AECT Certificate Endorsement Program (CEP) Application Process FAQ

The Association for Educational Communications and Technology has established an endorsement program for formal certificate programs in higher education institutions. Endorsement refers to validation by AECT of a certificate program's scope and rigor consistent with both the institution's stated purposes for the program and the 2012 AECT Standards for Educational Media, Communications, and Technology. Such endorsement may provide a competitive advantage for the sponsoring institutions as well as a form of external evaluation that can be useful as part of student recruitment, quality efforts, or institutional program review. In turn, endorsement serves to verify the integrity and standing of AECT as a leading professional association in the field of educational communications and technology and promote the standards that are a core product of the Association.

This FAQ is intended to assist institutions who are developing an initial application for the certificate endorsement. For details and specific guidelines on the endorsement program, see the complete **AECT Certificate Endorsement (CEP) Policy, available at the AECT web site.**

Who can apply for the Certificate Endorsement?

Applications can be submitted by a representative of an accredited institution of higher education. Typically this is a faculty member or program specialist in the program to be reviewed. At present, applications must come from institutions in the United States but others may request consideration.

How does AECT define a certificate program?

For the purposes of CEP, a certificate is defined as "a specialized, non-degree program offered by a nationally accredited institution of higher learning." Typically a student earns a certificate from the institution by completing a prescribed sequence of courses that are fewer credits than a full degree (i.e., not bachelors, masters, doctorate). Certificates may be offered at the graduate, undergraduate or post-graduate level. Such certificates must have formal recognition by the institution and the certificate is therefore awarded by the institution, not a department or school. More on the definition is included in the CEP policy.

What is required in the application?

There is no application form. The sections are outlined in the policy and further elaborated in the review rubric (attached to this FAQ).
1. Purpose(s) of the program.
2. Prerequisites.
3. Program goals, objectives, and target proficiencies.
4. Course requirements: titles, descriptions, and number of courses/credits required to earn a certificate. (Note: A syllabus or detailed course outline for each course in the program should be included in the application.)
5. Instructional methods and materials.
6. Procedures for evaluating learning outcomes.
7. Overview description of how the certificate program aligns with the 2012 AECT standards (particularly the assessments)

Is there a particular format or application form?

No. There is no required format. The one successful applicant to date used a web site. More recent applicants submitted a text-based report. What matters is organizing the material so that reviewers can easily find the required sections.

Is there a charge to apply?

No. At present the Certificate Endorsement Program is in a pilot phase and is therefore not requiring a fee. Such a fee is expected to be implemented in the future.

What does the CEP policy mean by alignment?

The term alignment occurs in multiple parts of the policy requirements. What the reviewers want to see in an application is that the program is (1) within the field that AECT represents and (2) is designed using the 2012 AECT standards as a guidepost for the program's purpose, outcomes, and assessments. Note that it is the responsibility of the applicant to explain how and why the design is aligned to the standards used in the certificate program. It is not enough to just list the standards that have been applied. One of the most common reasons an application is sent back is insufficient detail in explaining alignment. The judges should not have to guess or assume how the standards apply.

Can we use older standards?

No. The current AECT standards for professional programs were adopted in 2012. These are the *only* standards on which the certificate will be reviewed. In fact, pre-2012 standards in a syllabus or assignment detail are seen as problematic, making it appear the new standards are not integral to program design but an afterthought. Applicants should take care to show the program as a whole is based on the newer standards.

Do we need to show alignment with all standards and indicators?

No. The standards were designed based on degree programs which are typically a more comprehensive review of the field than a certificate. In general a single standard would be insufficient to earn the endorsement of the five in the 2012 set, but all five are not expected. Applicants should explain why the subset that is used in the certificate program design was appropriate, and why the other standards and indicators were not used.

Should we use standards or indicators?

It is acceptable to use the standard level for design of the program including assessments, but the indicators almost always are needed for the explanation. These lower level phrases are what provide enough definition to make the standards meaningful, as the standards are quite broad in their scope.

Is there any element of the standards that must be used?

Yes. While it may not be obvious at first glance, all the standards have an ethical element, and this is viewed as a key part of the standards as a whole. Any good program design is expected to include an introduction to ethical practice and some indication students are applying it, either through an assessment related to ethical standards or through some element of individual assignments in which this understanding is expressed.

Do the standards have to be present in every course and assessment?

No. Typically programs contain unique elements that may go beyond the standards. What does matter is an indication that every student who goes through a program will achieve the outcomes that are standards based. In general, this means that only those outcomes and assessments in required courses will apply for the review, or if there is a choice of courses, all students will take one of the choices in which the standards-based assessment(s) apply. The best programs often have formative assessments in most courses with some sort of culminating project that is a summative assessment to show mastery of the standards elements.

Do we need to show data proving that positive student learning outcomes based on the standards are met?

No. Unlike in many accreditation reports, the endorsement is not premised on final student outcomes but on program design that is aligned to standards. No student data is expected. However, the committee does look for evidence that the program faculty are reviewing such student outcome evidence to ensure students are meeting standards and for continuous improvement. This might include such processes as internal or external program reviews, portfolio systems, use of critical friends, or other program evaluation methods. Such overall program evaluation is a standard part of good design.

Is there an example I can look at?

Yes. The first successful endorsement was awarded to the University of Hawaii at Mānoa "Certificate in Online Learning and Teaching" (COLT) offered by the Department of Learning Design and Technology. They have made their application available for those who want to see an example. As the first awardee, the application is not perfect but does give a sense of what is required. See
https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/colt-aect/

How long will it take me to develop an application?

The challenge in putting together an application is not the application itself but ensuring the program design is based on the standards, and that this is evident coherently throughout the materials submitted. In most institutions, program design is not something that one person can impact alone. Those who have applied are finding that getting all the pieces and all the faculty in line is the most time-consuming part of developing an application. The application can generally be done in a couple of weeks if all is in order with the program. For those who have written a document for institutional program review or accreditation, the AECT process will seem much less elaborate.

How long does it take to get an application reviewed?

Reviews are being done in two stages.

1. The chair of the CEP Review Committee does an initial review to determine if the basic parameters of the application are present, and that there is enough information to understand how the standards have been applied. If there is a problem, the application is returned to the applicant for revisions. This first step in the review is usually no more than two weeks.

2. Once the application is complete, it is sent to the entire CEP Review Committee for formal review for rigor, alignment, and standards approach. During this time each member carefully considers the application, completes the rubric and shares results, then the committee meets as

a whole virtually to discuss any remaining concerns. This second step may take 6-8 weeks and longer at times such as summer when faculty are often away or are at the end of a busy semester, as committee members are volunteers during the pilot phase.

What are the review criteria?

The AECT Certificate Endorsement Program Policy contained a draft rubric which is now under revision and has been replaced by a newer draft attached to this document. The updated rubric is intended to help applicants better understand what the reviewers are rating. Criteria range from satisfactory to unacceptable. The goal is not to determine if the certificate is outstanding, but rather does it meet the level for endorsement. Open-ended comments allow reviewers to add commendations where these are deserved. To pass, all items must be rated at a minimum satisfactory.

What if our program does not get a positive review?

In the pilot phase, our goal is to help applicants improve an application so that they will earn the endorsement. Rather than review being a final judgment, it is seen as a way to provide feedback, and to work with applicants in a collaborative way so each good program may earn the endorsement. As such, reviews are not anonymous as the judges are also serving as coaches. So far all applications have required some tweaks but the programs have been good ones and we expect more to earn the endorsement.

What do I do first?

After reviewing this FAQ, the official policy, and the example application, begin to put together your application. Once you are sure you have the elements you will need, contact the AECT Executive Director, Phil Harris (pharris@aect.org), indicating you will be submitting an application. He will contact the review team so they know your application is coming. When your application is ready for review, send it (or the link if it is online) to Phil. You will receive an acknowledgment that the review is under way.

Does the endorsement have an end date?

Yes. The policy indicates endorsement is for five-year period. After that time, the endorsement may be renewed based on a less extended reapplication process described in the CEP Policy. In addition, any major changes to the certificate require another review.

Where should I send questions?

Questions should be sent to the AECT Executive Director, Phil Harris (pharris@aect.org).

Attached: Draft review rubric for Pilot Phase Applications (10 June 2015 version)

Rubric Items Reviewed	Possible Reviewer Responses
2012 AECT Standards Addressed in the Program*	
Standard 1 (Content Knowledge)	Creating - Using - Assessing/Evaluating - Managing - Ethics Addressed only at broad standard level
Standard 2 (Content Pedagogy)	Creating - Using - Assessing/Evaluating - Managing - Ethics Addressed only at broad standard level
Standard 3 (Learning Environments)	Creating - Using - Assessing/Evaluating - Managing - Ethics - Diversity of Learners - Addressed only at broad standard level
Standard 4 (Professional Knowledge and Skills)	Collaborative Practice - Leadership - Reflection on Practice - Assessing/Evaluating - Ethics Addressed only at broad standard level
Standard 5 (Research)	Theoretical Foundations - Method - Assessing/Evaluating - Ethics Addressed only at broad standard level
The standards addressed include an ethical element.	Yes - No - Uncertain
Applicant has adequate explanation for why other standards are not included.	Yes - No - Insufficient Explanation
The standards addressed are sufficient for a program to receive AECT endorsement:	Yes - No
Comments on standards addressed.	[open ended]
Purpose and Goals**	
The purposes of the certificate program are consistent with the purpose of the AECT endorsement program.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
The purposes of the certificate program are clearly stated and explicitly aligned with the AECT scope and mission.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
The program goals are clearly articulated.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
Program Design	
The prerequisites are appropriate for the intended audience of the certificate program.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
Individual courses provide appropriate scope and sequence for students to achieve the target competencies.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
Course contents and activities are consistent with the purposes, goals, objectives, and target competencies of the program.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
Instructional methods and materials are appropriate to the courses in which they are used.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory

Standards Alignment

The applicant has clearly articulated which standards are addressed in the program.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
The program's target competencies are consistent with AECT standards.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
Student assessment procedures align with the goals and objectives, and comprehensively address designated AECT standards.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
Student assessment procedures are appropriate for determining the competencies are met.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory

Program Evaluation

The program is approved at the home institution.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory
The program has in place a procedure for reviewing programmatic achievement of goals, including standards implementation.	Satisfactory - Marginal - Unsatisfactory

Reviewer Comments

Are there areas in which you thought the program was exemplary that should be noted?	[open ended]
Which areas need to be further addressed, and what is missing?	[open ended]
Other comments	[open ended]

Review Decision

Initial review decision	-Endorse -Revise and resubmit, minor changes -Revise and resubmit, major changes -Not Acceptable -Program falls outside of AECT scope
For any answer above that is not "Endorse," please explain.	[open ended]

* As specified by the applicant in the application

** Satisfactory - must be satisfactory for each; exemplary areas highlighted in open-ended responses