

Undergraduate Standalone Certificates Manual – Final

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A. Terminology & Communications

CSU defines Undergraduate Certificates as “small-scale credit-bearing credentials that help prepare students for the workforce and/or further academic study by building their capacity in specific skills, competencies, and/or knowledge areas” (General Catalog). An Undergraduate Certificate consists of a minimum of 9 specified credits and a maximum of 23 credits. Students must apply for admission into the Undergraduate Certificate program and for the conferral of the certificate. Students must be enrolled at CSU to complete the certificate requirements and receive the certificate. Once completed, Undergraduate Certificates by title are noted on the student’s academic record (transcript).

CSU offers two types of Undergraduate Certificates: 1) Standard Certificates and 2) Standalone Certificates.

- 1) Standard Certificates are certificate programs offered exclusively to current undergraduate students pursuing a bachelor’s degree at CSU.
- 2) Standalone Certificates are certificate programs open to learners at any stage who meet CSU’s admissions requirements. Standalone Certificate programs will be included on CSU’s official degree/certificate list with the Colorado Division of Higher Education.

Definitions of and distinctions among CSU certificate types must be clearly and consistently presented in internal and external communications and marketing materials.

B. Admissions

1. Standalone Certificate Learners Classification

- i. For CSU admissions, registration, and tracking purposes, Standalone Certificate learners will have their own internal classification as Certificate-Seeking, distinct from Degree-Seeking (BA/BS/BM) and Non-Degree-Seeking (GUEST, Summer Only, CE) categories.
 - ii. For reporting and accreditation purposes, Standalone Certificate only students will be classified as Degree-Seeking, but they will be classified (and tracked) differently than Bachelor's Degree-Seeking students as appropriate.
- 2. Entrance Requirements**
- i. To enroll in a CSU standalone certificate program, the applicant must meet the standard university admission requirements.
 - ii. Because admission requires proof of high school graduation, dual enrollment and other high school students cannot be admitted to standalone certificate programs prior to graduation. Certificate programs may be designed such that dual enrollment high school students can begin course work while in high school but not earn the certificate until after high school graduation and admission to the certificate program.
 - iii. Current CSU degree-seeking students can request to add a certificate that is offered as a Standalone Certificate in addition to their bachelor's program. Departments will complete this through the academic program change tool (accessible via ARIESweb), and, if successfully completed, the certificate will appear on their transcript
 - iv. A student in a residential instruction program may not simultaneously enroll in an online program through CSU Online.
 - v. Undergraduate standalone certificates may not be earned alongside a graduate or professional level program.
- 3. Application**
- i. The application process for Standalone Certificates is the same as for bachelor's degree-seeking students.
 - ii. At the time of application, prospective learners will indicate that they are applying for a Standalone Certificate.
 - iii. The applicant must meet the standard university admission requirements.
 - iv. Standalone Certificates can be added retroactively, if the final course was completed on or after the term in which certificate became active. Learners may not apply for awarding of a Standalone Certificate more than five years after completing coursework for the certificate.
- 4. Application Fees**
- i. Application fee practices for standalone certificate programs mirror current practices for bachelor's degree programs.
 - ii. Currently enrolled Standalone Certificate learners in good standing may enroll in an additional certificate program at CSU without paying an additional application fee (See "Transition between Standalone Certificate and Bachelor's Degree Classification" section below).
- 5. Transition between Standalone Certificate and Bachelor's Degree Classification**
- i. Currently enrolled Standalone Certificate learners in good standing who wish to enroll in a bachelor's degree program at CSU do not need to reapply through the full admissions process because they already have been admitted as "degree-seeking" students. They can request the bachelor's program be added via academic program change tool (accessible in ARIESweb).
 - ii. Currently enrolled Standalone Certificate learners in good standing who wish to enroll in another certificate program at CSU do not need to reapply through the full

- admissions process. They request the department enroll them in the certificate program through the academic program change tool (accessible via ARIESweb).
- iii. Former CSU degree-seeking students who are eligible to return may enroll in a Standalone Certificate program.

C. Registration

1. Standalone Certificate learners will register for classes according to their classification:
 - i. Online/Distance learner: Online.colostate.edu website
 - ii. RI learner: RAMWeb
2. Registration for Standalone Certificate learners will open at the same time as for bachelor's degree-seeking students.
3. Learners can be enrolled in up to two certificate programs simultaneously, to ensure course / program restrictions work as departments intend.
4. Standalone Certificate learners can transfer in up to 6 credits toward a certificate. All other courses associated with the standalone certificate must be completed at CSU. In general and unless otherwise specified, credit transfers will align with current university policies.
5. Counting Credits: Standalone Certificate learners may count course credits earned at CSU toward multiple certificates, as applicable.

D. Student Records

1. All undergraduate academic standards and policies will be applied to Undergraduate Standalone Certificate learners.
2. Undergraduate Standalone Certificate learners are eligible for planned leave.
3. If a Standalone Certificate learner's record becomes inactive due to not registering in a new term, they will need to reapply to reactivate it.
4. Students seeking standalone credentials only will have their credential awarded based on confirmation of completion in the term they have identified as their "intent to graduate term" or otherwise confirmed complete by the Office of the Registrar.
5. Bachelor's degree will always be posted as the student's primary field of study to ensure consistency in reporting and tuition and fee charges.

E. Financial Aid

1. In order to qualify for federal aid, certificate programs must meet the federal financial aid requirements. Notably, they must be greater than or equal to 24 credit hours, accommodate enrollment at half-time or more, and must be at least 30 weeks long to be considered for potential funding. While the maximum credits are 23, a department may petition for a waiver of this maximum by submitting a request and rationale to the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Affairs.
2. Programs that qualify for federal aid are subject to [Gainful Employment regulations](#), requiring reporting that demonstrates employment and income outcomes for students who successfully complete them.
3. CSU Standalone Certificate Programs must clearly indicate whether they are eligible for federal aid (e.g. website and marketing materials).

F. Learner Services

1. Orientation
 - i. Standalone Certificate Learners will be provided with a streamlined orientation experience appropriate to this population.
 - ii. Online/Distance: CSU Online has a specific online orientation for online learners that works for this learner population too.
 - iii. Main Campus/Resident Instruction (RI): Orientation materials and on demand resources for this population will be curated from RamOrientation resources

(navigating systems such as email, Canvas, etc.). RI Standalone Certificate Learners will be invited to on-campus orientation but not required to attend.

2. Advising & Career Services
 - i. Advising support and resources must be included in all Standalone Certificate programs.
 - ii. Online/Distance: Standalone Certificate learners will be included in CSU Online advising numbers and involved in outreach and support.
 - iii. RI: Undergraduate Standalone Certificate learners must have access to
 - 1) A designated academic advisor, who may be either a faculty member, as with a minor, or a professional / career advisor.
 - 2) The Hub, for navigating CSU systems and processes.
3. Student Services
 - i. Online/Distance: Standalone Certificate learners will have access to all resources that are available for existing online / distance learners.
 - ii. RI: Standalone Certificate learners must have access to resources and services that support a positive learning and academic experience. The cost of these services will be covered through tuition and fees.
4. Student Fees
 - i. Online/Distance: Online/Distance learners do not pay student fees (other than tech fee, and approved course fees).
 - ii. RI: Student fees will mirror student fees and student fee practices for bachelor's degree programs, providing access to resources for Standalone Certificate learner services.
 - iii. If differential tuition is charged, it will follow CSU's differential tuition structure.
 - iv. Special course fees: In courses that include special course fees, Standalone Certificate learners will be subject to the same fees as bachelor's degree seeking students.

G. Review and Assessment

1. Certificate Program Support
 - i. The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President will provide support, coordination, and oversight for the development and implementation of Standalone Certificates, in collaboration with Faculty Council.
2. Standalone Certificate Proposal Requirements
 - i. Standalone Certificate proposals must be submitted for review through the university's Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system as an independent Standalone Certificate proposal with an independent workflow: If the certificate is already offered as a Standard Certificate, the department should decide whether to offer both formats or deactivate the Standard Certificate. Proposals for standalone certificates must have >50% credits from existing courses: Certificate proposals must be comprised of greater than 50 percent existing courses to avoid engaging the substantive change clause in HLC accreditation.
 - ii. Evidence of market demand: Additionally, in the standalone certificate proposal, faculty should indicate and support with evidence the market demand for the proposed standalone certificate. Evidence may be drawn from Bureau of Labor Statistics, state of Colorado labor market data, IPEDS data for similar certificates at other institutions, professional organization data. As standalone certificates are largely aimed at non-bachelor's-degree-seeking students, we believe this evidence will support the viability of the standalone certificate.
 - iii. Offering plan: Standalone certificate seekers may engage in standalone certificate programs at a different cadence than traditional bachelor's-degree-seeking students. As such, at the time of proposal submitting, faculty should clearly indicate a course

offering plan. The courses included in the certificate must be offered at least once per year (including summer).

3. Undergraduate Standalone Certificate Proposal Review Process
 - i. Undergraduate Standalone Certificate proposals must be submitted for review through the university's Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system as an independent Standalone Certificate proposal with an independent workflow, even if the certificate is already offered as a Standard Certificate.
 - ii. Standalone Certificate proposals must include the following elements, in addition to proposal requirements for a Standard Certificate:
 - 1) Evidence of market demand and/or workforce need
 - 2) Demonstration that the standalone certificate does not contain hidden prerequisites for certificates
 - 3) An academic advising contact: Unless otherwise specified in the proposal, the proposer is the default advising contact.
 - 4) Program Learning Outcomes (3-4 PLOs), aligned with the selected courses taught
 - 5) Program of Study included required and elective courses and any sequencing requirements.
 - 6) Minimum number of terms (can include Summer) by which the certificate can be completed.
 - 7) A commitment to offering the certificate for at least five years or, if not, a deactivation plan (see "Assessment and Continuous Improvement" below)
 - 8) MOU for interdisciplinary certificates / certificates led by multiple units
 - iii. The CIM process for Standalone Certificate proposals involves the following workflow steps, in addition to proposal requirements for a Standard Certificate:
 - 1) Dean of offering college(s) approval (including financial commitment)
 - 2) Faculty Council approval
 - 3) Accreditation Liaison Officer (HLC) stop
 - 4) Program code generation
 - 5) CIP-code generation
 - 6) Board of Governors approval
 - 7) Colorado Department of Higher Education approval
4. Assessment and Continuous Improvement
 - i. Standalone certificates will be subject to the same [annual outcomes assessment process](#) as graduate certificates, and they will be included in [academic program review](#) as graduate certificates are currently.
 - ii. Deactivation Plan: A comprehensive deactivation plan is essential for standalone certificate proposals with an anticipated lifespan of less than five years or for certificates facing discontinuation due to insufficient demand, financial viability concerns, or other reasons. This plan should ensure a smooth transition for enrolled students, mitigate any institutional risks, and maintain transparency and visibility with stakeholders (including relevant updates to catalogs, websites, etc.).

H. Budget and Finances

1. The budget model for standalone certificates aligns as closely as possible with practices for degree programs / majors.
2. For budgetary purposes, Undergraduate Standalone Certificate learners are treated as majors in their associated department / unit. Thus, the department / unit budget should cover the same types of certificate-related expenses as it does for its undergraduate majors, and tuition revenue should be similarly distributed. For certificate programs hosted by multiple departments / units, the

budget should be equally divided among those units or distributed according to a rate agreed-upon by all hosting units and stated in an MOU at the time of certificate proposal.