



## Certificate Policy

Loyola University Chicago's definition of a certificate appears [here](#). A certificate is a non-degree credential, less extensive than a bachelor's or master's degree program, which provides students with a specialized set of coursework. The coursework in a certificate program provides unique knowledge and skills for personal enrichment, professional advancement, or career change.<sup>1</sup> Certificate programs may provide a basic introduction to an established field of study, an interdisciplinary approach linking several fields, or a concentrated focus on a sub-field.

Credit-bearing certificates can be created within an academic unit, discipline, School/College, or across these entities following the review and approval process outlined in the [Chart of Reviews and Approvals for Academic Matters](#). The issuing School/College is responsible for administering the certificate program and monitoring academic rigor and student outcomes.

### 1. Types of Certificates

- **Embedded:** A certificate program that a student enrolls in while concurrently enrolled in a related degree program.
- **Stackable:** A certificate program that can count toward completion of a degree program.
- **Stand Alone:** A certificate program/s in which completion of the program(s) is an end in itself.

A certificate in and of itself does not necessarily have a particular status. The status of a certificate is determined in one of two ways: a) by how a student engages with it, in possible relation to their engagement with another certificate/s and/or a degree program or b) if it is classified as such by the School.

### 2. Certificate Policies

#### Transfer of External/Non-Loyola Certificate Credits to a Certificate

- An academic unit has discretion to determine the number of external credits accepted for a certificate (up to fifty percent of the certificate's total credits).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Higher Learning Commission expects institutions to differentiate learning outcomes for embedded certificates, relative to the associated degree. In cases where a certificate stands separate from a related degree program, we must specify discrete learning outcomes for student learning. These outcomes may be closely aligned with those for the degree program but should recognize the certificate as a separate credential such that student learning is assessed and curricular improvement processes are engaged. For example, we should be able to document the learning that has occurred as part of an embedded certificate.

## **Double Counting of Credits from Loyola Certificates or Degree Programs**

- Embedded: No maximum for double counting of courses or credits at discretion of graduate degree program. Cross-school embedded certificates are possible, but doing so would require the school with the embedded certificate to identify the certificate as open for cross-school embedded enrollment and to create an application mechanism for enrollment.
- Stackable: 50% maximum for double or triple counting of credit hours across multiple certificates. Double or triple counting of course credit permitted across multiple certificates but no double (or triple) counting of credit hours towards the total credit hours required for completion of the highest-level program. That is, it is not possible for double (or triple)-counted courses in stackable certificates to also double (or triple) count towards the credit total of the degree program.
- Stand Alone: 50% maximum for double or triple counting of credit hours across multiple certificates.

## **Time Limit for Certificate Completion**

- Embedded:
  - The certificate must be completed during the maximum time permitted for the completion of the degree program.
  - Withdrawal from the degree program is the last date to apply for certificate conferral.
- Stackable and Stand Alone: Each unit should establish a time limit for completion of the certificate to ensure that students' knowledge is up-to-date and to encourage them to maintain progress. A reasonable limit is three years, with allowance for one or more semester breaks within that time so long as the entire program is completed within the three-year limit. The limit should be no more than four years.

## **Continuous Enrollment Requirement**

- Embedded: Whether continuous enrollment is required is dependent on the degree program's requirements.
- Stackable & Stand Alone: Whether continuous enrollment is required is at the discretion of the academic unit.

## **Timing of Admission to Degree Program**

- Embedded & Stand Alone: A student must enroll in an embedded certificate at least one semester before the semester of their degree conferral.
- Stackable: The timeline for admission to the degree program is set by the academic unit.

## **Required GPA for Completion of Certificate**

- Embedded: Academic unit's minimum GPA for admission and completion of the degree program.
- Stackable: Academic unit's minimum GPA for admission to and completion of the degree program (each academic unit has discretion to waive or lower its admissions GPA).

- Stand Alone: Academic unit's minimum GPA for admission and completion of certificate.

#### **Admission Point(s)**

- Embedded: The school must specify enrollment for both programs, with the option of simultaneous completion, sequenced completion, or both completion options.
- Stackable: The academic unit must specify whether simultaneous enrollment is possible or if the stackable certificates must be taken in a particular sequence.
- Stand Alone: N/A

#### **Financial Aid**

Below are the minimum program requirements for Title IV eligibility for graduate and undergraduate certificate programs:

- Graduate or Professional nondegree programs must be at least 10 weeks and have at least 8 semester or trimester credit hours, 12 quarter credit hours, or 300 clock hours. Please note these programs are only eligible for Direct Loans.
- Undergraduate nondegree programs that do not require an enrolling student to have an associate degree for admission to the program must be at least 15 weeks and have at least 16 semester or trimester credit hours, 24 quarter credit hours, or 600 clock hours of instruction.
- Undergraduate nondegree programs that require an enrolling student to have an associate degree for admission to the program must be at least 10 weeks and have at least 8 semester or trimester credit hours, or 12 quarter credit hours, or 300 clock hours of instruction. Please note these programs are only eligible for Direct Loans and additional requirements apply (refer to the FSA Handbook link below).

Students may be enrolled in a standalone certificate program and receive aid as outlined above or combined with a degree program. If the student is enrolled in a degree program and a certificate that is not aid eligible, they can only receive aid for the degree program. As an example, if a student were enrolled in 6 credit hours, but three hours were in the non-aid eligible certificate program, aid would be evaluated based on the 3 credit hours in the degree program.

Approved April 28, 2025