Program Evaluation Theory and Design Certificate (for MSES students)

University of Delaware

Program Policy Statement

November 2021

v1.4

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Part I. Program History and Purpose

A. Program Purpose

The Program Evaluation Theory and Design Certificate is a 9-credit program for students in the Masters of Science in Interdisciplinary Evaluation Science program only. It is intended to prepare students in the basics of program evaluation across the fields of human service, education, public policy, health, and other program and policy areas through thoughtful, effective, and ethical use of evaluation models and methods. The American Evaluation Association (AEA; www.eval.org) defines evaluation as "assessing the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, personnel, products, and organizations to improve their effectiveness."

The University of Delaware Strategic Plan incorporates as a key activity that programs "rigorously challenge students to be excellent scholars, promote interdisciplinary thinking and collaborations, and meet the needs of students and society." The proposed certificate in program evaluation directly addresses this priority by training scholars to conduct evaluations that provide credible evidence about the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions, evidence that is used to inform decisions in the public, non-profit, and for-profit sectors. Evaluation is a form of applied research that is practiced to support the public good.

This certificate serves a need for education in evaluation approaches and skills within Delaware, across our region, and beyond. It will raise the visibility of the University of Delaware as a resource for the evaluation needs of local, regional, national, and international organizations. Additionally, the need for evaluation professionals is likely to expand in response to increasing attention to accountability of public funds and the continued interest in and growth of evaluation internationally.

A student who earns the Program Evaluation Theory and Design Certificate will be able to:

1. Explain the historical and philosophical underpinnings of evaluation and their implications for evaluation practice;

2. Apply the ethical standards and guiding principles of the profession, including striving for cultural competence;

3. Explain the logic of evaluation/research design, including mixed-method

designs;

4. Utilize basic quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods;

5. Conduct an evaluation, including negotiating evaluation questions, developing program theory, creating evaluation plans and associated budgets, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting and reporting results, and disseminating and facilitating the use of findings; and

6. Collaborate and communicate effectively with stakeholders at all levels of evaluation, including policymakers, program/policy leadership, staff, and participants.

B. Current Status

The certificate is in the proposal stage.

C. Degrees Offered

Certificate. The certificate awarded to those who complete the program of study will be a Program Evaluation Theory and Design Certificate from the University of Delaware Graduate College. All courses will be offered online. Only Master of Science in InterdisciplinaryEvaluation Science students who have completed the three certificate courses, along with MSES program courses EVAL770 and EVAL771, are eligible for this certificate.

D. Term when First Students May Enroll

We anticipate that students may be able to enroll in certificate courses approximately one year following program approval. During the year between approval and enrollment, the program will work to (1) create the program's administrative structure, (2) develop online courses for the program, (3) market the program, and (4) recruit its first group of students.

E. Demand for the Program

This certificate is specifically intended to prepare students with the skills necessary to understand, plan, and conduct evaluations. Programs, organizations, personnel, products, policies, and other entities can be evaluated. Some students may be employed and looking to gain program evaluation skills for their current position. Other students may be interested in securing jobs in program evaluation.

A market research study conducted in June 2021 by the UD Division of Professional and Continuing Studies found high demand for new jobs in evaluation in the Mid-Atlantic region, with the highest in Virginia and New York. Further, the median

salary for graduates with master's degrees was $80,893 in the Mid-Atlantic Region. The education market was found to be not crowded, with the average cost of competitors' tuition being $1,180 per credit. Most competing programs are offered on-campus, either full- or part-time; very few had online options.

Audience for the Program. It is anticipated that many of the students in the program will already have some experience as service providers or managers. In their work environments, they may discover the importance of evaluation and research methods for accountability and program improvement. This discovery may lead to the desire for increased knowledge about evaluation and research methods so that they can pursue careers in the field. It is also anticipated that organizations may want to partner to offer the program to a group of their employees.

Unique Career Paths. There are three likely career paths for graduates. First, graduates who are already employed may continue with their organization, now equipped with skills in research methods. Second, graduates may be recruited by regional firms that hire individuals with research methods skills, including American Institutes for Research (AIR; offices in Rockville, MD), Urban Institute (located in Washington, DC), Mathematica (offices in Washington, DC and Princeton, NJ), Research for Action (located in Philadelphia, PA), Westat (headquartered in Rockville, MD), and WestEd (offices in Washington, DC and New York, NY). A third path is finding researcher positions through sources such as the American Evaluation Association (AEA) or the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

Comparable Programs in the State/Region. There are no comparable online, interdisciplinary evaluation programs in Delaware or the mid-Atlantic region. Most evaluation programs are located within specific disciplines, such as education or healthcare.

The University of Delaware is uniquely poised to compete for the top students in evaluation. The University of Delaware has a strong base of applied researchers with experience in evaluation and university research centers, such as the Center for Research in Education and Social Policy (CRESP), that are strategic resources for evaluation expertise and potential field experiences.

Influences on the Proposed Curriculum: There is no accreditation process for graduate evaluation programs nor licensing requirements for professional evaluators in the United States. However, the American Evaluation Association does have Guiding Principles for Evaluators, as well as Evaluator Competencies. Both of these documents have been used to shape the proposed curriculum.

F.   College in which the Program will Reside

        The program will reside in the Graduate College.

Part II. Admission

A.   Admission Requirements

        Only students who have already been admitted to the Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Evaluation Science program will be eligible to attain the certificate. No separate application is necessary.

Part III. Academic (present all information separately for each degree and each concentration, if applicable)

A.   Certificate Requirements

        The Program Evaluation Theory and Design Certificate requires 9 credits. These 9 credits include the following three 3-credit courses:

- EVAL 680: Foundations of Evaluation
- EVAL 755: Evaluation Models and Management
- EVAL 615: Research Design and Methods

B.   Mode of Delivery

- All 3 courses will be offered 100% virtually.

C.   Inclusion in other programs

        The Program Evaluation Theory and Design Certificate is included in the Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Evaluation Science, i.e., students take all 3 courses as part of the Masters program.

D.   Variance in Degree Requirements

        In rare circumstances, students may need to alter approved programs of study once they have entered the program for reasons such as scheduling conflicts or the creation of new courses directly related to the students' goals. Students who wish to make changes to their program of study should first obtain permission from their advisor. The student must then make a written request to the Faculty Governance Committee to revise the program of study.

If students are involved in research projects involving human subjects, even administration of a survey, approval must be obtained prior to beginning any study. Information about obtaining approval may be found on Human Subjects in Research (http://www.udel.edu/OVPR/humans/humans.html). If a project involves animal subjects, an Animal Use Proposal must be completed and submitted to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (http://www.udel.edu/OVPR/animals/animals.html).

E.   Committees for Exams, Thesis, or Dissertations

This certificate does not have a culminating exam, thesis, or dissertation.

F.   Timetable and Definition of Satisfactory Progress towards the Degree

We anticipate most students will be part-time; time to completion will vary by student. The program can be completed in less than 1 year of part-time study (6-credit hours/semester for 1 semester and 3 credit hours during a winter or summer session). Though, students may take three to four years for program completion. There are no full-time residency requirements.

Table 3. *Course Sequencing (Part-Time)*

Session	Course	Format
Semester 1	EVAL 680: Foundations of Evaluation EVAL 615: Research Design and Methods	Two 7 week courses
Winter/Summer 1	EVAL 755: Evaluation Models and Management	4-5 weeks

Students will be assigned an advisor upon entering the program. At the midpoint in a student's program, the advisor will review the student's program of study to determine if he or she is making satisfactory progress through the program. Students who are not making satisfactory progress will be placed on academic probation for one semester. If performance has not improved by the end of the probation semester, the student may be terminated from the program. A minimum average of B (GPA of 3.0) is required for successful completion of the program.

Students must have a minimum overall grade point average of 3.0 to be eligible for the certificate. Candidates should see that all final grades have been submitted by their instructors.

If a student should be recommended for termination for failure to make satisfactory progress, they may follow the grievance procedures for the Graduate College.

Part IV. Assessment Plan

The program will be assessed in two ways:

- Program-level outcomes; and
- Student-level outcomes.

Table 6. *Program-level Outcomes and How They Will Be Assessed*

Program-level Outcomes	Measure 1	Measure 2
Interdisciplinary faculty	Data on faculty involvement	Survey*
Recruitment of excellent, diverse students (excellence will be examined by admissions achievement indicators, essays, and recommendation information; diversity will be examined by gender, race, ethnicity, as well as other demographic variables)	Application and admissions data	Survey*
*Survey: at the end of each academic year, for the first 3 years of the program, we will survey faculty to ask about their experiences participating in the program and recruiting students to identify areas in need of additional supports.		

Table 7. *Student Outcomes and How They Will Be Assessed*

Student Outcomes	Measure 1	Measure 2
Foundational Knowledge in Program Evaluation	Final course paper, project or exam	Graduate Follow-Up Survey
Evaluation Design Skills	Final course paper, project or exam	Graduate Follow-Up Survey
Engagement with stakeholders through multiple modes of communication and reporting	Final course paper, project or exam	Graduate Follow-Up Survey
Post-graduation professional success/career advancement	Exit Survey	Graduate Follow-Up Survey

Part V. Program Educational Goals

The Certificate in Program Evaluation Theory and Design has the following program educational goals:

- Explain the historical and philosophical underpinnings of evaluation and their implications for evaluation practice;

- Apply the ethical standards and guiding principles of the profession, including striving for cultural competence;

- Explain the logic of evaluation/research design, including mixed-method designs;

- Utilize basic quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods;

- Conduct an evaluation, including negotiating evaluation questions, developing program theory, creating evaluation plans and associated budgets, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting and reporting results, and disseminating and facilitating the use of findings; and

- Collaborate and communicate effectively with stakeholders at all levels of evaluation, including policymakers, program/policy leadership, staff, and participants.

Part VI. Financial Aid

A. Financial Awards

Financial assistance from the program is not provided for Certificate students, however students may find financial assistance from external sources. We intend this to be a revenue-generating program where students will pay the cost of tuition.

Part VII. Departmental Operations

A. General Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to notify program administrative staff of any change in address. Students will be expected to have access to a personal computer and the Internet for on-line coursework. There are no other required expenses beyond the traditional books and supplies.