

Michigan State University – Academic Program Terminology

This terminology is used to describe majors, minors, graduate specializations, undergraduate and graduate certificates, teacher certification and sub-categories within them as noted.

| Name | Definition | Transcriptable <small>(listed on student's transcript)</small> | Trackable in SIS <small>(students can be located by program in SIS)</small> | Eligibility | Relationship to Major | Requires separate approval/certification |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| MAJORS | | | | | | |
| Major | A primary field of study named as a specific degree program. | Yes | Yes | Students who select and meet specific admission criteria for a field of study as a major preference. | N/A | Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. |
| Concentration | A set of disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses within a major. | Yes, if requested, by program. | Yes | Students enrolled in specific majors. | Available for majors that provide multiple paths to completion. | Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. |
| Cognate | A set of related disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses. | No | No | Students enrolled in specific majors. | Complementary to the major. | Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. |
| MINORS | | | | | | |
| Minor | A secondary field of study at the undergraduate level. Policy: minimum of 15 credits | Yes | Yes | Students who select and meet specific admission criteria for a field of study as a secondary preference. | Coherent set of courses supplementary to the major. | Final approval is concurrent with the degree certification process. |
| UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATES | | | | | | |
| Type 1 Undergraduate Certification for | Course work, co-curricular experiences, and specified training associated with a specific college, department, or school. Designed to complement specified MSU degree programs. | Yes | Yes | MSU undergraduate students in specific academic programs who meet the eligibility requirements. | Directly related to, yet distinct from, a degree program or programs offered by an academic college, department, or school. | Admission and completion are granted by the academic unit and are separate from or concurrent with the degree certification process. |
| Type 2 Undergraduate Certificate Program in | Coursework, co-curricular experiences, and learning opportunities that are interdisciplinary, competency-based, or related to professional skills not directly linked a degree program. | Yes | Yes | MSU undergraduate or guest students who meet the eligibility requirements. | Distinct entity not related to a degree program or minor. | Admission and completion are administered by the sponsoring unit and are separate from the degree certification process. |
| Type 3 <i>Sponsoring Unit</i> Professional Certificate in... | Co-curricular experiences, online modules, and/or specified professional training, skills, or competency levels. | No | No | Fee-paying participants or guest students who meet specific admission criteria. | Distinct entity designed for external stakeholders and guest students not related to a degree program or minor. | Admission and completion are administered by sponsoring unit and are separate from the degree certification process. |
| Type 4 University Undergraduate Certificate in.... | Course work, co-curricular experiences, and specified professional training, skills, or competency levels that distinct from a major and serve a broad, pan-institutional audience. Designed to serve both MSU and guest students. | Yes | Yes | MSU undergraduate or guest students who meet the eligibility requirements. | Distinct entity designed for undergraduate students and guest students. | Admission and completion are administered by APUE in collaboration with sponsoring unit(s) and are unrelated to a degree certification process. |

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|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Type 5 Certificates in... (Exclusively for the Institute of Agricultural Technology programs) | Course work, co-curricular experiences, and specified professional training, skills, or competency levels for which the certificate and the academic program are one-in-the same. | Yes | Yes | Students who meet the eligibility requirements. | Directly related to a degree program as part of the degree program's requirements. | Admission and final approval are managed by the degree program and integral to the degree certification process. |
| GRADUATE SPECIALIZATIONS | | | | | | |
| Specialization | An interdisciplinary program of thematically related courses. Guideline: 9 credits. | Yes | Yes | Students enrolled in any major unless specified. | Distinct from a major. | Final approval is concurrent with the degree certification process. |
| GRADUATE CERTIFICATES | | | | | | |
| Type 1 Certification for . . . | Course work, specified professional training, skills, or competency levels. | Yes | Yes | Students enrolled in specific majors. | Directly related to a degree program as part of the degree program's requirements. | Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. |
| Type 2 Graduate Certificate Program in . . . | Course work, specified professional training, skills, or competency levels. | Yes | Yes | Students who meet specific admission criteria. | Distinct entity not related to a degree program. | Final approval is separate from or concurrent with the degree certification process. |
| Type 3 Academic Unit Certificate Program . . . | Course work, specified professional training, skills, or competency levels. | No | No | Students enrolled in any major unless specified. | Distinct entity not related to a degree program. | Final approval is granted by the academic unit. |
| Type 4 University Graduate Certification in . . . | Specified professional training, skills, or competency levels. | Yes | Yes | Students enrolled in specific majors. | Distinct entity not related to a degree program. | Final approval is recommended by the administering unit and The Graduate School and is separate from the degree certification process. |
| TEACHER CERTIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Area of Emphasis (Exclusively for Teacher Certification Programs) | A set of disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses. | Yes | Yes | Students enrolled in specific majors. | Integral to a major. | Final approval is integral to the degree certification process. |
| Teaching Minor (Exclusively for Teacher Certification Programs) | A group of single subject or group subject courses required by the State of Michigan. | Yes | Yes | Students admitted to teacher certification programs. | Teaching Minors are available for elementary and/or secondary certification. Certain teaching minors are only available for specified majors. | Yes |