Certificate approval process - Updated March 2019

For students to enroll in a certificate program, the program must first be approved through this approval process:

1) Internal – Columbus State Community College (CSCC)
2) External – Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE)
3) External – The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
4) External – Department of Education/Federal Financial Aid

Each Stage of the approval process must be complete before the certificate submission can move to the next stage.

Stage 1 – Columbus State Community College

The college has established two steps to this process, 1) the Pre-Approval stage where the basic information of the certificate is presented and reviewed for approval by the Department Chair, the Division Dean, the Accreditation Liaison Officer, the Dean of ASC, and the Senior VP of Academic Affairs and 2) the Curriculum change and approval process where the certificate and any necessary support documentation is submitted for review and approval by the Department Curriculum Committee, the Department Chair, the Division Curriculum Committee, the Division Dean, the OAA Curriculum Committee, Curriculum Management, and the Senior VP of Academic Affairs (or his designee).

Once the certificate is approved internally, Curriculum Management will gather the necessary information and submit the certificate to the Ohio Department of Higher Education. The certificate may not be submitted to ODHE until it has been internally approved through our process.

Stage 2 - Ohio Department of Higher Education

Certificates fall under one of three categories

General Certificates**:** An award for completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree). These certificates are classified by IPEDs as "less than one year," "at least one but less than two academic years" or "at least two but less than four academic years". They do not align to any recognized valid occupational license or third-party industry certifications. These are not considered Technical certificates even though they contain technical courses.

Less Than One Year Technical/Short-Term Technical Certificates: These are certificates awarded by a post-secondary institution for the completion of an organized program of study in less than 30 semester credit hours or less than 900 clock hours that are designed for an occupation or specific employment opportunities. These certificates should align to a 2 year degree when possible and might be part of a stackable certificate pathway to degree completion. These certificates should prepare students for a valid occupational license or third-party industry certification, if available, related to the field of study.

One Year Technical Certificate/ Technical Certificate**:** Certificates awarded by a post-secondary institution for the completion of an organized program of study in at least 30 semester credit hours or 900 clock hours, with the majority of the coursework completed in a prescribed technical area. While the certificates are designed to have value a part from a degree, these certificates should serve as building blocks to an associate degree. The technical certificate is designed for an occupation or specific

employment opportunities. These certificates should prepare students for a valid occupational license or third-party industry certification, if available, related to the field of study.

To receive Technical Certificate designation, a certificate must align to an industry-recognized credential. The following information provides the parameters for an approved credential:

- **All occupational licenses and registries** provided by state or national professional boards.
- **The apprenticeship completion certificate** issued by the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council. Apprenticeship completion certificates **issued to students who achieved journeyperson status** for programs not registered with the state may also be reported.
- **Industry certifications from a valid third-party**. To assist in verification of the validity of the third-party certifications, ODHE, in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education, has developed a list of approved industry certifications. A process for submitting certifications for approval that are not on the initial list is available. To be approved, third-party certifications must:
  - Demonstrate preparation for **an occupation or occupational cluster**. Certifications, such as OSHA 10 or CPR, that only encompass basic safety or a basic skill requirement and do not demonstrate a distinguishable competency for a specific job are not requested for state reporting and, standing alone, may not qualify a certificate program as technical according to the ODHE criteria.
  - **Be governed by a regional, statewide, national, or international body** for the related field or industry. Preference is given for national and international bodies.
  - **Be recognized and valued by employers, especially sector partnerships, as leading to employment.** Certifications that are only valued for association or affinity group membership are not recommended.
  - Be **related to the learning objectives** of the program of study.
  - Be **awarded based on results from standardized and reliable assessments** that measure the designated competencies of the occupation or skill set. The state also prefers but does not require that assessments are independently graded from the educational institution.

  Embedded skill certifications: Embedded skill certifications as stand-alone certifications may be collected for the purpose of reporting outcomes related to the Perkins Act but standing alone, may not qualify a certificate program as technical according to ODHE criteria. An embedded certification is a minor certification in and of itself as well as a component of a more comprehensive industry certification. For example, Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) Safety is an embedded certification for the MSSC Certified Production Technician and Microsoft Word is an embedded certification for Microsoft Office.

  If a credential is not approved or deemed inapplicable for what ODHE would like to report, this does not in and of itself restrict the institution from using the credential.

If no occupational license or third-party credential is available, then the college must provide the following materials to support the creation of the program:

- Program outcomes and learning objectives with detailed curriculum documents and course syllabi.
- Description of how the program measures competencies or technical skill attainment against industry standards.
- Specific labor market information for the field of study. Such sources may be www.ohiomeansjobs.com; ODJFS labor market data, etc.

- Projected placement or job opportunities in the market
- Letters of support, not to exceed six (6) letters, from local/regional employers regarding the programs preparation of completers for an occupation.
- Program-level accreditation from a third party, if available.
- Resources required to support the program: faculty, classroom or lab space, library resources, student support resources, budget impact information.

The ODHE Certificate review and approval process typically takes 2-4 months for completion.

Stage 3 - Higher Learning Commission

HLC "Substantive Change" Process

As of **September 1, 2016**, after receiving internal and ODHE approval for a new degree or certificate, the Higher Learning Commission requires that institutions will apply for and obtain **Prior HLC approval** for any of the following proposed changes submitted through the office of the Accreditation Liaison Officer:

- The addition of academic program(s) at a degree or credential level not previously included in the institution's accreditation by HLC

- The addition of academic program(s), including Title IV-eligible Certificate programs not related to existing degree program(s), that represents a significant departure from program(s) previously included in the institution's accreditation

- The addition of concentration(s) (or specialization, track, or emphasis) to mean less than half the total hours in the program of which it is a part and that the remaining hours are taken in common by all students in the program and if the concentration(s) (or specialization, track, or emphasis) represents a significant departure from the institution's program-level approval for the underlying program

- The addition of academic program(s) that requires allocation of substantial financial investment or resources, or any program(s) acquired from another institution

- Offering courses at a higher degree level or outside the range of institutional programs currently approved by HLC

- The addition of academic program(s) outside stipulations imposed by a previous HLC action

- The addition of hybrid programs (e.g., biostatistics or cybersecurity) where the programs being combined to create the hybrid program have been previously approved by HLC

- A change from clock to credit hours in one or more institutional programs or a substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of an academic program or a change in length of term affecting allocation of credit

In the case of the initiation of new academic program(s) or major(s) *other* than those listed above, or cancellation or suspension of academic programs, these require HLC "Notification" only rather than "Prior HLC approval."

Institutions seeking a substantive change should note the following:

1- HLC does not grant retroactive approvals

2- HLC does not permit marketing of programs until the change request application has undergone the approval process and the institution has received the official notification from HLC.
3- Institutions seeking changes of different types (program, location, distance delivery, etc.) must submit a separate application for each type of change sought.
4- It takes an average of 90 days to six months for HLC to process substantive change applications; it could take longer if it involves a complex change request or less than six months if the request is of a fairly routine nature.

Stage 4 – Federal Department of Education
Once the certificate has been approved by ODHE and HLC, it must be submitted and approved by the Department of Education prior any financial aid being disbursed to students to participate in the program. This submission process is handled through the CSCC financial aid office.

If the certificate rolls up into a previously approved Department of Education degree, then if it typically a 2 week review and approval.

If the certificate does not roll completely into an approved degree, then it will take approximately 6 weeks for the review and approval to occur.