
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Industry-Recognized Credentials

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) has defined an industry-recognized credential (IRC) as a credential that is sought or accepted by employers within the industry or sector involved as a recognized, preferred, or required credential for recruitment, screening, hiring, retention, or advancement purposes. Where appropriate, it is endorsed by a nationally recognized trade association or organization representing a significant part of the industry or sector.

Recipients of IRCs have demonstrated that they possess the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to perform specific tasks or roles within that industry. IRCs are awarded by certifying bodies, trade associations, or professional organizations that have established standards for proficiency and knowledge within that domain. Many IRCs are stackable, allowing a student to earn an entry-level credential and additional related credentials as they progress through programs. Credentials include educational certificates, degrees, certifications, and government-issued licenses, as detailed in the table below.

IRC Credential Categories

	<u>Certificate</u>	<u>Certification</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>License</u>
Awarded by	Education institution	Business, trade association, industry	Education institution	Government Agency
Results from	Course of study	Assessment	Course of study	Meeting requirements
Indicates	Education	Skill mastery	Education	Legal permission
Completed in	Less than 2 years	Varies	2 or more years	Varies
Maintained by	N/A	Skill practice, reassessment	N/A	Reapplication, continuing education
Examples	ServSafe Food Handler, Green Manufacturing Specialist, Certificate in Business Administration	Certified Welder, Certified Logistics Technician, Certified International Information Systems Security Professional	Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, Doctorate	Registered Nurse, Cosmetologist, Master Plumber

More Information

Iowa Department of Education: educate.iowa.gov/higher-ed/cte/irc
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Approved Industry-Recognized Credentials List

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) has an application and review process to identify relevant high-quality IRCs. As part of the review process, the DE determines if the IRC aligns with [career and technical education](#) (CTE) content areas that include the following:

- Agriculture, food, and natural resources
- Arts, communications, and information systems
- Applied sciences, technology, engineering, and manufacturing, including transportation, distribution, logistics, architecture, and construction
- Health sciences
- Human services
- Business, finance, marketing, and management

The DE maintains an [approved IRCs list](#), and additional IRCs may be added to the list upon completion of the application and review process.

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