

Guidelines on Certificate Programs

Schools accredited by the ATS Commission on Accrediting sometimes inquire about our procedures and policies regarding certificate programs. Such programs are under renewed scrutiny—at least in the US—because of recent regulations from the US Department of Education (USDE) regarding [gainful employment](#) and certificate programs' eligibility for USDE Title IV funding. Our USDE scope of recognition is limited to graduate, theological *degree* programs, not *certificate* programs. Consequently, the Commission does not have the authority to approve certificate programs for USDE Title IV eligibility. The sole exception may be for what USDE calls [embedded certificate programs](#) that are part of approved degree programs, though member schools should review that USDE exception carefully to see if their programs qualify. Regardless of Title IV eligibility, member schools with certificate programs should note the Commission requirements on “nondegree instructional programs” ([Educational Standard](#), section ES.8), though no approval is needed or provided, and no record of non-embedded certificate programs is maintained by the Commission. The Commission reviews such programs primarily insofar as they impact degree programs, especially certificate programs that are embedded in graduate theological degree programs.