require Students to develop a conceptual understanding of fundamental aspects of the discipline(s) and appropriate levels of analytical, interpretative, methodological and expository skills through course-specific applications, while some may require Students to demonstrate these skills in applied activities; and
 - c) **Master's and Doctoral Level Diploma (Type 3)** programs are stand-alone, direct-entry Graduate Diploma programs that require Students to develop a conceptual understanding of fundamental aspects of the discipline. Programs require Students to demonstrate the appropriate level of analytical, interpretative, methodological and expository skills through course-specific applications, while some may require Students to demonstrate these skills in applied activities.

Academic Course Requirements

35. Graduate Diplomas must include academic content equivalent to a minimum of **four, three-unit (half)** graduate courses at McMaster.

General Admission Requirements

36. Students who wish to enter a Graduate Diploma program must meet the admission requirements of a Master's level program. These requirements ensure that Students have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the academic credit courses in Graduate Diploma programs.

Additional Admission Requirements

37. Any particular Graduate Diploma program may have other admission requirements which are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisite courses or degrees specific to the particular diploma.

Credit Toward Degree or Other Program Studies

38. In some specific cases, courses taken for credit as part of a graduate diploma program may be considered for credit toward a subsequent Master's degree program.

SECTION IV: GRADUATE ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES

39. A Graduate Academic Certificate is a microcredential consisting of a program of study coherently organized around clear learning objectives.

Academic Course Requirements

40. All Graduate Academic Certificates must include academic credit courses equivalent to at least **two, three-unit (half)** graduate courses at McMaster.

General Admission Requirements

41. Students who wish to enter a Graduate Academic Certificate program must meet the admission requirements of a Master's level program. These requirements ensure that Students have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the academic credit courses in Graduate Academic Certificate programs.

Additional Admission Requirements

42. Any particular Graduate Academic Certificate program may have other admission requirements which are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisite courses or degrees specific to the particular certificate.

Credit Toward Degree or Other Program Studies

43. Up to 100% of the certificate course requirements may overlap with graduate degree courses. The courses may or may not be unique to the certificate.

SECTION V: UNDERGRADUATE DIPLOMAS

44. An Undergraduate Diploma is a program of study involving a significant body of academic work coherently organized around clear learning objectives. Undergraduate Diplomas (including post-baccalaureate diplomas and all diplomas offered by MCE) may be focused primarily upon academic or professional development objectives, but all must include academic content equivalent to a **minimum of 24 units** of undergraduate-level course work.
45. Undergraduate Diplomas serve as complementary study to degree programs, professional preparation or upgrading, and transferring credit into undergraduate degree programs. The word *Diploma* must be included in the program name (for example, *Diploma in Accounting*).

Academic Program Requirements

46. All Undergraduate Diplomas must include academic credit courses equivalent to **at least 24 units** of undergraduate study at McMaster. In addition to their academic content, Undergraduate Diploma programs may include courses and other forms of learning which are not suitable for academic credit.

General Admission Requirements

47. Students who wish to enter an Undergraduate Diploma program must meet at least one of the following criteria:
- a) possess an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent;
 - b) be a mature Student as defined in the *Undergraduate Calendar*; or
 - c) be deemed an exceptional case by the admissions committee for the Undergraduate Diploma.
48. These requirements ensure that Students have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the academic credit courses in Undergraduate Diploma programs and take into account the function of transferring credit into degree programs that some diplomas perform.

Additional Admission Requirements

49. Any particular diploma program may have other admission requirements appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisite courses or degrees specific to the particular diploma.

Credit Toward Degree or Other Program Studies

50. The maximum overlap with degree courses is 70% of the requirement for the diploma. Up to 100% of the academic credit courses completed toward undergraduate diploma and certificate programs may be used for credit toward another credential. The academic unit offering the subsequent credential shall apply credit at its discretion and per that credential's normal academic rules.

SECTION VI: UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES

51. An Undergraduate Certificate is a program of study coherently organized around clear learning objectives.
52. There are three types of Undergraduate Academic Certificates. Each certificate has the academic content equivalent to a specified amount of undergraduate study at McMaster, as indicated below:
 - a) Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate (**15 units**);
 - b) Stand-Alone Certificate of Professional Learning (**9 units**); and
 - c) Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate (**15 units**).

STAND-ALONE UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE

Academic Course Requirements

53. A Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate (including a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate) may be focused on academic or professional development learning objectives, but it must include academic credit courses equivalent to at least **15 units** of undergraduate study at McMaster. In addition to their academic content, Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate programs may include courses and other forms of learning which are not suitable for academic credit. The phrase *Undergraduate Certificate* must be included in the program name (for example, *Health Professional Entrance Preparation (HPEP) Undergraduate Certificate*).

General Admission Requirements

54. Students who wish to enter a Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate program must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - a) possess an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent;
 - b) be a Mature Student as defined in the *Undergraduate Calendar*; or
 - c) be deemed an exceptional case by the admissions committee for the certificate.
55. These requirements ensure that Students have the basic capabilities necessary to manage the academic content in an Undergraduate Certificate program and take into account the function of transferring credit into degree programs that some certificates perform.

Additional Admission Requirements

56. Any particular Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate program may have other admission requirements which are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisite courses or degrees specific to the particular certificate.

Credit Toward Degree or Other Program Studies

57. A Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate may bridge Students into an undergraduate degree program, supply professional preparation or upgrade, or provide complementary work to degree studies.
58. Students may use up to 100% of the academic credit courses completed toward a Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate for advanced credit toward another credential. The academic unit offering the subsequent credential shall apply credit at its discretion and per that credential's normal academic rules.

STAND-ALONE CERTIFICATE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

59. Stand-Alone Certificate of Professional Learning enables Students to complete an academic program of study (**9 units**) with a professional focus. It will include academic development objectives targeting the Student's growth in a professional area and will meet the minimum criterion of academic content. Stand-Alone Certificates of Professional Learning serve the function of transferring credit into undergraduate degree programs and professional enhancement. The phrase *Certificate of Professional Learning* must be included in the program name (for example, *Certificate of Professional Learning in User Experience and User Interface (UX/UI Design)*).

Academic Course Requirements

60. All Stand-Alone Certificates of Professional Learning must include academic credit courses equivalent to **9 units** of undergraduate study at McMaster. Up to 100% of the academic credit courses completed toward undergraduate diploma and certificate programs may be used for credit toward another credential. The academic unit offering the subsequent credential shall apply credit at its discretion and per that credential's normal academic rules.

General Admission Requirements

61. Students who wish to enter a Stand-Alone Certificate of Professional Learning program must have at least one of:
 - a) an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent;
 - b) be a mature Student as defined in the *Undergraduate Calendar* ; or
 - c) be deemed an exceptional case by the admissions committee for the certificate.
62. These requirements ensure that Students have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the academic credit courses in Undergraduate Certificate programs and take into account the function of transferring credit into degree programs that some certificates perform.

Additional Admission Requirements

63. Any particular Undergraduate Stand-Alone Certificate of Professional Learning program may have other admission requirements which are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisite courses or degrees specific to the particular certificate.

CONCURRENT UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE

64. A Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate shall be focused primarily upon academic development objectives and must meet the minimum criterion of academic content (**15 units**). This type of certificate sets out a plan of study complementary to degree studies and will provide added value to those studies. The phrase *Concurrent Certificate* must be included in the program name (for example, the *Concurrent Certificate in Leadership, Equity, and Social Change*).

Academic Course Requirements

65. All Concurrent Undergraduate Certificates must include academic credit courses equivalent to at least **15 units** of undergraduate study at McMaster.
66. In addition to their academic content, concurrent certificate programs may include courses and other forms of learning which are not suitable for academic credit.

Admission Requirements

67. Students who wish to enter a Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate program must be enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at McMaster.
68. Any particular Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate program may have other admission requirements, such as prerequisite courses, which are appropriate to its learning objectives.

Credit Toward Degree or Other Program Studies

69. Up to 100% of the requirement for the concurrent certificate may overlap with undergraduate degree courses.

SECTION VII: ACADEMIC MICROCREDENTIALS

70. Academic microcredentials must meet the standards for academic coursework, but there are no minimum credit hours to complete the work. Microcredentials may be within a program, separate from a program, or they could reside simultaneously in both places. The word Microcredential must appear in the credential name (for example, *Microcredential in Project Management*).

General Admission Requirements

71. Students who wish to begin an academic microcredential must meet its specified admission requirements. Since a microcredential may be aimed at Students and Learners from a broad range of backgrounds, the admission requirements of the academic microcredential are considered at the time of its approval, whether linked to a degree or diploma program, certificate, or as a stand-alone non-academic learning activities such as a portfolio, placement, community project, or others. These admission requirements for a microcredential will ensure that Students and Learners have the basic capabilities necessary to deal with the learning activity.

Additional Admission Requirements

72. Any microcredential may have other admission requirements that are appropriate to its learning objectives. These requirements may include prerequisite courses or degrees specific to the particular microcredential.

Credit Toward Another Credential

73. Academic microcredentials may be stacked together to be used for credit toward another credential at the discretion of and in accordance with the normal academic rules specified by the academic unit offering the subsequent credential. See also *Section II: Procedural Requirements: Academic Credit for Diploma and Certificate Courses and Microcredentials*.

SECTION VIII: NON-ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

74. Non-Academic Credentials are distinct and differentiated from academic certificates, microcredentials, and diplomas. The types of Non-Academic Credentials include Certificates of Completion, Non-Academic Microcredentials, and Certificates of Attendance.
75. The majority of Certificates of Completion, Non-Academic Microcredentials, and Certificates of Attendance will not normally be categorized expressly as graduate or undergraduate offerings, although such categorization may be identified at the discretion of the unit proposing the credential or the CDM Committee.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

76. A Certificate of Completion acknowledges that an individual has completed a course or program at McMaster that does not meet the requirements of an academic program.
77. A Certificate of Completion can be issued when a non-academic course or program includes a minimum of **30 contact hours** and **evaluation** of the Learner's learning. Certificates of Completion may include academic content if the course or courses have been approved for credit toward another credential. The phrase *Certificate of Completion* must be included in the credential name (for example, the *Teaching and Learning Foundations Certificate of Completion*).
78. This category will be suitable for various types of life-long learning and career-related courses and programs.

Admission Requirements

79. Normally, there are no specific admission requirements.

Credit Toward Another Credential

80. Normally, there is no credit granted towards degree program studies, unless the course or courses making up the Certificate of Completion have been approved for credit as part of a degree, diploma or certificate.
81. A series of Certificates of Attendance (see below) cannot comprise a Certificate of Completion or any other credential.

Guidelines and Limitations

82. Clarity and the protection of the McMaster certificate brand are paramount. Thus, any courses or programs that issue a Certificate of Completion shall not use the term Certificate in their title, unless it is part of the term "Certificate of Completion." Exceptions may occur when a program is provided as

contract training to a company (i.e., not a public program) and the program name is determined jointly with the client.

83. The course description should include the credit or non-credit nature of the course, that there will be Learner evaluation, how the Learner shall be graded (i.e., Pass/Fail or a letter grade), and that a "Certificate of Completion" will be awarded for successful completion.

NON-ACADEMIC MICROCREDENTIAL

84. A Non-Academic Microcredential acknowledges that an individual has completed learning activities related to a coherent set of skills, competencies, or knowledge at McMaster that does not meet the requirements of an academic certificate, microcredential or diploma program.
85. The phrase *Non-Academic Microcredential* must appear in the credential name (for example, *Non-Academic Microcredential in Outdoor Leader Training*).
86. A Non-Academic Microcredential can be issued using the same learning activities as an academic microcredential, subject to approval by MCE or the offering Faculty. However, an individual Student or Learner cannot earn both academic and non-academic microcredentials for the same learning activity nor may a non-academic microcredential be transferred to an academic microcredential or stacked with any Academic Credential for credit after issuance.
87. This category will be suitable for various types of life-long learning and career-related courses and programs. The Non-Academic Microcredential shall not be categorized as undergraduate or graduate level. In addition, it will not appear on a transcript.

Admission Requirements

88. Normally, there are no specific admission requirements.

Credit Toward Another Credential

89. No academic credit shall be granted towards any Academic Credential, in part or whole.
90. A series of Non-Academic Microcredentials may be combined (stacked) for a Certificate of Completion (see above) that has been approved by MCE or the offering Faculty with the inclusion of these microcredentials. Non-academic microcredentials are issued by the Inspire Office (unless the offering Faculty has previously stated its intent to issue the credential instead of the Inspire Office), or MCE. A report of new non-academic microcredentials or revisions to existing non-academic microcredentials shall be provided annually to Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council.

Guidelines and Limitations

91. Clarity and the protection of the McMaster certificate brand are paramount. Thus, any unit that issue a non-academic microcredential shall not use the term *Academic* in their title, unless it is part of the term “Non-Academic Microcredential.”
92. The microcredential description should include the credit or non-credit nature of the learning activity, that there will be Learner evaluation, the grading basis in which the Learner shall be evaluated (i.e., Pass/Fail), and that a “Non-Academic Microcredential” will be awarded for successful completion.

CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

93. A Certificate of Attendance acknowledges that an individual has participated in a set of activities at McMaster that does not meet the requirements of an academic program as there is no evaluation of learning. The phrase *Certificate of Attendance* must appear in the credential name (for example, the *Medical Acupuncture Program Certificate of Attendance*).
94. Such activities are designed to meet the interests and objectives of participants who may want to acquire general knowledge or training for career related purposes, but who neither require nor seek any form of professional or academic recognition. As such a Certificate of Attendance shall not be categorized as undergraduate or graduate level. This category will be suitable for various types of life-long learning and career-focused learning experiences.

Admission Requirements

95. Normally, there are no specific admission requirements.

Credit Toward Degree or Other Program Studies

96. There is no credit granted toward additional credentials.

Guidelines and Limitations

97. Clarity and the protection of the McMaster certificate brand are paramount. Thus, any courses or programs that issue a Certificate of Attendance shall not use the term Certificate in their title, unless it is part of the term “Certificate of Attendance.”

SECTION IX: PROCEDURES FOR APPROVAL

PROCEDURES

98. The Faculty, Inspire Office, or MCE will present the proposal for undergraduate diplomas, undergraduate academic certificates and microcredentials, as well as undergraduate-level academic credit courses to the CDM Committee.² Once approved, the Committee will then make a recommendation to Undergraduate Council.
99. In the case of Graduate Academic Certificates and Microcredentials, as well as graduate-level academic courses, the Faculty, Inspire Office, or MCE will present proposals to the CDM Committee. Once approved, the Committee will then make a recommendation to Graduate Council.
100. The relevant Council shall report to the Senate the establishment, closure, and/or substantial revisions of academic certificate, microcredential and diploma programs.
101. The academic unit is responsible for providing a complete proposal. In addition to the program proposal, the complete submission must include the *Undergraduate or Graduate Calendar* copy, if applicable (see *Publication of Credential Requirements*, below). A Statement of Academic Merit from the office of the Dean must also be included, as described below.
102. Graduate Diplomas are approved through the process outlined in the [Policy on Academic Program Development and Review](#).
103. Applicability of credit from a microcredential to a degree, diploma, or certificate must be established and described in the microcredential's initial proposal. Likewise, any revisions to the rules of this applicability must be approved by the CDM Committee and by Undergraduate or Graduate Council, as appropriate.

APPROVAL CRITERIA

104. When approving a new certificate, diploma or microcredential, the CDM Committee and Undergraduate or Graduate Council (as appropriate) must ensure that the proposal appropriately fulfills all of the following criteria:
 - a) well-defined objective(s);
 - b) well-defined learning outcomes;
 - c) curriculum to meet the learning outcomes; and
 - d) admission requirements, as applicable.

² With the exception of MCE, units that are not academic departments or Faculty-based must consult with the Inspire Office during the development of any microcredentials.

105. See also *Appendix A* for additional details regarding the approval workflow and governance of certificates, diplomas, and microcredentials.

Specific Criteria for Academic Credentials (Academic Certificates, Academic Microcredentials, and Diplomas)

106. If the courses or learning activities contained in the Academic Credential are not already approved as part of a degree program, to receive approval as academic credit, the credential must:
- be at a level of intellectual rigour comparable to that found in undergraduate or graduate degree program courses in the same or similar field(s). Academic credit courses or microcredentials are vetted by the Faculty offering the credential or the Faculty that is most relevant to the content of the credential;
 - include a systematic evaluation of Student performance by the methods normally used in degree courses such as tests, essays, reports, narrative responses, interviews and/or other assignments.

Specific Criteria for Non-Academic Credentials (Certificate of Completion, Non-Academic Microcredential, Certificate of Attendance)

107. Except for the Certificate of Attendance, a learner undertaking a Non-Academic Credential must demonstrate competency in the material as determined by evaluation methods which may include an exam, paper, project, presentation, etc. This assessment will normally be recorded as a *Pass* or *Fail*, and the unit offering the program will retain the records.
108. Although administrative and academic units at McMaster do not need permission from Undergraduate or Graduate Councils to issue Non-Academic Credentials, they are required, at minimum, to report new Non-Academic Credentials and revisions thereof to Undergraduate or Graduate Council on an annual basis.
109. However, if new or revised **fees** are being charged to Learners, the Inspire Office or Faculty proposing the Non-Academic Credential must follow the full approval process for Academic Credentials.
110. It is expected that Non-Academic Credentials will be offered only when the activities are of benefit and/or interest to the community and are consistent with the objectives of the University.

Approval of Revisions

111. After their initial approval, any revisions to the descriptions, regulations, requirements, or course requirements of an academic certificate, microcredential, or diploma program must be approved by the governing bodies, as appropriate. These bodies include the CDM Committee, Undergraduate Council, or Graduate Council.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC MERIT

112. Proposals for new Academic Credentials must include a Statement of Academic Merit. This document is normally an attestation from a Faculty, at McMaster University, confirming that the proposed program (or learning activity in the case of microcredentials) has been vetted and found that it meets 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.
113. Proposals for new academic credit courses or microcredential learning activities, which are intended to be part of a certificate, microcredential or diploma program, and which are not to be part of any degree program, will include the following:
 - a) a paragraph-long course description along with a statement of the number of units of academic credit provided by the course or learning activity; and
 - b) a statement of how the course or learning activity contributes to the learning objectives of the program(s) of which it will be a part.
114. In the case where any proposed revisions to an existing academic certificate, microcredential, or diploma program will exceed approximately 40% of the credential's content, a new Statement of Academic Merit must be included with the proposal.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

University Student Fees Committee

115. Diploma programs, academic certificates, and microcredentials, as well as non-academic certificates and microcredentials for which fees are charged, must submit fee proposals to the University Student Fees Committee (USFC) for approval. Normally, this approval should be sought prior to submission of the academic proposal to Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council.

Governance Approval

116. Following approval by Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council (as applicable), the completed *Financial Viability and Resource Implications template* for new certificate and diploma programs must be reviewed. This review must occur **prior** to submission of the business case to the University Planning Committee (as per the [Academic Revenue Activity Policy for Revenue Generating Certificate and Diploma Programs Administered through a Faculty](#)) by the:
 - a) Associate Vice-President, Finance and Planning (Academic); and
 - b) Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning) or Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies.

117. It is expected that **additional fees will not** be charged for Undergraduate Concurrent Certificates and Graduate Academic Certificates, and that such programs will not generate additional revenue for the University, and therefore do not normally require approval from the University Planning Committee.

PUBLICATION OF CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

118. Once approved, the full description and criteria for each Academic Credential must be published for public reference in the most appropriate location, so the nature of these credentials may be reviewed by potential Students and employers. For instance,

- a) Undergraduate Diplomas, Undergraduate Concurrent Certificates, Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificates, and Stand-Alone Certificates of Professional Learning must be published on the MCE website or in the *Undergraduate Calendar*, as appropriate;
- b) Graduate Diplomas and Graduate Academic Certificates must be published in the *Graduate Calendar*.
- c) Academic Microcredentials must be published on the MCE or the Inspire Office website, as appropriate;
- d) Non-Academic Credentials (Certificate of Completion, Certificate of Attendance, Non-Academic Microcredential) should be published on a publicly-accessible website. Non-Academic Credentials are not required to be published in the *Undergraduate* or *Graduate Calendars*.

PARCHMENT DESIGN

119. Where a parchment (digital or paper-based) is provided to a Student or Learner upon completion of a certificate, diploma, or microcredential, the design of such document shall be consistent with those provided in this Policy (see *Appendix C: Sample Parchments*). It is understood that converting a parchment to a digital form may result in variations of the recommended design. As required, the parchment designs included in this Policy will be amended from time to time.

120. Where a credential is offered in partnership with an external institution, a notation of this partnership may be indicated on the parchment.

APPENDIX A: APPROVAL PATHS OF NEW OR REVISED CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMAS & MICROCREDENTIALS

<u>Credential</u>	<u>Fees</u>	<u>Faculty Council or MCE</u>	<u>CDM</u>	<u>GCPC</u>	<u>USFC¹</u>	<u>C&A</u>	<u>UGC</u>	<u>GC</u>	<u>UPC¹</u>	<u>QC</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>PRC+ Board¹</u>
Non-Academic Microcredentials	New or Revised Fees to be Charged	A	A		A		A- UGC or GC		A		A	A
Certificate of Attendance		A	A		A		A- UGC or GC		A		A	A
Certificate of Completion		A	A		A		A- UGC or GC		A		A	A
Non-Academic Microcredentials	No Fees	A	I				I- UGC or GC					
Certificate of Attendance		A	I				I- UGC or GC					
Certificate of Completion		A	I				I- UGC or GC					
UNDERGRADUATE												
Undergraduate Diploma	New or Revised Fees to be Charged	A	A		A		A		A		A	A
Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate		A	A		A		A		A		A	A
Stand-Alone Certificate of Prof. Learning		A	A		A		A		A		A	A
Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate		A	A		A		A		A		A	A
Academic Microcredential		A	A		A		A		A		A	A
Undergraduate Diploma	No Fees	A	A				A				A	
Stand-Alone Undergraduate Certificate		A	A				A				A	
Stand-Alone Certificate of Prof. Learning		A	A				A				A	
Concurrent Undergraduate Certificate		A	A				A				A	
Academic Microcredential		A	A				A				A	
GRADUATE												
Graduate Diploma	New or Revised Fees to be Charged	A	A	A	A			A	A	A	A	A
Graduate Certificate		A	A	A	A			A	A		A	A
Academic Microcredential		A	A	A	A			A	A		A	A
Graduate Diploma	No Fees	A	I	A				A		A	A	
Graduate Certificate		A		A				A			A	
Academic Microcredential		A	A	A				A			A	
A - For Approval I – For Information ...See next page for notes												

Notes

¹ USFC, UPC, PRC, and Board approval is only required when new or revised fees are assessed. PRC and the Board examine fees and no other credential documentation. Departmental representation at these governance meetings is required only upon request by the University Secretariat. The fees review is undertaken in June for the subsequent academic year, so approvals should be sought in sufficient time to launch programs as planned.

Approval Bodies

Board: Board of Governors

C&A: Undergraduate Council Curriculum and Admissions Committee

CDM: Certificates, Diplomas & Microcredentials Committee

Faculty Council: Council for the corresponding unit offering the credential

GC: Graduate Council

GCPC: Graduate Studies Curriculum and Policy Committee

MCE: McMaster Continuing Education

PRC: Planning and Resources Committee of the Board of Governors

QC: Quality Council

Senate

UGC: Undergraduate Council

UPC: University Planning Committee

USFC: University Student Fees Committee

APPENDIX B: RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines. Any question of the application of this Policy or related policies shall be determined by the Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning) or the Vice-Provost & Dean of Graduate Studies and in conjunction with the administrator of the other Policy or policies. The University reserves the right to amend or add to the University's policies and statements from time to time (this is not a comprehensive list):

- [Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances \(RISO\)](#)
- [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Program Development and Review, Policy on](#)
- [Academic Revenue Activity Policy for Revenue Generating Certificate and Diploma Programs Administered through a Faculty](#)
- [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Digital Learning Resources, Guidelines for](#)
- [*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*](#)
- [Graduate Course Management Policy](#)
- [Graduate Examinations Policy](#)
- [Ownership of Student Work](#)
- [Professional Behaviour Code for Graduate Learners, Health Sciences](#)
- [Professional Behaviour Code for Undergraduate Learners, Health Sciences](#)
- [Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work, Policy on](#)
- [Statement on Building an Inclusive Community with a Shared Purpose](#)
- [Statement and Guidelines on Inclusive Communications](#)
- [Student Appeal Procedures](#)
- [Undergraduate Course Management Policies](#)
- [Undergraduate Examinations Policy](#)

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PARCHMENTS



A. Design Option for Graduate Diplomas.



B. Design Option for all other credentials. **The Campus Store logo represents a placeholder for a partner institution (where applicable).**