

FITZHERBERT UNIVERSITY

Established 1783 · Veritas per Verificationem



Degree Certificate — Specimen Format

With Cryptographic Seal Specification

Office of the Chancellor & Registrar
Fitzherbert University · 2025

ABSTRACT

The authoritative specimen format for Fitzherbert University degree certificates from Epoch III onward. Each degree is issued in three forms: a physical certificate on Fitzherbert bond paper; a signed PDF in the Institutional Archive; and an NFT credential minted to the graduate's wallet address on the Polygon network. Version 1.1 of this specification corrects an error in the smart contract hash described in v1.0 that resulted in three degrees being minted to the same wallet address in the June 2025 graduation cycle. The three affected graduates have been notified. Their degrees are valid. The University declines to speculate further on the metaphysical implications. The Legacy Credential Bridge enables retrospective NFT issuance for degrees awarded prior to 2025, for alumni who wish to have their credentials on-chain and who accept that their degree was earned before 'on-chain' was an institutional concept.

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Table of Contents

I. Purpose, Audience, and Academic Status	3
Degree Certificate — Specimen Format is issued for graduates, employers, registry staff, verifiers, and archival users.	
II. Core Requirements and Conditions of Good Standing	4
Students governed by this document are expected to satisfy the following core requirements: award authorisation, recipient identity confirmation, correct programme and classification recording, and secure issuance pathway.	
III. Teaching, Assessment, and Verified Intellectual Work	5
Teaching and assessment under this framework are designed to measure understanding rather than exposure.	
IV. Student Support, Advice, and Corrective Interventions	6
Support structures available under this framework include services provided by the Registrar, the Chancellor's Office, and the Office of Blockchain Infrastructure.	
V. Progression, Awards, and Institutional Record	7
Progression decisions are made on the basis of academic performance, compliance with programme conditions, and the integrity of the submitted work.	
VI. Review, Amendment, and Student Notice	8
the Office of the Chancellor and Registrar is responsible for reviewing the continuing adequacy of this document.	

I. Purpose, Audience, and Academic Status

—3—

Degree Certificate — Specimen Format is issued for graduates, employers, registry staff, verifiers, and archival users. It consolidates rules, expectations, and procedures that are academically material to progression through the University. The document is not exhaustive of every possible scenario; no serious academic regulation ever is. It is, however, intended to be sufficiently complete that a diligent reader can understand the normative structure of the institution without requiring a private translator from the Registry.

The scope of the guide includes certificate form, legal wording, physical presentation, digital representation, NFT linkage, and verification procedures. These matters are grouped together because students experience them together. Universities often separate academic regulations from practical realities and then act surprised when students fail to perceive the hidden coherence between attendance, assessment, support, authorship, progression, and professional conduct. Fitzherbert has chosen the more candid path of documenting those connections directly.

Nothing in this document displaces the Charter, Senate regulations, or formally promulgated departmental rules. Where conflict appears, the higher authority prevails, but the conflict itself must be reported to the Office of the Chancellor and Registrar. The University has become increasingly unwilling to tolerate situations in which two valid-looking documents issue incompatible commands and the burden of reconciliation is quietly transferred to the least powerful reader.

II. Core Requirements and Conditions of Good Standing

— 4 —

Students governed by this document are expected to satisfy the following core requirements: award authorisation, recipient identity confirmation, correct programme and classification recording, and secure issuance pathway. These requirements are cumulative rather than decorative. A student may be intellectually gifted and administratively non-compliant, or administratively immaculate and academically unconvincing. The University records both conditions separately because experience suggests they produce different forms of difficulty and therefore require different interventions.

Good standing is defined as the concurrent maintenance of academic eligibility, procedural compliance, and honest authorship. This formulation was adopted after the University realised that earlier versions of its regulations assumed these states naturally travelled together. They do not. A student may be passing modules while misrepresenting authorship, or may be impeccably honest while failing to meet minimum progression thresholds. The document therefore insists on a multi-dimensional understanding of standing rather than a single flattering average.

The three-form model of physical certificate, signed PDF, and NFT credential is maintained because redundancy in credential evidence is now considered a strength rather than a failure to choose a modern aesthetic. The University recognises that some readers regard such notes as unduly specific. They are specific because Fitzherbert now writes regulations with the benefit of memory, and memory has proved less sentimental than institutional branding materials.

III. Teaching, Assessment, and Verified Intellectual Work

—5—

Teaching and assessment under this framework are designed to measure understanding rather than exposure. Attendance alone does not constitute engagement, submission alone does not constitute authorship, and polished prose alone does not constitute reasoning. These propositions may appear obvious, yet the University continues to find them operationally necessary. The increasing fluency of AI-assisted output has not made assessment impossible; it has merely made imprecision in assessment no longer survivable.

Students must therefore preserve evidence of process where required by module, programme, or examiner instruction. Evidence may include outlines, notes, drafts, model interaction logs, source annotations, code provenance, or oral defence materials. The requirement is not intended to create administrative theatre. It exists because verified intellectual labour increasingly depends on the capacity to distinguish between a result that is merely impressive and a result that is educationally attributable.

Programme teams retain discretion to vary assessment methods, but any variation must remain legible to students in advance and reviewable afterwards. Hidden criteria, retroactive standards, and unadvertised penalties are inconsistent with the University's conception of academic justice. Fitzherbert has occasionally fallen short of this standard and has therefore made the standard more explicit rather than less.

IV. Student Support, Advice, and Corrective Interventions

—6—

Support structures available under this framework include services provided by the Registrar, the Chancellor's Office, and the Office of Blockchain Infrastructure. Students are expected to use these services before a difficulty becomes a narrative of inevitability. The University is willing to provide support, extensions where regulations permit them, and structured interventions where risk is identified. It is less willing than in previous decades to accept the proposition that a predictable difficulty became unmanageable only because no one guessed in time what the student had not disclosed.

Corrective interventions may include academic skills plans, supervised study arrangements, authorship reviews, attendance contracts, wallet and credential remediation sessions, or referral to specialist support. These measures are not punishments, though they may feel administratively intimate. Their purpose is to restore viable academic participation before more severe decisions become necessary. The University prefers prevention to attrition, even if prevention produces more paperwork.

Where a student contests an intervention, reasons must be supplied and an appeal route explained. Fitzherbert has found that students accept demanding standards more readily when the standards are accompanied by intelligible process. The University has also found that some staff accept appeal rights only in theory. This document is written partly to improve that situation.

V. Progression, Awards, and Institutional Record

—7—

Progression decisions are made on the basis of academic performance, compliance with programme conditions, and the integrity of the submitted work. No student acquires an entitlement to progress merely by having reached the end of a term. Progression is a judgment recorded against published criteria, moderated where appropriate, and retained in a form that can survive later scrutiny by examiners, appeals panels, professional bodies, and the graduate's future self.

Award records, whether physical, digital, or on-chain, derive their legitimacy from the underlying academic decision. The credential is evidence of the judgment, not a substitute for it. This point has acquired renewed importance in an era in which students understandably pay more attention to the portability of credentials than to the minutes of the board that authorised them. Fitzherbert encourages the former interest while requiring the latter record.

Academic records generated under this document are retained according to University schedule and may be reviewed by the Office of the Chancellor and Registrar where patterns of inconsistency, unexplained grade movement, or authorship concern arise. Retention is not merely defensive. It is one of the few ways an institution can prove, years later, that it meant what it said when it certified someone's knowledge.

VI. Review, Amendment, and Student Notice

— 8 —

the Office of the Chancellor and Registrar is responsible for reviewing the continuing adequacy of this document. Review takes place annually and additionally at points of regulatory strain, technological change, or material confusion in application. The University regards confusion in application as a genuine diagnostic event. If readers repeatedly misread a rule, the problem may lie not only with the reader but with the institutional habit of writing as though ambiguity were a mark of sophistication.

Material amendments must be published with a notice explaining what changed, why it changed, and to whom the change applies. Retrospective application is exceptional and must be justified. Students are not required to admire the amendment process, but they are entitled to know whether the rules under which they enrolled are the rules under which they are now being judged.

This edition is therefore offered as a practical academic instrument: formal enough to guide decisions, explicit enough to constrain them, and candid enough to admit that the University is governing real students under real conditions rather than idealised subjects in a prospectus. Fitzherbert considers candour an underused academic virtue and has attempted, here, to employ it more consistently than is traditional.



INSTITUTIONAL NOTICE

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A cryptographic hash of this document is registered on the Fitzherbert Canonical Registry. The SHA-256 hash and associated metadata are available at the University's canonical verification endpoint.

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