

Office of the Provost  
**STEARNS CENTER FOR  
 TEACHING AND LEARNING**  
 George Mason University®







**The Mason Core Instructor Certification Program (MC-ICP)** is a joint effort of Mason Core and the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, recognizing faculty who are investing their time in gaining skills and teaching expertise. **This certification particularly focuses on the strategies necessary for teaching non-majors and ensuring student success as part of Mason Core.**

With a blend of live workshops (in-person and on Zoom), asynchronous engagement, and individual projects, **you can work on your own timeline to earn each one of our certifications.**

***Participating in MC-ICP also allows faculty to***

- Learn about strategies, assignments, and approaches that can make their teaching in a general education course more effective, engaging, and efficient
- Connect with a wider community of faculty teaching general education courses
- Document their teaching for reappointment or promotion processes

MC-ICP is open to all George Mason University instructors who have taught one or more Mason Core courses in the past two years. Instructors may complete one or multiple levels as they have time and interest. All instructors who complete the program will receive a certificate and a special email signature-file recognition icon. In addition, their academic unit leaders will be notified directly of their achievements.

  <p><b>CERTIFIED Faculty</b></p>	<p>Complete the five-hour Mason Core Certification Workshop sequence  <b>OR</b>          Complete the Mason Core Mini-Portfolio to showcase your pedagogical knowledge</p>
  <p><b>ADVANCED Faculty</b></p>	<p>Complete the Certified Level  <b>AND</b>          Complete 8-10 hours of advanced guided study about teaching Mason Core (live and asynch options) and file your brief report</p>
  <p><b>DISTINGUISHED Faculty</b></p>	<p>Complete the Certified and Advanced Levels  <b>AND THEN</b>          Propose, complete, and share an Independent Study Course Inquiry Project about teaching Mason Core (~8-10 hours)</p>



## Certified Mason Core Instructor: 5 hours

**Choose ONE Pathway**

**Workshop Pathway**, appropriate for all faculty: Take the full Certification Cluster in our one- or two-day format, or [use our survey](#) to indicate the dates that you completed the five workshops:

- Teaching Foundations
- Relevant Assignment Design (or equivalent Stearns Center *Design* workshop)
- Good Stuff (or equivalent Stearns Center *Engage* workshop)
- Grade Efficiently (or equivalent Stearns Center *Assess* workshop)
- Solving the Puzzle: Engaging Non-Majors in Mason Core Courses

**Portfolio Pathway**, appropriate for faculty with (a) at least 2-3 years' experience teaching general education courses, and (b) experience learning about college-level teaching.

To succeed with the Portfolio Pathway, you should already be able to define and explain how you apply approaches such as *backwards design*, *alignment to outcomes*, *regular and substantive interaction*, *active/collaborative learning*, *low-stakes or formative assessment*, *authentic assessment*, *inclusive teaching*, *scaffolded practice*, and/or *growth-centered feedback*.

To complete the portfolio pathway, please submit each of the following documents via our [MS Forms Survey](#). Our review team will respond before the end of the current term.

1. **Course syllabus** for one Mason Core course: Include policies, brief description of major assignments/exams, and a semester schedule of key topics and tasks
2. **MC teaching statement**: Describe 2-3 of your foundational teaching approaches and explain how they support inclusive learning for all students, and especially for non-majors (300-400 words)
3. **MC course map**: Complete a course map or guide identifying and explaining which of your assignments align with the required Mason Core Outcomes (see links for a [DOC](#) / [PDF](#) course map guide) (200-400 words)
4. **MC student engagement statement**: Provide examples of how you regularly include interactive, applied, and/or hands-on learning in your course (300-400 words)
5. **MC assessment statement**: Describe 2-3 ways that you provide productive, timely feedback to students to support their learning (300-400 words)
6. **MC transparent assignment**: A draft of one assignment for your course that uses a TILT framework ([see more information here](#)) to make purpose, tasks, and criteria visible to students



## Advanced Mason Core Instructor: 8-10 hours

- Complete the Certified Level, via the workshop path **or** the portfolio path
- Complete at least 8 hours of advanced study (synchronous/asynchronous options) about teaching Mason Core Courses
- Submit an Advanced Learning Report and annotated syllabus

**Advanced Study Options:** *Choose ONE Stearns Center Offering.* See [Events Calendar](#) for upcoming options

- Project-Based Learning Bootcamp focusing on a Mason Core Course
- Teaching with Writing in the Disciplines Seminar
- Teaching with Generative AI Seminar focusing on a Mason Core Course
- Mason Core Category Assessment sequence: Participate as an artifact rater
- Course ReDesign Academy focusing on a Mason Core Course
- Other options TBA

**Advanced Learning Report:** Submit both documents [to our online form](#).

- In 500-700 words, explain how your advanced study experience connects to 3 areas of your Mason Core Course. You could explain
  - One or more elements of your Mason Core course or your instruction which **already matched** a key concept from your advanced study: How do you now better understand its value in supporting student learning in Mason Core?
  - One or more elements of your Mason Core course or your instruction that **you have changed** or are planning to change as a result of your advanced study: How will your changes better support student learning in Mason Core?
  - One or more elements of your Mason Core course that you think **need(s) improvement** based on what you learned through advanced study: What might be involved in the change, how could that improve student learning in Mason Core, and what people, policies, or resources might be needed to effect this change?
- Attach an annotated syllabus:
  - Your Mason Core course syllabus should include policies, brief descriptions of major assignments/exams, and a semester schedule of key topics and tasks
  - Include 5-7 brief annotations that help the review team see how/where the course intersects with the advanced learning you document in your report



## Distinguished Mason Core Instructor: 8-10 hours

- Complete the Certified Level, via the workshop path or the portfolio pathway
- Complete the Advanced Level, through study and an approved report
- Design and complete your **Mason Core Course Project**. This is expected to be a **small and relevant** independent study project that relates directly to an approach you're using to build student success in your Mason Core class(es): assignment design, course activities, feedback approaches, student engagement strategies, metacognition, inclusive teaching, relationship-building, etc. You will need to pose a question, gather some data from your course (student work, surveys, other artifacts), and provide an initial informal report. You have the option—but not a requirement—of seeking IRB permission if you want to pursue this inquiry as part of a larger research project. You can work individually or collaboratively with other faculty.
  - Attend a Project Orientation workshop (starting Fall 2025): 1 hour
  - Submit a Project Proposal (500-700 words): ~1-2 hours
    - What is a key teaching approach/strategy that supports Mason Core student learning that you implementing this term and want to focus on?
    - What question(s) is/are important for you to explore right now? How will this knowledge help you improve student learning?
    - What is your timeline for relevant activities/assignments?
    - What kind of student data (surveys, assignments, etc.) will you gather to understand how the instruction is going?
  - Collect data and submit a draft Project Report (700-1000 words) for peer and facilitator review: ~4-6 hours
  - Attend a Project Conclusion Workshop and submit your final Project Report: ~1-2 hours