March 10, 2011

## University of Toronto

## Guidelines on Academic Transcript Notations

These administrative *Guidelines* have been developed in line with the University of Toronto's *Grading Practices Policy* (April 9, 1998) and the *Graduate Grading and Evaluations Policy* (May 12, 2004) to provide a framework within which individual Faculties /Divisions will make decisions about the content of the academic transcripts they provide to their students. The existing grading policies lay out the elements that must be included on an academic transcript. In addition, the Faculties/Divisions have well established norms governing standard content. The goal of the *Guidelines* is to ensure a level of clarity and consistency in the kinds of notations (both in respect to graduate and undergraduate level academic work) made on academic transcripts beyond those directly connected with the student's completion of their degree and program of study requirements. In so doing, it is intended that the *Guidelines* will make these notations more meaningful and enhance the value of the transcript as the primary official record of a student's academic performance and achievement.

These *Guidelines* are not intended to deal with transcript notations relating to academic misconduct. Those are governed by the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (1995) and related Faculty/Divisional level rules and regulations on academic integrity.

**Definitions:**
An academic transcript is the official complete report of a student's academic record.

**Context:**
The main body of a standard academic transcript at the University includes a list of all courses attempted, the grade earned in each, the average course grade (undergraduate only), and sessional and cumulate grade point averages (undergraduate only); transfer credit awarded; titles of any theses (Doctoral); information about the student's academic status including records of suspension and refusal of further registration, and current academic sanctions; and the details of the program(s) (including fields, specialists, majors, and minors) and degree completed. See the University of Toronto's *Grading Practices Policy* (April 9, 1998) and the *Graduate Grading and Evaluations Policy* (May 12, 2004).

Beyond this comparatively standard content, University of Toronto transcripts can include a wide variety of free-hand transcript notations intended to recognize student achievement. These vary between Faculties. As stated above, the goal of these *Guidelines* is to regularize this content.

**Principles:**
The Academic Transcript should:
1. Reflect academic work only.
2. Acknowledge academic work / achievement that is in addition to that required by the student's program of study.
3. Recognize work that conforms to an agreed upon minimum commitment of time, effort, and performance.
4. Highlight the acquisition of skill / knowledge in discrete areas.
5. Recognize the formal development of skills beyond those conventionally learned within a student's disciplinary program.
6. Refer to agreed upon categories of academic activity.

7. Use standardized language.

The Academic Transcript is not the appropriate document to record:
1. Co-curricular activity
2. Volunteerism

**Categories of Transcript Notations:**
A review of the range of academic activities for which students might reasonably expect formal recognition in the form of a formal transcript notation suggest that there are three broad categories. It is critical to note that in every case the achievement of the citation does not serve to meet degree requirements.

1. ***Completion of a Certificate or Diploma as defined by the* Policy on Diploma and Certificate Programs** *(December 2, 2003)*
   The recognition on a student's transcript of a formal approved undergraduate Certificate or graduate Diploma program is an accepted norm. These are understood as formal entities which may be taken alone or in conjunction with a student's program of study, depending upon their specific requirements in line with the *Policy on Diploma and Certificate Programs* (December 2, 2003)

   *Example that would fall under this category*:
   - Any approved undergraduate Certificate or graduate Diploma.

2. ***Completion of a coherent cluster of for-credit courses that are less than a minor but provide the student with a degree of proficiency in a discrete area of study.***
   This transcript notion would recognize the completion of a specified amount of for-credit work that is distinct from a major or minor but has academic integrity. It is intended to indicate that the student has some working knowledge of / or proficiency within the area cited.

   *Examples that would fall under this category*:
   - The existing Undergraduate Language Citation offered by the Faculty of Arts and Science which recognizes the completion of two full courses or the equivalent in one of a wide variety of languages beyond the introductory University-level course with a minimum grade of at least B- in each course. (This results in the transcript notation: "Language citation in x"),
   - The Faculty of Law citation in Jewish Studies which recognizes a student who has participated in the yearlong bi-weekly core graduate research seminar in Jewish Studies; presented during the course of their law degree one paper to the graduate student Jewish Studies conference; and completed a course listed in the Centre for Jewish Studies Graduate Handbook at some point during their law school course work.

3. ***Completion of a defined series of non-credit courses, workshops, and activities that support student academic success or professional development goals directly associated with an academic program of study***
   This transcript notation would recognize a coherent course of activity intended to enhance a student's learning directly related to their program of study.

   *Examples that would fall under this category*:
   - The existing Graduate Professional Skills program offered by the School of Graduate Studies which consists of a range of optional "offerings" with a time commitment roughly equivalent

to 60 hours of work.   (This results in the transcript notation : "Completion of the Graduate Professional Skills Program")
- Professional Development programs being developed by undergraduate Divisions in conjunction with academic programs.

**Minimum Commitment of Time and Effort**
For a transcript notation concerning academic achievement to be meaningful, it is critical that minimum standards of time and effort be established.  While there is a great variety possible, at the University of Toronto, the minimum commitment of time must be the equivalent of at least a half course or 36 hours of work at a University level.  In each instance, the notation is dependent upon the successful completion of the program which should be defined at the outset.

While these Guidelines establish a minimum, individual Faculties/Divisions may wish to establish minima that are higher.

**Language of the Notation:**
The language of the notation should be simple and consistent.  It should, at the most straightforward, read:
1. "Certificate/Diploma in ……"
2. "Faculty of x citation in …….."
3. "Completion of the professional development program in [area]"

**Approval Process:**
In the interest of ensuring a degree of consistency of meaning in University of Toronto transcripts, all Faculties/Divisions are asked to bring forward short proposals outlining the program of activity for which they intend to provide a transcript notation for discussion with the Provost's Office, prior to implementing them.

Beyond Provostial approval, it is recommended that Faculty/Divisional Council approval be sought for these proposals before the notation is implemented.  This could be done quite appropriately through existing curriculum committees.  The School of Graduate Studies has established a Graduate Professional Skills Committee to coordinate and promote all existing and proposed non-credit courses, workshops, and seminars provided by various units in support of professional skills development for graduate students as a mechanism for providing a curricular framework and ensuring quality control for such offerings.