

Guidelines for Full-Time Graduate Assistant Participation in Certificate Programs

Proficiency and certificate programs (e.g., Ph.D. Teaching Proficiency Program, Certificate in Business for Bioscientists) are non-degree credentials designed to enhance the educational portfolio of graduate studies at UNMC or provide a pathway towards a graduate degree. This document provides uniform guidance regarding student participation in these programs.

For the purpose of this document: “Advisor” denotes the student’s Supervisory Committee Chair (a.k.a. Supervisor, mentor, or PI); “Program Director” denotes the chair of the Graduate Committee overseeing the program or subplan in which the student is enrolled; and the term “Certificate program” encompasses academic programs typically requiring 12-15 credit hours for completion and appearing on a student’s graduate transcript, as well as structured proficiency programs consisting of activities having time commitment and performance expectations similar to standard academic courses.

1. These guidelines address participation of degree-seeking graduate students supported by full-time (0.33-0.49 FTE) assistantships classified as a Graduate Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, or Graduate Teaching Assistants. These guidelines do not cover certificate programs required for licensure or career development of health care professionals, workshops, boot camps, internships, and career mentoring activities.
2. Certificate programs are not required components of graduate degree programs at UNMC. Therefore, coursework completed in these programs cannot be used to satisfy curricular requirements for a graduate degree unless the course is already part of degree requirements or approved as such by the student’s Supervisory Committee. Failure to successfully complete a certificate or proficiency program will not prevent awarding of a graduate degree in programs offered by UNMC, unless poor grades in certificate coursework result in a cumulative graduate GPA < 3.00 or a grade of Incomplete in certificate coursework remains on the student’s graduate transcript.
3. **Criteria for participation.** All graduate students (domestic and international) in good academic standing are eligible to participate in certificate programs. Good academic standing requires meeting the minimum standards for academic performance and expected progress toward the degree as set by the UNMC Graduate Council.
 - a. Individual graduate programs may establish other specific criteria by which students become eligible to participate in certificate programs. These criteria should be clearly stated in the curriculum description for the program provided online or in the program’s student handbook.
 - b. Enrollment in a certificate program is prohibited if participation will interfere with timely completion of core curriculum requirements, or will delay completion of the comprehensive exam or final oral exam (thesis or dissertation defense).
4. **Prior to applying to a certificate program.** At least three months before the application deadline for the certificate program, the student must submit to the Office of Graduate Studies the **Approval Form for Graduate Assistant Participation in Certificate Programs** (appended). All fields on the form must be completed, including the following:
 - a. Identification of the source(s) of funds to cover tuition and fees. For students applying to the Certificate in Business for Bioscientists, limited funding (typically ≤ 50% of the cost) may be available on a competitive basis from the Office of Graduate Studies. Email unmcgraduatestudies@unmc.edu for information about current funding availability.
 - b. Signatures of the student’s Advisor and the Program Director, testifying to the student’s satisfactory academic performance and progress. This certification must be based on review of transcripts, assessment of progress toward the degree, and the Advisor’s point of view.
5. **Recurring recertification.** After enrolling in a certificate program, permission for continued participation is based upon the student’s satisfactory academic performance and progress toward degree, as assessed every 6 months at the student’s Supervisory Committee meeting. Based on this evaluation, written recertification by the student’s Advisor and Program Director must be provided in writing to the Office of Graduate Studies prior to registering for certificate courses each semester.
6. Participation in a certificate program is “on the student’s own time” and time dedicated to such activities during normal working hours must be “made up” in the evenings or on weekends. Participants who fail to maintain satisfactory progress toward the degree or who reduce research effort may be required to withdraw from the certificate program and may lose the privilege to participate in the future.

**Approval Form for Graduate Assistant Participation
in Proficiency or Certificate Programs**

Information about current proficiency and certificate programs is available through the following link:
<https://www.unmc.edu/gradstudies/programs/certificate-programs/index.html>

Student's name:

Student's Advisor (Supervisor/mentor/PI):

Comprehensive exam completion (or targeted completion) date:

Targeted graduation date:

Selected certificate or proficiency program:

Rationale for selected program:

Anticipated duration of program participation: _____

Source of funding for tuition and fees (check all that apply):

Student Department Graduate Studies Other (please specify): _____

By signing this form, the student agrees to take responsibility for a) ensuring that his/her research progress will not suffer due to participation in the selected program, and b) submitting to the Graduate Studies Office written recertification from his/her Advisor and Program Director of permission for continued participation prior to enrolling in certificate courses each semester.

Student's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

By signing this form, the student's research Advisor agrees to allow the student the flexibility to participate in the selected program. If, at any time, the Advisor feels that the student's participation in said program is having a negative impact on student progress, this concern will be discussed with the student and his/her Supervisory Committee and continued participation in the selected program will be reviewed.

Advisor's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

By signing this form, the Program Director confirms that the student is progressing toward timely degree completion and is permitted to participate in the selected proficiency or certificate program.

Program Director's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Graduate Dean's signature: _____

Date: _____