Regulation on Non-Credit Programs, Certificates, and Credentials

I. Purpose. The University of North Carolina System recognizes that constituent institutions offer a broad range of non-credit educational opportunities in furtherance of the University's public-service, workforce-development, professional-education, and lifelong-learning missions. This regulation establishes Systemwide parameters for the development, approval, delivery, assessment, and awarding of non-credit programs, certificates, and other non-credit credentials bearing the name of a constituent institution or the University of North Carolina System.

II. Scope. This regulation applies to all non-credit instructional offerings sponsored by a constituent institution that: (a) are organized as a program, series, pathway, or other structured educational experience; (b) result in the award of a certificate, microcredential, badge, digital credential, continuing education unit (CEU), or other formal recognition of participation, completion, or demonstrated competency; and (c) are marketed to the public as University-sponsored educational credentials. This regulation does not apply to degree programs, minors, or other credit-bearing academic certificates and credentials that may be governed by other provisions of the UNC Policy Manual, or those programs and activities that do not purport to be, or could reasonably be considered to be, operated under the auspices of the constituent institution.

III. Definitions.

A. Non-Credit Program. A structured educational offering, or sequence of offerings, that does not award academic credit but is designed to achieve stated learning objectives, professional preparation, workforce advancement, public service, or personal enrichment. Non-Credit Programs may align with national credential frameworks where institutions chose to adopt them but shall at all times be subject to this regulation.

B. Non-Credit Credential. A credential awarded upon satisfactory completion of a planned and approved Non-Credit Program that includes defined outcomes or competencies and stated completion requirements. Categories of Non-Credit Credentials include, but are not limited to:

1. Non-Credit Certificate or Certification. A Non-Credit Certificate or Certification is a structured educational offering awarded following the completion of stated requirements.

2. Non-Credit Microcredential. A focused Non-Credit Credential awarded for the attainment of specified skills, competencies, or knowledge in a discrete area. A Non-Credit Microcredential may be stand-alone or designed to stack into a larger Non-Credit Credential pathway.

3. Certificate of Participation or Completion. A document recognizing attendance, participation, or completion of a non-credit educational activity. Unless specifically

approved otherwise under institutional policy, a Certificate of Participation or Completion does not represent verified mastery of defined competencies.

4. Digital Badge or Digital Credential. A digital representation of a University-awarded Non-Credit Certificate, Non-Credit Microcredential, or participation-based recognition describing the issuer, requirements, date awarded, and evidence of achievement.

5. Continuing Education Unit (CEU). A unit of measure awarded in accordance with nationally accepted standards, or as determined by appropriate governance bodies.

IV. Requirements. In order to ensure appropriate oversight, transparency, and quality, each Non-Credit Program or Credential shall advance the mission of the constituent institution and the University, be developed and offered under appropriate academic or administrative oversight, and have a clearly stated purpose and intended audience. At a minimum, each such offering shall:

A. Be sponsored by an academic or administrative unit and have a designated responsible official;

B. Be supported by a written proposal or other program record identifying the offering's purpose, intended audience, modality, duration, and expected start date;

C. Have published completion requirements;

D. Include an assessment method, if applicable to the credential type;

E. Where appropriate, include a process for verifying learner identity and completion;

F. Disclose whether the offering is recorded in another institutional record, or issued only as a stand-alone certificate or Digital Credential;

G. Where a student or individual consumer is expected to pay for offering(s) under this regulation, clearly and accurately communicate the total cost of the offering, including refund rules and procedures;

H. Accurately represent any pathway to academic credit, including pursuant to Section 700.10.1 of the Policy Manual, *Policy on Awarding Undergraduate Credit on the Basis of Advanced Course Examination Scores*, and any applicable processes for advanced course examination, prior learning assessment, or stackability;

I. In the case of a competency-based Non-Credit Certificate, Microcredential, or CEU, not be awarded unless the institution has established and documented the learning outcomes or competencies to be achieved, the method by which achievement or satisfactory completion will be determined, and the person or office authorized to verify completion.

J. Clearly identify the basis of award, such as attendance, instructional hours, participation, or completion of prescribed activities, and the person or office authorized to verify completion.

V. Approval and Oversight.

A. Institutional Policy and Procedure; Periodic Review. Each constituent institution shall maintain a clearly defined policy and procedure for the review and approval of Non-Credit Programs and Credentials covered by this regulation. Each constituent institution shall review its Non-Credit Programs and Credentials for quality, demand, learner outcomes, operational viability, and continued alignment with institutional mission on a periodic basis, which shall be not less than once every five years for each Non-Credit Program or Credential.

B. Institutional Approval. The chancellor or the chancellor's designee shall review and approve all programs offered pursuant to this regulation. At a minimum, the chancellor shall ensure that institutional procedures require review by the sponsoring unit and the appropriate dean, vice chancellor, or equivalent continuing education official. Constituent institution policies and procedures should provide for appropriate scrutiny where the non-credit program or credential is tied to professional licensure, purports to be a pathway toward academic credit, is offered out-of-state, or otherwise presents material enterprise risk to the institution.

C. Program or Registration Fees. The chancellor or the chancellor's designee must review and approve any program or registration fee charged. Constituent institution policies and procedures may establish appropriate levels of review and approval based on the offering.

D. Third-party Vendor Approvals. Where a constituent institution contracts with a third-party vendor in the delivery of a Non-Credit Program or Credential that is subject to this regulation, it must request and receive prior approval from the president or the president's designee. Approval under this section must be received prior to executing the third-party contract for the services. Approvals will be on a per-program basis, unless otherwise specified by the president or president's designee.

VI. Naming, Representation, and Use of Institutional Marks.

A. Clarity of Labeling. The title of a Non-Credit Credential must clearly indicate its non-credit status to avoid confusion among learners, employers, regulators, accreditors, or the public.

B. Restricted Names. A Non-Credit Credential or program may not be named in a manner that could reasonably be confused with a degree program, approved credit-bearing credential, professional license, or external certification.

C. Third-party Vendor Disclosures. If a constituent institution has been authorized by the president or president's designee to contract with a third-party vendor in delivering a Non-Credit Program or Credential, the institution must clearly state how the vendor is engaged in the development and delivery of the program or credential.

D. Institutional Seal and Name. Each institution shall regulate by local policy the use of the institutional seal, logo, and name on Non-Credit Credentials. Certificates of Participation may be subject to different formatting or seal requirements than competency-based credentials.

E. Additional Requirements. Constituent institution policies may include additional restrictions, compliance, or reporting obligations for third party vendors in the constituent institution's discretion.

VII. Records, Transcription, and Verification.

A. Records. Each institution shall maintain sufficient records to verify the issuance of a Non-Credit Certificate, Microcredential, CEU, or participation-based credential.

B. Transcription. Non-Credit Credentials shall not appear on the academic transcript unless authorized by institutional policy and consistent with applicable accreditation, regulatory, and records requirements.

C. Digital Credentials. If Digital Credentials are used, the institution shall maintain a process for validating authenticity and preserving sufficient award metadata.

VIII. Other Matters.

A. Effective Date. This regulation is effective on the date of adoption. Each constituent institution shall adopt or revise local procedures consistent with this regulation within such time period as may be established by the president or his designee.

B. Reporting. Institutions shall on an annual basis report approved non-credit programs and credentials to the UNC System Office in a format to be determined by the president or his designee.

C. Relation to Federal and State Laws and Policies. The foregoing regulation as adopted by the president is meant to supplement, and does not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments, regulations, and policies which may govern or relate to the subject matter of this regulation.