

From: [Smith, Randy](#)
To: [Johnston, Renee](#); [Osborne, Jeanne](#)
Cc: [Sutherland, Sue](#); [Smith, Randy](#); [Griffiths, Rob](#); [Reed, Katie](#); [Duffy, Lisa](#); [Hunt, Ryan](#); [Pintor, Lauren](#); [Wilson, Robyn](#); [Washburn, Shannon](#)
Subject: Proposal to establish a Category 1b Undergraduate Academic Certificate in Environmental Assessment
Date: Friday, July 24, 2026 12:01:13 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Renee and Jeanne,

The proposal from the School of Environment and Natural Resources to establish a Category 1b Undergraduate Academic Certificate in Environmental Assessment was approved by the Council on Academic Affairs at its meeting on July 23, 2026. Thank you for attending the meeting to respond to questions/comments.

No additional level of internal review/approval is necessary. This action will be included in the Council's next Annual Activities Report to the University Senate (July 2026).

The Office of the University Registrar will work you with any implementation issues.

Please keep a copy of this message for your file on the proposal and I will do the same for the file in the Office of Academic Affairs.

If you have any questions please contact the Chair of the Council, Professor Sue Sutherland (.43), or me.

Randy



W. Randy Smith, Ph.D.

Vice Provost for Academic Programs

Office of Academic Affairs

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Assisted by:

Katie Reed

Executive Assistant

(614) 292-5672

From: [Osborne, Jeanne](#)
To: [Smith, Randy](#)
Cc: [Reed, Katie](#); [Violet, Cynthia](#); [Fries, Sara](#); [Pintor, Lauren](#); [Walter, Cheryl](#); [Johnston, Renee](#); [Lewandowski, Monica](#)
Subject: Category 1B Certificate: "Environmental Assessment"
Date: Monday, April 20, 2026 1:53:54 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[UG Environmental Assessment Certificate Final.pdf](#)

Dear Dr. Smith,

The College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Science (CFAES) is requesting Council on Academic Affairs approval of the attached proposal for a Category 1B Undergraduate Academic Certificate in 'Environmental Assessment', proposed by the School of Environment and Natural Sciences and to mirror the existing graduate certificate of the same name.

The proposed embedded certificate will provide students are interested in adding a focus in environmental assessment at the UG level the opportunity to obtain a credential that reflects this focus.

This Certificate Type 1B proposal was approved by the Academic Affairs Committee of the School of Environment and Natural Resources as well as the CFAES Committee on Academic Affairs.

Please let me know if any additional information is needed in support of this request.

Thank you,

Jeanne



Jeanne M. Osborne

Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
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'Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly, and most underrated agent of human change' (Bob Kerrey)

Check out KINDNESS AT OHIO STATE at <http://kind.osu.edu>!

Undergraduate Environmental Assessment Certificate

Attached is a proposal from the School of Environment and Natural Resources to establish an undergraduate certificate (Type 1b: Undergraduate Embedded Certificate) in Environmental Assessment (EA).

This proposed certificate has been reviewed and approved by the SENR Academic Affairs Committee.

Required Information

Name of Proposed Certificate: **Environmental Assessment Certificate**
Certificate Type: 1b:

Post-secondary undergraduate academic certificate: Embedded Certificate.
Intended for post-high school diploma students who wish to earn an academic certificate by completing courses with undergraduate academic credit in this topic area.

Delivery: Hybrid. All but one of the courses will be completed 100% online.

Proposed Implementation Date: Autumn 2026

Academic Unit Responsible: School of Environment and Natural Resources

Rationale

Ohio State University calls for teaching and learning that address the complexities of sustainability through multiple formats and disciplinary perspectives, which this certificate fulfills by integrating law, science, policy, and social dynamics into a practice-based curriculum. This certificate will train students to evaluate environmental impacts, incorporate social and cultural considerations, and propose strategies that support environmental protection and community wellbeing. Environmental assessment expertise is highly sought after across a wide range of career sectors. Graduates will be able to navigate the intersection of environmental science, law, and community values in Ohio and beyond.

Likely Sources of Demand and Student Enrollment

This certificate will appeal to students enrolled in all five majors within SENR and is appropriate for anyone interested in working toward addressing some of the world's most pressing environmental issues. Due to allowable overlap, Environmental Policy and Environment, Economy, Development, and Sustainability majors can complete the EA certificate with only two additional courses beyond what is required for their degree. This certificate will be well-supported by the SENR advising staff who will be able to articulate its professional relevance to all SENR students as well as to those interested students from outside of SENR. We believe that this certificate will attract students across various majors within the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Public Health,

and the John Glenn College of Public Affairs, among others.

Three of the four required courses are offered asynchronously online: ENR 5210, ENR 5211, and RURLSOC 5580. Demand for these courses is robust and steady. Their modality ensures scheduling flexibility free from conflicts. ENR 4400 is currently offered in-person, once per year. Enrollment in this course is steady as it is required across multiple ENR majors. Demand for this course is projected to remain steady, if not increase. We do not foresee any issues with course availability or interruption to their regular pattern of offering.

There are no undergraduate-level minor or certificate programs at Ohio State that focus on training in environmental assessment or that do so in one cohesive credential. This certificate will fill a need and better prepare students for careers as environmental scientists, policymakers, engineers, public health experts, lawyers, ecologists, sustainability specialists, and educators, among others.

Certificate Goals and Learning Outcomes

In teaching the fundamentals of environmental impact assessment, this certificate prepares students to address today's most critical environmental management and conservation challenges, such as biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Students will learn how to assess the environmental impact and consequences of a plan, policy, or program before moving forward with the proposed action. Those completing the certificate will be equipped with specialized knowledge to build competency and increase their employability in governmental agencies, consulting firms, civil society organizations, and multinational corporations.

The certificate curriculum will provide students with the skills they need to:

Goal 1: Develop foundational knowledge of environmental assessment frameworks

Students will understand legal, institutional, and procedural foundations of environmental assessment in U.S. and global contexts.

Goal 1 Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Explain key elements of U.S. environmental law, permitting, and administrative process as they relate to impact assessment (ENR 4400).
2. Describe the purposes, principles, and statutory requirements of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in the U.S. (ENR 5210).
3. Compare international EIA and SIA systems, including legal frameworks, institutional roles, and cultural contexts across settings (all courses).

Goal 2: Apply assessment methods to environmental decisions

Students will develop competence in analyzing, preparing, and critiquing environmental assessment processes and documentation.

Goal 2 Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Identify typical stages of environmental assessment processes and their application to real-world projects. (ENR 5210; ENR 5211)
2. Evaluate case studies of environmental impact assessments to identify strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes across a variety of dimensions. (ENR 5210; ENR 5211)
3. Create assessment strategies that balance environmental protection, legal compliance, and social wellbeing (All courses)

Goal 3: Integrate social and cultural dimensions into environmental assessment

Students will gain an understanding of how environmental assessment intersects with community and stakeholder values.

Goal 3 Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze how social, cultural, and community dynamics shape and are affected by environmental assessment processes. (RURLSOC 5580; ENR 5211)
2. Apply social assessment tools to interpret the distributional and equity implications of proposed policies or projects. (RURLSOC 5580)
3. Show ability to incorporate cross-cultural norms into assessment (ENR 5211 & RURLSOC 5580)

Requirements

Credit hours required: 12 credit hours

Overlap with degree program: 50% maximum overlap with degree program (including major, minor, other certificate, or GE)

Grades required: a grade of C or better is required in all courses; a minimum of 2.0 cumulative point-hour ratio is required.

Relationship to Other Programs at the University

While there are other minors or certificate programs at the university that analyze how interactions between human and natural systems impact and shape environmental policy and practice, there is no program that focuses on the breadth of environmental assessment training and practice as outlined in this curriculum. SENR currently offers a graduate-level environmental assessment certificate program; this curriculum aims to expand access to this critical training opportunity to the undergraduate student population.

Curriculum

Required credit hours: 12. All courses except ENR 4400 can be completed entirely online.

- ENR 4400: Law and Legal Process (3 cr.) – Spring offering
- ENR 5210: US Environmental Impact Assessment (3 cr.) (prereq: Jr., Sr., or Grad standing) – Autumn offering
- ENR 5211: International Environmental Impact Assessment (3 cr.) (prereq: Jr., Sr., or Grad standing) – Spring offering
- RURLSOC 5580: Social Impact Assessment (3 cr.) (prereq: Jr., Sr., or Grad standing) – Autumn and Spring offering

Minimum Requirements for Admittance

Ohio State undergraduate students in good academic standing may pursue this certificate. No prerequisite coursework is required to begin taking courses. Students must meet with the Environmental Assessment Certificate Coordinator to declare.

Administrative Program

The certificate will be housed in SENR. A staff member on the SENR undergraduate academic team will provide advising support and serve as the EA Certificate Coordinator and advising contact.

The SENR Environmental Social Science (ESS) Faculty Group will provide curricular and administrative oversight.

Assessment

1) Students are required to complete all courses in this certificate program with a minimum grade of C or above. Courses for which a C- is earned will not apply.

2) The Final Project for RURLSOC 5580: Social Impact Assessment offers students an opportunity to research a real-world development or policy, design a study using course concepts to assess its social impacts (including impact categories, indicators, and methods), analyze likely findings based on background or secondary data, and propose appropriate monitoring and mitigation strategies. A random selection of 5-10 student projects will be reviewed by an oversight committee within the ESS Faculty Group annually. The committee will review and assess student learning and provide curricular suggestions for the course and for the curriculum, with ideas for additional courses to consider depending on material or concepts that may be more or less well represented in student reports.

3) The certificate coordinator will maintain an alumni database to track career outcomes. A survey will be administered to program alumni within one year of graduation that will assist with compiling data on career outcomes and readiness. Focus groups will be held periodically with students in their final semester of study as an additional method of gathering information and student reflections on their certificate coursework and overall experiences.

Appendix A – Advising Sheet

The Ohio State University
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences | School of Environment and Natural Resources

Environmental Assessment Certificate, Type 1b

Advising Contact:

Cheryl Walter, SENR Undergraduate Academic Advising Manager,
walter.266@osu.edu, 614-292-2265

Faculty Contact:

Dr. Nicole Sintov, Associate Professor of Behavior, Decision Making, and Sustainability, SENR, sintov.2@osu.edu, 614-292-2265

This certificate prepares students to address today's most critical environmental management and conservation challenges, such as biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Students will learn how to assess the environmental impact and consequences of a plan, policy, or program before moving forward with the proposed action. Those completing the certificate will be equipped with specialized knowledge to build competency and increase their employability in governmental agencies, consulting firms, civil society organizations, and multinational corporations.

Pre-requisites: None

Required credit hours: 12. Students are required to complete the following four courses:

- ENR 4400: Law and Legal Process (3 cr.) – Spring offering
- ENR 5210: US Environmental Impact Assessment (3 cr.) (prereq: Jr., Sr., or Grad standing) – Autumn offering
- ENR 5211: International Environmental Impact Assessment (3 cr.) (prereq: Jr., Sr., or Grad standing) – Spring offering
- RURLSOC 5580: Social Impact Assessment (3 cr.) (prereq: Jr., Sr., or Grad standing) – Autumn and Spring offering

Overlap with degree program: A student is permitted to overlap up to 50% of the credit hours with other degree requirements (major, minor, or other certificates)

Grades required:

- A minimum grade of C is required for the course to apply toward the certificate
- A minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA for all certificate coursework

- Course work graded pass/non-pass cannot count in the certificate
- No more than 3 credit-hours of course work graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory may count toward the certificate
- No more than 3 credit hours of xx93 coursework may count toward the certificate

Certificate approval

The certificate can be certified in Buckeye Degree Planner by the student's assigned academic advisor. If the certificate is not complete on the audit, the student must meet with the EA Certificate Coordinator (advising) for approval.

Appendix B: Sample program for completion in two years

Year 1:

Autumn:	Spring:
RURLSOC 5580 (3)	ENR 4400 (3)

Year 2

Autumn	Spring
ENR 5210 (3)	ENR 5211 (3)

This certificate can also be completed in a minimum of **two semesters** for those students who have enough overall credit-hour flexibility to take multiple EA courses per term:

Autumn:	Spring:
RURLSOC 5580 (3)	ENR 4400 (3)
ENR 5210 (3)	ENR 5211 (3)

Appendix C: Course List

ENR 4400 Law and Legal Process (3 cr.) - Introduction to American law and legal process. Addresses law, science, and administrative process esp. in regard to planning and management of land, natural resources, and the environment; examines related cases, statutes, rules, permits. Prereq: Not open to students with credit for 694.

ENR 5210 (3 cr.) US Environmental Impact Assessment (3 cr.) - Study of impact of human activity in natural resources through evaluation of environmental impact. Prereq: Jr, Sr, or Grad standing.

ENR 5211 (3 cr.) International Environmental Impact Assessment (3 cr.) - Fundamental concepts of international environmental impact assessment including the legal and institutional frameworks, practice and performance, and social and cultural contexts that shape EIA's implementation worldwide. Prereq: Jr, Sr, or Grad standing, or permission of instructor.

RURLSOC 5580 (3 cr.) This course provides students with a broad understanding of the fundamental history, concepts, methods, and theories of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) as part of environmental policy and regulation in both US and International contexts. Students are exposed, via scholarly articles, case studies and projects, to existing SIAs from across the US and the world and how quality SIAs are performed. Prereq: Jr, Sr, or Grad standing, or permission of instructor.

Appendix D: Assessment Rubric

Expected learning outcomes	Baseline	Advanced	Mastery
Understand legal, institutional, and procedural foundations of environmental assessment in U.S. and global contexts	Demonstrates basic understanding of legal, institutional, or procedural foundations of environmental assessment in U.S. and/or global contexts; may explain concepts superficially	Demonstrates clear understanding of legal, institutional, and procedural foundations of environmental assessment in both U.S. and global contexts; can explain concepts clearly and accurately	Consistently demonstrates deep understanding of legal, institutional, and procedural foundations of environmental assessment in U.S. and global contexts; can explain concepts in great detail
Develop competence in analyzing, preparing, and critiquing environmental assessment processes and documentation	Demonstrates basic ability to analyze, prepare, and critique environmental assessment process and documents; critiques may be superficial; may have limited ability to interpret results	Demonstrates clear ability to analyze, prepare, and critique environmental assessment process and documents; critiques are accurate; interprets data to make informed recommendations	Demonstrates expertise in analyzing, preparing, and critiquing environmental assessment process and documents; critiques are accurate and insightful; synthesizes data to provide insightful recommendations
Gain an understanding of how environmental assessment intersects with community and stakeholder values	Demonstrates basic understanding of how environmental assessment intersects with community and stakeholder values; may explain concepts superficially	Demonstrates clear understanding of how environmental assessment intersects with community and stakeholder values; can explain concepts clearly and accurately	Demonstrates expertise in how environmental assessment intersects with community and stakeholder values; can explain concepts in great detail

From: [Bittner, Brandi](#)
To: [Walter, Cheryl](#)
Subject: RE: Online Program Development Process
Date: Thursday, March 5, 2026 10:22:31 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi Cheryl,

Thanks for the additional information. We don't typically support an embedded certificate like this because you're going to get students already at Ohio State. Therefore, you're all set to proceed without an MOU.

Thanks,

Brandi

Asst. Vice Provost, Online Enrollment + PCE

Ohio State Online

From: Walter, Cheryl <walter.266@osu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, March 5, 2026 8:54 AM
To: Bittner, Brandi <bittner.102@osu.edu>
Subject: RE: Online Program Development Process

Hi Brandi,

Thank you so much for your reply and assistance. The intention is to make this certificate program available to any Ohio State student pursuing an undergraduate degree program. It would require that the student be actively pursuing an OSU undergraduate degree program (but it doesn't have to specifically be our own degree program in SENR).

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information!

Take care,
 Cheryl



Cheryl Walter

Manager, Undergraduate Academic Advising

College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences School of Environment and Natural Resources

210 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210

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walter.266@osu.edu / senr.osu.edu

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Buckeyes consider the environment before printing.

From: Bittner, Brandi <bittner.102@osu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 3:22 PM
To: Walter, Cheryl <walter.266@osu.edu>
Subject: RE: Online Program Development Process

Hi Cheryl,

I'm happy to help you here. Is the intent to embed this certificate in an undergraduate program you have and only allow students in that degree program to access this certificate?

Thanks,

Brandi

Asst. Vice Provost, Online Enrollment + PCE
Ohio State Online

From: Walter, Cheryl <walter.266@osu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 11:32 AM
To: Online Enrollment <OnlineEnrollment@osu.edu>
Subject: Online Program Development Process

Good morning!

I am reaching out from the School of Environment and Natural Resources to inquire about the online program development process. We are in the process of developing an undergraduate certificate program (type 1b: undergrad embedded) that will be greater than 50% online. The certificate program is 12 credit-hours, with 3 of the 4 required courses offered entirely online. This will be an undergraduate version of our already established graduate environmental assessment certificate. Would you be willing to outline the process that we should follow in order to ensure that we have all required components established with Ohio State Online before submission of the proposal to our college curricular affairs committee?

Thank you very much for your help! Please let me know if there is any additional information that I can provide.

Take care,

Cheryl



Cheryl Walter

Manager, Undergraduate Academic Advising

College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences School of Environment and Natural Resources

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