



June 6, 2025

Dr. Donde Ashmos Plowman
Chancellor
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
800 Andy Holt Tower
1331 Circle Park Drive
Knoxville, TN 37996-0180

Dear Dr. Plowman:

Thank you for submitting the following substantive change:

Substantive change:

**New Program-Approval
Graduate Certificate in Justice Studies**

Submission date:

5/1/2025

Intended Implementation date:

8/18/2025

Case ID:

SC031388

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, anticipates an enrollment of eight to ten students per academic year in the Graduate Certificate in Justice Studies. The program will be delivered face-to-face on the main campus. The target audience will be available as an add-on credential to those students already enrolled and pursuing a graduate degree at the institution. The new program will be ongoing.

The Graduate Certificate in Justice Studies is designed for graduate students who want to integrate social sciences, humanities, and law in the empirical and theoretical study of legal, political, and economic systems of justice. This certificate prepares students for careers in non-profit organizations, grassroots institutions, think tanks and policy fields, media and journalism, higher education, government, and law.

The University and the College of Arts and Sciences are prepared to offer the new certificate program. The College has an array of academic disciplines and interdisciplinary programs for undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students. The departments, schools, and special programs housed within the college stretch across several divisions, including the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.

Upon implementation of the Justice Studies course in fall 2024, the Appalachian Justice Research Lab (AJRL), housed within the College of Arts and Sciences, received 60 competitive applications from undergraduate, graduate, & law students who represented over 20 disciplines including the social sciences, natural sciences, education, public health, information sciences,



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and business. The course was implemented with five faculty members from law, sociology, and geography, four research projects, and five community partners.

The University states that the demand from graduate students for a certificate has been high. Ten graduate students who completed the inaugural fall 2024 Appalachian Justice Research Lab are continuing their work as independent studies in spring 2025, and other students are incorporating this work into master's theses and doctoral dissertations. As such, these students are eager to have this coursework and time investment translate into a Justice Studies certificate. The certificate should be beneficial for students' careers.

The program integrates social sciences, humanities, and law in the empirical and theoretical study of legal, political, and economic systems of justice, which aligns with the University's mission to serve the diverse community with a shared commitment to discovery, creativity, learning, and engagement.

Initial discussions began with the College of Arts & Sciences social sciences divisional dean. The idea was further explored and committed to as part of the Dean's Consortium on Social and Cultural Inquiry (CoSCI). A growing affiliate faculty and community of scholars at the Appalachian Justice Research Center and a Justice Studies steering committee have been involved in building the program.

The certificate was approved following curricular procedures, including review and approval by faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences, and submission to the institution's graduate curriculum committee, graduate council, and faculty senate for review and approval. The Faculty Senate approved the program on March 3, 2025. The minutes of the meeting are included in the proposal. Approval by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is not required for certificate programs. THEC requires a notification for certificates to be sent by the Chief Academic Officer/Provost.

The University identified two student learning outcomes. Outcome assessment methods include a culminating experience, a public oral presentation, and a written capstone project.

Enrolled graduate students from all disciplines are eligible to apply for admission to the certificate program. Students must complete 12 graduate hours of coursework, selected in consultation with the Justice Studies program chair, who must approve each student's courses. To qualify for certificate completion, students must maintain a minimum 3.0 graduate grade point average (GPA) throughout the program.

The University demonstrates compliance with Standard 10.7 of the *Principles of Accreditation*. It defines a credit hour as classes taught in-person in a traditional lecture-based format over a semester with 14 weeks of instruction, as one credit that represents 50 minutes per week of direct faculty instruction in a face-to-face classroom setting and a minimum of 100 minutes per



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week, outside the classroom setting, during which a student engages actively with the course content. The Justice Studies graduate certificate program will include 12 credit hours delivered through four three-credit courses. Each class will provide at least 700 lecture hours of instruction per credit hour.

The University provided the program of study, course descriptions, and a projected schedule of course offerings. It also provided the qualifications for nine full-time and two part-time faculty. Academic qualifications and work experience appear adequate for teaching courses in the graduate certificate. The University also provided the scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in the program. Keep in mind that the ultimate determination of faculty qualifications is the responsibility of the peer review team, which will assess the program as part of the institution's next SACSCOC reaffirmation review.

All faculty teaching in the Justice Studies graduate certificate program have terminal degrees in the related field of study, have demonstrable expertise in the instruction of course content, and have been appointed by the institution as faculty with status as a tenure-track professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or non-tenure track adjunct or lecturer.

The University demonstrates that it has enough faculty to implement the new certificate program of 12 credit hours. There will be no impact on faculty workload for law faculty as these courses are taught regardless of the availability of the Justice Studies graduate certificate program.

Library and learning information resources appear adequate to support the new program. The University affirms that no new library resources will be needed to support the Justice Studies graduate certificate program. The library offers students learning and course activities. Law databases, including HeinOnline, ProQuest Congressional, and ProQuest Regulatory Insight, are available to students.

Students can utilize OneSearch to search journals by category on the library's website. Justice Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study with hundreds of journals with all forms of justice (racial, economic, environmental, criminal, disability, food, gender, reproductive, class, energy, design, indigenous, and so on). OneSearch provides access to these resources via e-journals. The University provided a list and description of discipline-specific resources. All library resources are available online to Justice Studies graduate certificate students with a valid university ID and password.

Students are informed of the library and learning/information resources available via the course syllabus and individual course orientation. Faculty often guide students regarding the existence of resources relevant to class projects and assignments and how to access and use those resources. Information is commonly posted on the Canvas site. In addition, students have access to resource guides on accessing library materials and information sources. Students can access digital databases and AskUsNow to chat with a librarian.



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Student support resources appear adequate to support the new program. Resources include academic advising, research experiences, and the Appalachian Research Center.

Physical resources appear adequate to support the new program. The graduate certificate program is interdisciplinary. Classes may be taught in various facilities across campus, as assigned. Existing facilities will be used, and no new space is required. Courses taught by law faculty members are guaranteed classroom space within the law school, which is equipped with standard classroom technology, secure wireless internet access, and sound amplification. These rooms vary in size and seating arrangements, and classroom space will be assigned to meet the needs and number of students and faculty for each course.

All faculty are assigned office space per their home department. Administrative support staff are housed in office space as assigned; no new administrative faculty will be hired. No new equipment will be purchased.

Financial resources appear adequate to support the new program. The University provided a three-year budget plan. The University affirms that expenses are covered by pre-existing departmental budgetary allocations, including administrative and advising support, communications and marketing, and recruitment.

An assessment will be made at the end of the third year to determine the accuracy of the estimated support service costs. This information will determine the benefit of continuing the program or recommending closure through a teach-out plan. The LAW courses, which are part of the certificate program, are offered regardless of the status of the Justice Studies certificate program, and those faculty costs are part of the existing College of Law budget.

No new faculty or staff will be hired to support the certificate, and all support and contracts are already in place for the program.

The University participates in evaluation and assessment for each academic program, including the graduate certificate. Student learning outcomes are included in the annual program assessment process. Data is collected annually and analyzed by department faculty and reported formally every three years. The analysis and reporting requirements are focused on seeking improvement in student learning.

Program faculty are responsible for developing student learning outcomes, assessment methods, and interpreting the results for continued program improvement.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the Graduate Certificate in Justice Studies. It was the decision of the Board to approve the program and include it in the scope of accreditation.



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An invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus is enclosed with the liaison's copy of this letter.

Should you need assistance, please contact Dr. J. Matthew Melton at (404) 994-6553 or via email at mmelton@sacscoc.org.

Please include the Case ID number above in all submissions or correspondence about this substantive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/DDG:lp

Enclosure (invoice with liaison's copy only)

cc: Dr. Heather G. Hartman, Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, The
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Dr. J. Matthew Melton, Vice President, SACSCOC