



The REAL Certificate FALL 2025 Application and Admissions Process

The **R**aising **E**xpectations for **A**cademic **L**earning or REAL Certificate offers students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities the opportunity to participate in a post-secondary academic-, vocational- and social inclusion-focused program. Applicants will have received extensive special education services in their secondary schools and are not able to access college by meeting typical entrance criteria. The REAL certificate is a two year program that requires four (4) full semesters of study. Students in the REAL Certificate audit traditional undergraduate courses and participate in inclusive vocational and social experiences. Students have the option to live on campus or commute. An individual plan for college participation is developed for each student. Students must follow the University Code of Conduct and the REAL Certificate does not have the personnel to (1) supervise students with difficult and challenging behaviors; (2) dispense medications or (3) provide personal assistants.

The REAL Certificate is **NOT** an accredited college degree program and graduating students will receive a certificate of completion.

The REAL Certificate is a Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Eligible students are therefore able to [apply](#) for certain types of federal aid. See the *Student With Intellectual Disabilities* eligibility section of the Federal Student Aid website (studentaid.ed.gov) for further information. Consolidated or Person/Family Directed Supports (PFDS) waiver and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation funding may be used to pay for the REAL Certificate program.

If you need additional information or have questions about the application, please contact:

Jessica Mattis, REAL Certificate Director

real@arcadia.edu

REAL Certificate Eligibility Criteria:

Upon application, it is expected that students will demonstrate the following minimal requirements:

- Be between the ages of 18-26 at the start of the program.
- Provide documentation of intellectual and/ or developmental disability.
- Demonstrate active participation throughout the application/interview process.
- Express desire and motivation to complete a postsecondary education program.
- Have proof of eligibility for IDEA while in school (i.e., the student had an IEP).
- Demonstrate ability to communicate with staff, faculty, and mentors.
- Have the ability to function independently for a sustained period of time (i.e., able to sit through a 90 minute course, be independent in social settings on campus, and navigate campus independently).
- Have sufficient emotional stability and independent living skills to participate in all aspects of the REAL Certificate program and campus environment.
- Be able to handle and adapt to change; not overly stressed when schedules or people change.
- Express desire to be part of the workforce
- Be able to provide transportation to and from campus
- Have proof of health insurance (Medicaid, Medicare, private).
- Be able to follow the University Code of Conduct and to behave respectfully towards others

Due to space limitations, not all applicants who complete the application and meet the criteria for admission will be accepted in the REAL Certificate.

Application Process

Important Dates

January 6, 2025: Priority Consideration Application Deadline

February 15, 2025: Regular Decision Application Deadline

Rolling Admission (if space allows) continues through May 15, 2025

May/June, 2025: Enrolled students and families participate in Person-Centered Planning

August 20, 2025: Fall Orientation Begins

Application Process

To apply for the Fall semester, complete and submit the application, supporting documents, and teacher reference form. After submitting the required application packet, students may be invited to participate in an interview. Following the interviews, the application screening committee will review all of the applications and select students for admission. The decision to offer or deny admission to the program will be made by the admissions committee in their best judgment and in the best interest of the applicant.

Please do not call about the status of your application, as we will not be able to provide this information for you over the phone. You will receive an email notifying you of the status of your application. Since a limited number of applicants will be admitted each year, interested candidates are welcome to re-apply the following year.

Application Packet

Part 1: Application	Part 2: Supporting Documents	Part 3: Teacher Reference Form
-Contact Information -Program Information -Detailed Personal Information -Mailing Address -Demographics -Family -Education Details -Extracurricular Activities -Short Answer Questions	-High School Transcript -Most recent IEP -Educational evaluation conducted within the past 3 years, such as. <ul style="list-style-type: none">● School re-evaluation● Woodcock Johnson● PIAT● KTEA	-Use the REAL Certificate Reference form to ask for a recommendation from one of your teachers (Printable PDF or online form available)



Fall 2025 REAL Certificate Application

Contact Information

Legal First Name: _____ Legal Middle Name: _____

Legal Last Name: _____ Former name(s): _____

Different first name that you go by: _____
Email Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____ Mobile Phone Number: _____

Preferred Phone- please select: Home Mobile

Program Information

The REAL Certificate is a program for students with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental disabilities who are motivated to complete a post-secondary education program and join the workforce after graduation.

Please write your name and initial here to confirm that you meet the program entrance requirements listed on page 2 _____

Students in the REAL Certificate are required to take Foundations in College Writing and a First Year Seminar Course. After the first semester, students enroll in any 100 and 200 level courses across the university. Some students in the program choose to focus on one area of study while others explore courses in a number of different departments. Some examples of the types of classes students have taken include Criminal Justice, Art, Education, Psychology, etc.

Please list three areas you are interested in studying:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Students in the REAL Certificate have the option to reside in on-campus housing or to commute to campus daily:

Please select if you plan to be a residential or commuter student.

Residential Commuter

Transportation services are NOT provided by the university. If you plan to commute, what is your transportation plan?

Detailed Personal Information

Date of Birth: _____ (Students must be between 18-26 at the start of the program)

Gender: Female Male Nonbinary Another gender

Legal sex: Female Male X or another legal sex

Pronouns: She/her He/him They/them Other pronouns

Citizenship status: U.S. citizen or U.S. national U.S. dual citizen
 U.S. Permanent resident U.S. refugee or asylee
 Citizen of non-U.S. Country
 DACA, undocumented, Deferred Enforced Departure, or Temporary Protected Status

Are you the first member of your family to attend college? Please select... Yes No

Which disabilities do you have? Circle all that apply.

Intellectual disability	Speech or language impairment
Autism	Developmental disability
Orthopedic impairment	Emotional disturbance
Deaf-blindness	Traumatic Brain Injury
Other health impairment	Hearing Impairment
Deafness	Visual Impairment, including blindness
Specific learning disability	Other; please specify: _____

Which types of benefits do you receive? Select all that apply.

	None
	Consolidated or Person/Family Directed Supports (PFDS) Waiver
	SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
	SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)
	Unemployment Insurance
	TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families)
	OVR

Which of the following best describes the curriculum and educational setting you experienced in high school? Select one.

	Fully included in general education curriculum in general education classes
	Student spends the majority of classes in general education.
	Student spent half of their time in general education and half of their time in special education.
	Student spends the majority of classes in special education.
	Not included in general education curriculum or classes/ only in special education classes (e.g. life skills).
	Other; please specify:

What, if any, type of statewide assessment did you take while in high school? Choose one.

	Regular with or without accommodations
	Alternate
	Waived
	None
	Other; please specify:

Do you have a legal conservator or guardian? Yes No

If yes, please indicate who: _____

Permanent Mailing Address

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Country: _____

Family

Parent/Family member:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship- Please circle. Parent Family Member

Parent/Family member:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship- Please circle. Parent Family Member

Do you have a sibling, parent, grandparent, great grandparent that is attending or has graduated from Arcadia? Yes No

Are you related to a University employee? Yes No

Education Details

High School Name: _____

School Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Did you graduate high school more than 5 years ago? Yes No

Did you, or will you, graduate from this school? Yes No

Attended Start Date: _____ Attended End Date: _____

Have you attended another college or university? Yes No

Extracurricular Activities

Please share some activities that you participated in at your school or in your community. Activities can involve clubs, sport teams, volunteer events and paid employment.

Activity 1: _____

Describe the activity and your involvement:

I intend to participate in a similar activity in College Yes No

Activity 2: _____

Describe the activity and your involvement:

I intend to participate in a similar activity in College Yes No

Activity 3: _____

Describe the activity and your involvement:

I intend to participate in a similar activity in College Yes No

If you would like to include additional activities, please submit the information on another sheet or paper or include your resume.

Short Answer Questions

Please answer ALL of the following questions so that we can learn more about you and why you would like to be part of the REAL Certificate. *Each answer must be 250 words or less.*

1. Why are you interested in attending Arcadia University?
2. Describe your academic strengths and challenges and how you learn best.
3. Describe your work/volunteer experiences and your long-term career goals.
4. Please share any additional medical, psychiatric, behavior, and/or physical conditions that may affect your participation in the classroom, social or vocational activities on campus. Describe accommodations or supports that have been helpful in educational and/or work settings.

Disclosures

Non-Discrimination Statement

Arcadia University is committed to ensuring equal opportunity to all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, race, color, religion, creed, sex, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, gender identity or expression, military or military veteran status, disability, medical or genetic information, pregnancy, or any other characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law in its educational programs, activities, admissions or employment practices as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other applicable statutes. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, including sexual harassment, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University's educational mission, and will not be tolerated.

The Director of the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) and Title IX Coordinator oversees the University's centralized review, investigation, and resolution of reports of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment, and bias incidents. The Director of the OECR and Title IX Coordinator can be contacted by telephone at 215-517-2659 or email at oeocr@arcadia.edu. For further information, including the University's relevant policies and grievance procedures and processes, please visit Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

Fingerprinting and Background Check

Prospective students are advised that some internship placement sites require students to submit to fingerprinting and criminal background checks and receive appropriate clearances before they will be permitted to participate in internship programs at those institutions. Students who do not submit to fingerprinting and/or do not receive appropriate clearance may be unable to fulfill their academic requirements at Arcadia University, and therefore may not be able to complete their educational program. Unless otherwise paid for by the internship site, students will be required to bear the expense of such screening. Arcadia University does not pay for or reimburse for the expenses related to background checking or fingerprint clearance.

Questions regarding fingerprinting, background checking, and criminal convictions may be referred to the Office of the General Counsel at Arcadia University.

Harassment

Arcadia University also affirms every individual's right to an environment that is free from harassment of any kind. The University will not tolerate the subjection of another person, group or class of persons to inappropriate, abusive, threatening or demeaning actions at any time.

Mandatory Reporting

Under the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (23 Pa.C.S.6301 et seq), Enrollment Management staff, as school employees, are mandated reporters. As such, staff are required to make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.

Use of Specific Information

A disciplinary matter or criminal conviction, occurring prior to the time of application, while the application is under review, or after the admission decision has been made, may affect admission, enrollment or participation in academic, athletic or campus life activities. Arcadia University reserves the right to revoke admission or limit participation in such circumstances. Also, because offers of admission and enrollment are based upon a record of academic achievement, Arcadia reserves the right to revoke admission upon receipt of a final high school transcript (or most recent college transcript) reflecting a significant decline in academic performance. Additionally, if an application misrepresents any information, for any reason, admission or enrollment may be revoked at the University's discretion. Finally, admission to the University does not guarantee placement in campus housing or participation in student teaching placements, internships, or clinical rotations, which may be subject to additional policies or practices. Questions regarding the impact of a prior conviction in any of the aforementioned can be directed to admiss@arcadia.edu.

Communications from Arcadia

By submitting this form, you agree that Arcadia may communicate with you at the phone number and email address you provide. For more information, please see Arcadia's Privacy Policy.

I have read and understand the above disclosure statements.

Yes

No

Letter of Recommendation

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, you have the right to review letters of recommendation after you enroll in the university, unless you waive your right to access them. Waiving your right lets recommenders know you will never see the recommendation and may lead to a more candid and truthful recommendation. If you choose not to waive your right, some recommenders may decline your request.

Please select if you waiver your rights to review the letter of recommendation.

A yes response means you waive your rights. A no response means you do not waive your rights.

Yes

No

Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at any educational institution you have attended from the 9th grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action?

Yes

No

I understand that withholding information requested in this application or giving false information will make me ineligible for admission to, or continuation in, the REAL Certificate of Arcadia University. I furthermore pledge to submit any future changes, including those related to grades or discipline issues, to the REAL Certificate office and understand that an offer of admission may be rescinded based upon updated information. I certify that the information given is correct and complete.

I have read, I understand, and I agree to the above statement.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

You have now finished Step 1 of the application process. Please remember that in order for your application to be complete, all required supporting documents and the Teacher Reference Form must also be submitted.
