

Revised 4/13/2026

Illinois Tech Reduced Credit Bachelor's Degree Proposal

Reduced Credit Bachelor's Degree Proposal

The following document outlines a proposal to offer reduced credit bachelor's degrees. Such degrees would require a minimum of 90 credits and be designed to be completed in 3 years, rather than the traditional 4. The first of these degrees in the U.S. were launched in 2023 [[source](#)]. Degrees of this nature have recently been approved by HLC [see [HLC policy](#)] and other accrediting bodies, and offer an exciting opportunity to reach more students through relevant education.

Summary Proposal

Reduced credit bachelor's degrees are degrees intended to be completed in 3 years, rather than the traditional 4. They must: consist of a minimum of 90 credit hours; meet all standard university core curriculum requirements; meet all accreditation requirements; undergo regular and rigorous assessment. The requirement that the final 45 credits of a degree be completed at Illinois Tech applies to accelerated programs. Additionally, they must clearly be designated as reduced credit degrees and named such to distinguish them from the 4-year B.S. in all communications.

Reduced-credit bachelor's degrees must not be offered in areas where such reduction would undermine students' ability to meet licensure or other professional requirements.

Mission Alignment and Alignment to HLC Criteria

Reduced credit Bachelor's degrees have a clear alignment to the university's longstanding mission and current strategic priorities. Additionally, we are well situated to launch such degrees in a way that meets HLC accreditation criteria.

Criterion 1 Mission Alignment

Illinois Institute of Technology has as its central mission "To provide distinctive and relevant education in an environment of scientific, technological, and professional knowledge creation and innovation." Further, the university has as its founding purpose the provision of quality education to students of all backgrounds and preparing our students for meaningful roles in a changing industrial society. Offering a reduced credit, 3-year bachelor's program for students aligns with this mission by making education more affordable and accessible while retaining our academic rigor and focus on career readiness. In areas like medicine, where advanced professional study is required, the traditional 4-year degree can delay career entry and, due to limitations on available educational funding [[source](#)], limit access to these professions. Given shortages in key medical professions, this is a concern not only for individuals who wish to enter these careers, but also for the nation.

Criterion 2 Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

Illinois Tech will ensure that reduced credit programs are described transparently on all university materials. The reduced credit bachelor's degree programs will be clearly labeled as reduced credit programs (for example: "Bachelors of Science (B.S.) in Biology" is the name of a traditional 4-year program while "Bachelors in Health Science (B.H.S.)" would be the name of a 3-year program).

Messaging will make clear that these reduced credit degrees are tailored for those with a more focused professional interest, and students in these programs are less likely to have significant free electives or the capacity for a minor. These degrees serve students eager to complete their education and join the workforce or pursue further professional training while meeting the same rigorous academic standards we apply to all our degrees.

All students, on either the traditional or reduced credit degree pathway, will have the same admission standards, complete the same core curriculum requirements, and have access to the same university supports and resources. This is central to establishing and maintaining the rigor of all bachelor's degrees on campus, both standard and reduced credit.

Messaging will make clear that the reduced credit option is for those students focused on professional pathways. Because students meet the same admission standards, students who initially matriculate into the 3-year program will have the ability to convert to the standard program if they decide to do so.

The majority of programs for which this is appropriate are those that do not require licensure, and in the event a program in a licensure-based field considers developing a reduced credit bachelor's, the approval process will include review of any possible licensure issues for students.

Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning for Student Success

Reduced credit programs must go through the standard program review and assessment processes that are used for all degrees on campus. Proposals are reviewed by the relevant academic unit(s), department chair(s), and dean(s) as well as the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the broader faculty council.

The first 5 years of any reduced credit degree are considered a pilot period, during which the program must be assessed at least twice. At the end of 5 years, the program can either be sunset or made permanent, based on the recommendations of the program faculty, faculty governance, and other stakeholders.

If concerns are raised on an initial evaluation, and the program does not show improvement at a second evaluation, the program should be placed on probationary status; if a third evaluation shows improvement, it may be taken off this status, but if there is no improvement, the program must be sunset.

Reduced credit program proposals must have distinct and explicitly defined learning outcomes. Reduced credit and traditional programs in similar areas maybe be assessed on a similar cycle but must have distinct processes (ie, artifacts for the two programs should not be combined).

Any major, including one offered as part of a reduced bachelor's program, must have at least 33 credit hours in the major. Further, any bachelor's degree program must meet the core curriculum standards, regardless of whether that degree is traditional or reduced credit.

Criterion 4 Sustainability, Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The Undergraduate Studies Committee, University Faculty Council, and general faculty body will all be consulted to refine and review the reduced credit bachelor's degree proposal(s). They will be revised based on feedback at each stage, pursuant to standard faculty review policies, and a two town hall will be convened to discuss this proposal prior to full faculty review.

Illinois Tech is currently undergoing a strategic planning process, with a focus in part on meeting more learners where they are. To date, we have pursued this through strategic partnerships with online education vendors and with international partner institutions and campuses, including, notably, a campus in India. Reduced credit bachelor's degrees align clearly with this strategic goal and will make the university more accessible for our diverse student body, particularly our large population of first-generation college students and returning students.

Many of the degrees we offer feed into professions where experience and education are equally valued; providing opportunities for students to more efficiently complete a rigorous degree will serve students in these fields well, enabling them to enter the workforce more quickly or, if returning, to complete their degrees with a level of focus appropriate to their professional expertise and ambitions. Reduced credit bachelor's degrees are a logical extension of the university's strategy and our goal to meet learners where they are and to serve students of all backgrounds.