

Micro Degree/Certificate Program Guidelines

Background

The radical transformation from a traditional face-to-face classroom setting to an exclusive online learning environment substantially affected the educational systems of many countries during the pandemic by Covid-19. The inherent challenges necessitate the implementation of efficient and effective methods of delivering online distance learning to preserve classroom equilibrium, resulting in the acceptance of this form of instruction as a proven and effective alternative.

The ACUCA Micro Degree Program (MDP) was created in the summer of 2022 with unanimous approval from the Executive Committee (EXCO) to fulfill the three main objectives outlined in the existing ACUCA Constitution and By-Laws at that time of the program's inception and implementation: to develop and maintain Christian character; to enrich the quality of their educational programs and those of the other institutions of learning; and to re-examine the relevance of their objectives and programs concerning the needs of a changing society. Two additional objectives were incorporated into the program's rationale: to offer students from member institutions supplementary education that is not available at their home colleges or universities, and to provide credentials to enhance employability. The MDP was also created to provide a platform for the faculty members to collaborate on creating specific micro degrees to be offered in the program.

At the end of the program, the students were awarded a Micro Degree Certificate in a particular field of concentration within the specified period and had completed all the requisite courses, normally two. Otherwise, a completion certificate will be issued if only one course has been completed.

I. PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

All ACUCA member institutions are deemed qualified to participate in the program, with faculty members as course instructors and students as learners.

Member institutions with unpaid annual membership dues for the previous year will not be allowed to participate in the program until payment is confirmed.

A. For its faculty

1. Issue Employment Certification for its faculty, which is necessary at the time of course proposal to the ACUCA Secretariat. The Certification must indicate the following details and bear the institution's seal, dry or wet:

- a) Faculty members' complete name
- b) Academic rank
- c) Employment status
- d) Month and year employed.

2. When an institution's course through its faculty member is approved to be taught in a specific term, it must grant the following:

- a) Authority to teach certified by the Vice President, Vice Provost, or Vice Rector for Academic Affairs or equivalent
- b) High resolution of the institution logo or seal to be used in the certificate and other publication materials regarding MDP
- c) Electronic signature of the institution's President, Rector, Principal or equivalent offering the course. The same will be used in the completion certificate only.

Moreover, prior approval shall be sought for any subsequent need to use both the seal or logo and electronic signatures from the concerned institution offering the course in the ensuing terms.

B. For its students

To have its students participate in the program, the appropriate office of the institution will work with the Secretariat and the course instructor. The responsibilities of the participating institution through its appropriate office are outlined below.

1. Advertise MDP and collect applications for program participation from its students. One student can apply for two courses at most. In such cases, make sure that they identify their first choice so that they can be considered for their second choice when they are not accepted into the course of their first choice due to the limited capacity of the class.

2. In making a nomination, the appropriate office of the institution shall check the students' schedule at the institution to ensure that the program does not conflict with their classes and that the students are expected to be able to complete the program.

3. Report the nominees to the Secretariat by the deadline using the prescribed form. The nominated students must be in the order of priority (The slots will be allocated to all institutions equally. For example, when 5 slots become available to an institution with 10 nominees, the Secretariat will pick the first five on the nomination form).

4. When requested by the Secretariat, make reasonable efforts to communicate the Secretariat's requests to its students.

II. COURSE OFFERORS

A. Qualification and Eligibility

Any interested full-time faculty member of an ACUCA member institution participating in the Micro Degree/Certificate Program is eligible to submit a course proposal.

B. Course proposal

MDP courses will be conducted during the summer and winter terms at a set time each day for 15 weekdays during three weeks designated by the Secretariat. Classes shall be 100% online and synchronous for a maximum of 30 and a minimum of 15 students. Course proposals will be accepted prior to each term. The employment certificate described in I.A.1. and the course proposal for 15 days, comprising the following, must be submitted to the Secretariat before the deadline to be considered:

- a) Online course design that optimizes student learning and achievement of program outcomes
- b) Learning objectives, assessments, and instructional strategies or activities to ensure that students receive a high-quality educational experience
- c) Course syllabus containing the planned lessons/activities/evaluation for the entire program
- d) Detailed classroom management plans and strategies outlining methods and techniques in maintaining the students' focus and constant expectations in class, and handling every topic.

Both the employment certification and course proposal should be in a PDF format and labeled as employment certification and proposal, respectively.

C. Shortlisted courses

The Secretariat will notify the shortlisted courses through email in advance for the instructors to prepare for the class. Instructors of the shortlisted courses need to submit additional required materials to the Secretariat before the deadline as described in I.A.2.

D. Compensation

Compensation for one course is 1,800.00USD.

Please note that a minimum of 15 students outside of the instructor's home institution must be registered for the course to be offered. If, after the registration period, the minimum number of students has not been reached, the course will be cancelled and no compensation will be paid to the instructor.

ACUCA will arrange for compensation to be made through the instructor's home institution. If such an arrangement is not possible or if instructors prefer payment through a personal bank account, such payment can be facilitated. Instructors should be aware that disbursements may be subject to taxation and that such taxes are born by the recipient.

E. Obligations

1. Create a link for the virtual classroom. Disseminate the same to the students and Secretariat through email at most a day before the first day of classes.
2. Notify the students about their class through email, such as assigned readings and the like, before the first day of classes.
3. Provide the Secretariat with the initial list of completers at most three (3) days before the last day of classes to enable the preparation of the completion certificates, and to provide an updated final list on the last day of classes.
4. Enjoin the students to respond to the evaluation form to be sent by the Secretariat three days before the term ends to provide the Secretariat with valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the instructors' delivery of the subject matter; how might the course content be improved; professional development of the instructors on their strategies and teaching skills; and to allow the students to express their thoughts and feelings about the course.
5. Send the students' completion certificates individually through email at most a week

after the last day of classes (please note that the Secretariat will prepare the certificates).

III. STUDENTS

A. Qualification and Eligibility

Any bona fide student enrolled in any Baccalaureate degree program or Graduate Studies program as a full-time, regular student at an ACUCA member institution is eligible to apply for any of the courses offered, subject to the regulation in I (second paragraph).

B. Responsibilities

By voluntarily signing up for the program, students should be committed and determined to finish the chosen course and are expected to meet certain expectations to succeed by actively participating in the learning process along with other learners from other participating institutions, specifically to, but not limited to:

- a) conduct professionally throughout the program – punctual, respectful towards instructors and other learners, and contribute to a positive and respectful learning environment
- b) effectively manage the schedule and allocate sufficient time for studying
- c) be flexible in a fast-paced learning environment and willing to adapt study strategies
- d) actively engage in class discussions, seek clarifications when needed, and apply what has been learned in real-world contexts
- e) meet the submission of course requirements deadline and adhere to academic integrity policies
- f) be sure to notify the instructor when a class must be missed due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances.

IV. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

The Secretariat may assign an MDP Administrator who plays a crucial role in contributing to the smooth operation and the success of the program, at ACUCA's budget.

A. Responsibilities

To guarantee that the operation runs seamlessly and according to plan, the MDP

Administrator shall:

- a) Prepare payment requests at the end of each term
- b) Oversee the program of activities, including but not limited to scheduling of classes, call for course proposals, layout of promotional materials and completion certificates, registration of prospective qualified participants, program monitoring, assessment, and review, and coordination with member institutions, among others
- c) Handle logistics to ensure smooth operations and a positive learning experience for both course instructors and student learners, including responding to inquiries and addressing any questions or concerns from them. Ensuring that the participants have the necessary information and support to complete the program
- d) Provide an update on the program and completion rates to participating institutions
- e) Extend support to the course instructors by assisting them in facilitating correspondence with the student learners
- f) Monitor the delivery of courses to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the program, prepare course evaluation instruments, and conduct evaluations to assess the program's success and identify areas for improvement
- g) Analyze evaluation results, identify any trends in the data, and keep abreast with the developments to make necessary adjustments to the program – content, delivery methods, and overall experience.