

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

Certificate Program Definitions

These certificate definitions were developed by SCHEV staff to guide public institutions in preparing submissions to SCHEV when instituting new certificate programs. Generally, any new certificate program should fall within the boundaries of one of the categories of certificate listed below.

Note: If it should be necessary—due to particular disciplinary, certification, or other requirements—to design a certificate program that departs from these parameters, the institutional submission should include an appropriate explanation and citation of applicable external standards.

Baccalaureate/undergraduate certificate

A program of study in which all course work is at the bachelor level. The required number of courses varies, with a minimum of 9 credit hours and a maximum of 18 credit hours.

Post-baccalaureate certificate

A program of study designed to further undergraduate education that does not require enrollment in a graduate-level degree program. The required number of courses varies, with a minimum of 9 credit hours and a maximum of 15 credit hours of coursework beyond the bachelor's degree. The majority of required courses are at the graduate level with a limited number of courses at the upper division baccalaureate level. A prerequisite of a baccalaureate degree is required for admission.

Graduate Certificate

A program of study requiring graduate level coursework in a particular subject or area of specialization. The required number of courses varies, with a minimum of 12 credit hours and a maximum of 24 credit hours. A prerequisite of a baccalaureate degree is required for admission.

Post-Professional Certificate

A program of study in which the required number of courses varies, with a minimum of 12 credit hours and a maximum of 24 credit hours of graduate level coursework. A prerequisite of a baccalaureate degree or master's degree and licensure or national certification in a professional field is required for admission.

Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (CAGS)

A program of study that is intermediate between the master's and doctorate level. The required number of courses varies depending on the discipline and coursework consists of advanced graduate study. A prerequisite of a master's degree is required for admission.

Note: Graduate certificate programs requiring more than 24 credit hours will be reviewed to determine whether the program of study is a certificate of advanced graduate study (CAGS).