

LAS Certificate Programs

These guidelines describe LAS certificate programs in three categories: undergraduate certificates, non-transcriptable graduate certificates, and transcriptable graduate certificates. Currently, all undergraduate certificates at Illinois are non-transcriptable. Transcriptable graduate certificate programs are IBHE-recognized (“Big-C”) certificates and follow Graduate College and CIM-P approval processes. Non-transcriptable (“Small-c”) certificates do not appear on a student’s academic transcript, although the credit-bearing component courses do, and in some cases these courses can contribute to a subsequent degree program. Certificate program options and comparisons among them are described by the [Office for Professional Education](#).

All certificate proposals are reviewed by the LAS Courses and Curricula Committee.

Undergraduate Certificates

LAS units wishing to propose a new undergraduate certificate should adhere to the following guidelines.

1) Appropriateness of the Certificate Format

A proposed certificate must be clearly justified as the most appropriate program option for meeting the unit’s goals, as distinct from a major, minor, concentration, or track. Certificates are generally most appropriate for students drawn from a variety of majors and are designed to highlight a defined area of expertise or a focused field of study that may not be adequately conveyed through a major or minor to employers, graduate schools, or other professional audiences. If the primary intent is to serve students within a single major, a transcriptable concentration or track within that major may be more appropriate.

2) Program Structure and Credit Hours

Undergraduate certificates typically consist of 3-4 courses and should total a minimum of 9 credit hours and a maximum of 15 credit hours. Certificates should include at least one required “core” course that all students take in common, similar to the design of a minor program. All courses, including those under temporary special topics listings, must be approved through the CIM-C system as permanent courses before the certificate can be approved by the college.

3) Advising and Administrative Responsibility

The proposing unit is responsible for monitoring student progress and providing advising support for the certificate program. For interdisciplinary certificates involving multiple units, the proposal must clearly designate a single unit that will assume primary responsibility for advising students.

4) Communication of Non-Transcriptable Status

The proposing unit is responsible for clearly communicating to students that the undergraduate certificate will not appear on the official transcript. Students should be informed that only the individual courses completed for the certificate, not the

certificate itself, will be listed on the student's academic record.

5) Digital Credential Requirement

All undergraduate certificates must include issuance of a digital credential to students who successfully complete the program.

- Digital credentials are issued using the campus-approved Accredible platform.
- Credential design standards and issuance policies are established by the [Office for Professional Education \(OPE\)](#).
- Within LAS, digital credential administration, issuance coordination, and operational support are managed by [ATLAS](#).
- Units proposing new undergraduate certificates should plan to [coordinate with ATLAS](#) as part of program implementation to support digital credential setup and issuance upon program approval.

Proposal Submission

Proposals for certificates should be sent by the unit head to the LAS Associate Dean for Curricula and Academic Policy (sdownie@illinois.edu). Please submit a proposal of **no more than three pages**, as a Word document, outlining the following:

- 1) A brief justification of the certificate, including what student population(s) the certificate will serve and how it fits into the unit's existing curricular structures. In the case of an interdisciplinary certificate that crosses multiple units, explain how the certificate relates to these units' existing curricular structures. If a certificate is designed for students in a particular major program, explain under what circumstances (if any) students outside that major may also complete the certificate.
- 2) An overview of the certificate requirements, including which course or courses are core or fixed requirements and which are options to be chosen from a list of courses.
- 3) If any course listed in the certificate requirements is not owned by the proposing unit, or is crosslisted with another unit as the primary owner, attach a note of approval from that unit to ensure awareness of the certificate plan.
- 4) A minimum of three student learning outcomes describing what students will know or be able to do upon completion of the certificate.
- 5) A listing of up to 5 skills credential holders will have learned in the process of earning the certificate.
- 6) An indication of whether the certificate is stackable into an existing degree program or a future degree program in development, including any applicable course or credit limitations. Proposals should also indicate whether the certificate includes or connects to any non-credit pathways, such as Coursera MOOCs, Canvas Catalog offerings, or other approved learning experiences.

Graduate Certificates – Non-Transcriptable

LAS units may also propose non-transcriptable graduate certificates. Although the certificate

itself does not appear on the student's official transcript, the graduate courses completed as part of the certificate are transcript-bearing and remain part of the student's academic record.

Please follow the above guidelines and submission requirements for undergraduate non-transcriptable certificates when proposing a graduate certificate program of this type. Proposals should identify the intended professional or continuing-education audience, any non-credit pathways, the minimum graduate credit-hour requirement, and any relationship between the certificate and existing or planned graduate degree programs.

Non-transcriptable graduate certificates will also offer a digital credential issued through the Accredible platform to students who successfully complete the program. As with non-transcriptable undergraduate certificates, units should plan to [coordinate with ATLAS](#) as part of program implementation to support digital credential setup and issuance upon program approval.

Graduate Certificates – Transcriptable

These “Big-C” or IBHE-recognized certificates are implemented at Illinois using the same CIM-P approval steps as degree programs. Unlike non-transcriptable graduate certificates, transcriptable certificates appear on the student's transcript, require a minimum of 12 credit hours of graduate-level coursework, and may make students eligible for federal financial aid and scholarships.

Departments wishing to create a transcriptable graduate certificate should consult with the LAS Associate Dean for Curricula and Academic Policy (sdownie@illinois.edu) before initiating the proposal review process. The Graduate College provides information on proposing transcriptable graduate certificate programs under their [Graduate Certificate webpage](#). Guidelines for proposing new programs or revising existing programs are also available under Faculty & Staff Resources on the [LAS webpage](#).

Transcriptable graduate certificates, such as the campus [Graduate Certificates \(GCRT\)](#), are awarded like degree programs, with notation on the transcript and a diploma issued. It is also acceptable to issue an Accredible credential for completion of these programs. As with non-transcriptable certificates, units should [coordinate with ATLAS](#) during program implementation to support digital credential setup and issuance.

Certificates Offered by LAS and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Visit [Certificates in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences](#) for a complete list of non-transcriptable undergraduate and graduate certificate programs offered by LAS.

All credit-bearing certificates offered by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are listed on the Office for Professional Education's [Credit Bearing Certificates webpage](#).