

# CIRTL FAQs

## What is CIRTL?

[CIRTL](#) (rhymes with “turtle”) is a 45-university consortium that helps grad students and postdocs learn how to teach college courses more effectively. Penn State is a member. CIRTL is especially focused on preparing STEM educators, but any Penn State grad student or postdoc from any discipline can pursue CIRTL certificates. CIRTL participation and the certificate process are free. In January 2024, the Graduate School Teaching Certificate transitioned into the [Penn State CIRTL Teaching Certificate](#).

## How can CIRTL participation benefit me?

1. In completing the activities and programs needed to attain the certificate, you learn many useful ideas and strategies about teaching at the college level and have opportunities to practice those ideas.
2. CIRTL certification may help you stand out in positive ways during the job-search process.

## Who is eligible to earn a Penn State CIRTL certificate?

Any currently enrolled Penn State graduate student or postdoc.

## What does it cost to participate? How do I register?

There is no fee, and no registration is required to do the certificate process. You keep track of your progress and turn in your materials when you have completed all of them.

## Do I have to do all three levels (Associate, Practitioner, and Scholar)?

There are three certificate levels: Associate (introductory), Practitioner, and Scholar. **Participants can choose to complete one, two, or all three levels.**

However, participants also need to fulfill the requirements for any previous levels. So, for the Practitioner level, participants would also need to fulfill the Associate-level requirements. For the Scholar level, participants would also need to fulfill the Associate- and Practitioner-level requirements.

## How long does it take to complete a certificate?

You set your own timetable, but we suggest that participants give themselves multiple semesters. Here are estimates of the time needed to complete each level:

- Associate: 1-2 semesters (to take courses/short courses/workshops and participate in a learning community)
- Practitioner: 1-2 semesters (to plan and develop course materials or plan a research study focused on the learning environment in a Penn State course)

- Scholar: 2-3 semesters (to carry out and disseminate a research study focused on the learning environment in a Penn State course)

### **How many courses/short courses/workshops do I need to take to fulfill the requirements for the Associate level?**

The Associate level of Penn State CIRTl includes 18 learning objectives. Some courses/short courses fulfill most or all of those; other courses/short courses/workshops fulfill a few of the objectives. See the [CIRTl matrix](#) for a list of the objectives met by various programs at Penn State. You can also use programs from the 45-university [CIRTl Network](#) to fulfill the learning objectives. If you have questions about the Penn State CIRTl learning objectives fulfilled by a short course or workshop offered by the overall [CIRTl Network](#), please email [CIRTl@psu.edu](mailto:CIRTl@psu.edu).

### **Do I need to take a separate course for each of the objectives?**

No, a single course/short course/workshop might fulfill multiple objectives. See the [matrix](#) for details. For example, APLNG 493 is a single course that satisfies all 18 CIRTl learning objectives.

If you complete a course or experience that satisfies multiple but not all 18 objectives, you can supplement it with other courses/short courses/workshops. For example, if you have taken ASTRO 602, you have satisfied 17 of the 18 learning objectives. The remaining learning objective to fulfill is #1.6, which focuses on Universal Design for Learning. The easiest way to fulfill that would be to take OL3600 (free, non-credit short course) from World Campus Faculty Development.

### **If I took a course that fulfills CIRTl requirements before I started the CIRTl process, can I count it?**

Yes, but you will need to get the instructor/facilitator's signature on the endorsement form to indicate you successfully completed the work.

### **How can I identify courses/short courses/workshops that will fulfill the requirements for the Associate level?**

See the Penn State [CIRTl matrix](#), which includes information from more than 90 courses/short courses/workshops. We expect that more programs will be added each semester as more departments/programs become aware of Penn State CIRTl.

### **If I have already done SUBJ 602 (supervised teaching), do I have to do it again now for CIRTl?**

If you have already done 602 work, you don't have to complete another semester of 602 as long as your TAs hip met the following conditions:

- Teaching activities that go beyond serving as a grader. The TAs hip must involve interactions with students such as being responsible for leading lab sessions or discussion sections.

- Discussion with the instructor and other TAs (if there are multiple) about the assigned teaching activities.
- Feedback from a TA supervisor.

**Do I need to do the levels in order? Do I need to complete everything for the Associate (introductory) level before working on the Practitioner level?**

We recommend completing most of the requirements for the Associate level first, since that level contains foundational concepts that will inform your work in the more advanced levels. However, if you have questions about your specific situation, reach out to [CIRTL@psu.edu](mailto:CIRTL@psu.edu).

**How do I document my fulfillment of the requirements?**

When you have completed a course/short course/workshop that fulfills Penn State CIRTL learning objectives, ask the instructor/facilitator to sign the endorsement document attesting that you successfully completed that course/short course/workshop. When you have completed all requirements for a particular CIRTL level, email your materials (or a link to video files, a folder, etc.) to [CIRTL@psu.edu](mailto:CIRTL@psu.edu).