



LINKED LEARNING GOLD CERTIFICATION™ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. What are the benefits of Gold certification to our pathway and our students?

Linked Learning Certification promotes the continuous improvement of Linked Learning pathways to provide proven high-quality integrated learning experiences and improved outcomes for all students. Gold certification represents the highest quality standard for Linked Learning pathways and brings well-deserved public recognition of the exemplary work being done by Linked Learning pathway staff, students, and partners. It also provides valuable opportunities to network with other high-quality pathway educators to share best practices and encourage a mindset of continuous learning and improvement.

Gold certified pathway educators credit Gold certification with enhancing their ability to focus on shared ambitious college and career readiness goals. They also cite Gold certification as lending credibility to their efforts, increasing district-wide support for college and career preparedness work.

2. What are the primary differences between Candidate, Silver, and Gold certification?

Certification is based on the principle of continuous learning and improvement. Each level is a snapshot of where a pathway is on the journey to continually build and strengthen the pathway and improve student outcomes. Candidate level indicates that a pathway is taking the first steps towards building a high-quality college and career pathway experience for students. Silver is demonstration that a pathway understands and has put in place the core elements of an evidence-based Linked Learning approach. Gold certification signifies the highest quality of pathway design and implementation. Students receive a rigorous, integrated learning experience combining work-based learning with college preparation in a supportive and engaging environment.

3. How do I begin the Gold certification process?

The certification process begins with a self-study to determine pathway readiness. Email the Alliance at certification@linkedlearning.org to request a self-study tool. Once you have completed the self-study and determined that you are ready to move forward, notify the Linked Learning Alliance by submitting an [application form](#), and the certification team will get you started on the path to Gold.

4. Does a pathway need to be Silver certified before it can go through Gold certification?

Yes, the Silver certification process promotes continuous learning and improvement and sets the pathway up to begin the Gold certification process. Silver certification signifies that the foundational elements of a high-quality college and career pathway are in place. It is intended to recognize and celebrate the work of the pathway team, their site and district leaders, and community partners in establishing the core Linked Learning components. Silver certification begins with a self-study and includes engaging key stakeholders and collecting and analyzing key artifacts and data about the current program.

5. How much does the Gold certification process cost?

The fee for Gold certification is \$2,500 per pathway or \$2,000 per pathway if two or more pathways from the same district apply for Gold certification at the same time. Fees are due prior to assignment of a lead reviewer. Gold certification is valid for four years, with a two-year interim reporting requirement, which involves collaborative work with the Alliance to ensure pathway quality and fidelity. The purpose of the two-year check-in is to assess progress on areas of growth identified during the initial certification review. The check-in also involves a virtual review of evidence and data in those identified areas.

6. How long does the Gold certification process take?

The full Gold certification process takes approximately 10–13 weeks from submission to certification based on the timeline below. It is possible that the timeline is shortened or lengthened depending on the needs of the pathway and/or the schedules of the participants.

- Formal submission of intent
- Self-study: 2 weeks
- Readiness to proceed and initial meeting with review leader: 1–2 weeks
- Artifact collection culminating in preliminary review: 3–4 weeks
- Preparing for site visit: 2–3 weeks
- Site visit to final report: 2 weeks

7. Where do I report progress with Gold? What if I have a different system that I prefer?

Pathways in certification use Google Drive as a repository to collect artifacts and create a narrative that communicates the high-quality work they are doing. We can provide you with templates and guidance, but if you already have a Google Drive environment set up, that's fine, too. If you use another tool, contact us about how we might use it to collaborate during the certification process.

8. Who can I contact if I have questions about the process or need support?

If you would like to talk with someone from the certification team, please send an email to certification@linkedlearning.org and we will get back to you with a response or to schedule a conversation.