

Title: Stand-Alone Certificate Programs with Federal Aid Eligibility

Effective Date: February 6, 2023

Issuing Authority: Provost

Policy Contact: Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness

478-301-2070

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain eligibility to Federal Student Aid funds for stand-alone certificate programs.

Scope

The policy applies to stand-alone certificate programs at Mercer University.

Exclusions

None

Policy Statement

The authorization to provide student access to Federal Student Aid funds for stand-alone certificate programs requires that the program meet certain employment and wage expectations as supported in the following sections. According to the U.S. Department of Education,

The proposed definition of gainful employment is primarily based on two measures: (1) the repayment rate, or the percentage of the outstanding principal balance of the Federal loans of the program's former students that entered repayment in the previous four years that has been repaid or is being repaid, and; (2) the relationship between the median student loan debt and average annual earnings after the completion of the program.

A program would be "fully eligible" if (1) the repayment rate Federal is at least 45% or (2) students who completed the program have a debt-to-earnings ratio of less than 20% of discretionary income or less than 8% of total income. (Gainful Employment Disclosures, 2019, p. 2).

Federal aid availability may be indicated only after successful inclusion of the stand-alone

certificate program in the Program Participation Agreement between Mercer University and the Office of Federal Student Aid.

The submission deadline for fall semester disbursement of funds is **April 2**nd and **November 2**nd for spring semester disbursement of funds.

Additional Resources

- 1. Program Coordinator Responsibilities
 The Program Coordinator agrees to take responsibility to coordinate with all responsible parties to ensure that consumer information disclosures are posted anywhere the program is described, including the program's webpage, University catalogs, and any promotional materials for the program. These disclosures are required by the U.S.
 Department of Education and created by the Office of Student Financial Planning at Mercer University. The Program Coordinator will be consulted when any new information must be collected to complete future version of the disclosures, which are updated annually. The Program Coordinator understands that failure to comply puts the University at risk and may result in termination of federal aid eligibility for students in the program. The Program Coordinator will assess, monitor, and track metrics for determining gainful employment as part of the annual assessment process and cycle for degree programs and stand-alone certificates. The identified metrics are: (1) repayment rate, (2) completion rate, (3) debt-to-earnings ratio for completers. The annual
- 2. Stand-Alone Certificate Program Request for Federal Aid Eligibility Form:

 https://policies.mercer.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/85/2025/08/Stand-Alone-Certificate-Request-for-Federal-Aid-Eligibility-Form.docx

assessment planning and reporting for these metrics will be recorded in Compliance

History

Assist.

Approved by Provost Scott Davis, February 6, 2023