National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CD) Designation Program Guidance

Jointly Sponsored by
the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security (NSA/DHS)

Eligibility

Regionally accredited two-year, four-year and graduate level institutions in the United States (US) can apply for designation as a:

- NSA/DHS National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research (CAE-R)
- NSA/DHS National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Two-Year Education (CAE2Y)
- NSA/DHS National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education (CAE-CDE)

Four-year colleges, graduate-level universities, and DoD schools can apply to be designated as both a CAE-CDE and CAE-R.

Requirements

NSA/DHS CAE-CD in Research Designation

All NSA/DHS National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research (CAE-R) applicants must be either a DoD school, a PhD producing military academy, or a regionally accredited, degree granting four-year institution rated as either a Doctoral University – Highest Research Activity (R1), Doctoral University – Higher Research Activity (R2), or Doctoral University – Moderate Research Activity (R3) as determined by the Carnegie Foundation Basic Classification system (and/or other independent body to measure CD) or provide a written justification as to significant CD research.

The CAE-R criteria include:

- Demonstration of CD Research initiatives (faculty and student), publications, graduate-level production and research funding (See CAE-CD Research Criteria)

NSA/DHS CAE-CD in Education Designations

All NSA/DHS National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Two-Year Education (CAE-2Y) and NSA/DHS National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education (CAE-CDE) applicants are encouraged to complete a CAE-2Y Applicant Checklist or CAE-CDE Applicant Checklist at https://www.caecommunity.org/cae-program-applicant-checklist. This inventory will guide the applicant through the program requirements and provide a self-assessment of readiness. After a review of the checklist, applicants will be referred to one of two assistance paths[1]:

- Institutions needing further development of programs and/or curriculum, or those with programs that have not reached maturity, will be referred to a CAE Regional Resource Center for assistance.

- Institutions assessed to be within one year of meeting curriculum and programmatic criteria will be referred to the Application Assistance path for mentorship. The CAE Program Office requires the endorsement of the mentor to process applicants that have chosen this path.

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[1] This process is conducted in collaboration with CAE Community schools, and is designed to reduce the time required to earn the designation, help new participants understand the depth and breadth of the program and designation requirements, and facilitate sharing of experience and resources between institutions already designated and aspirants

NSA/DHS CAE-CD in Education Designations (cont'd)

1. **CAE-2Y**

   All CAE-2Y applicants must be a regionally accredited two-year community college or technical school, or a U.S. Government Cybersecurity training center, or a state or federally endorsed Cybersecurity training center.

   The CAE-2Y criteria include:
   - Demonstration of program outreach and collaboration, student development, CD Center establishment and maintenance, CD multidisciplinary efforts, practice of CD at the institution level, CD faculty, and student curriculum path and recognition (See CAE-2Y Criteria)
   - Successful mapping of the institution's curriculum to the two-year Core Knowledge Unit (KUs) (See CAE-CD Knowledge Units)

2. **CAE-CDE**

   All CAE-CDE applicants must be a regionally accredited four-year college or graduate-level University, or a DoD school.

   The CAE-CDE criteria include:
   - Demonstration of program outreach and collaboration, student development, CD Center establishment and maintenance, CD multidisciplinary efforts, practice of CD at the institution level, CD faculty, and student curriculum path and recognition; (See CAE-CDE Criteria)
   - Successful mapping of the institution's curriculum to all of the two-year Core KUs, the four-year Core KUs, and five (5) Optional KUs of the institution's choice. (See CAE -CD Knowledge Units)

The National CyberWatch Center's KU Mapping Guide and the CAE KU Mapping Matrix are available to assist in gathering the course information needed to map to the CAE KU topics and outcomes. This consolidated mapping information will expedite entering course information in the CAE application website.

Expectations:

Designated schools are expected to actively participate in the CAE Community and support the CAE-CD program.

Submission of an application acknowledges the following minimum participation expectations once a school is designated:

- Submission of an Annual Report with all required information

- Attendance at the CAE Principal's Meeting and CAE Community Symposium each year

- Regular communication with the CAE Program Office, the CAE Community, and the CAE Regional Resource Center. (Responds to email, offers input and suggestions for workshops, programs, program decisions, etc.)

Submission Process

All CAE-CD applications must be completed in the CAE application website. CAE website access prerequisite:

> CAE-R: Required research rating
> CAE-2Y: Endorsement of the mentor
> CAE-CDE: Endorsement of the mentor

The application must include an uploaded pdf copy of an official letter signed by the Provost or higher confirming institutional endorsement of the intent to participate in the CAE-CD program and a statement of their CAE-CDs mission and purpose. The evidence provided for all CAE-CD program criteria must clearly demonstrate how the institution meets each of the criteria.

In addition, CAE-2Y/CAE-CDE course mapping must clearly show **where** CAE KU topics are covered within the course(s) and **how** the course instructor determines the students have met the CAE KU outcomes.

Program Evaluation:

Applications will be reviewed by a team of government personnel and peer reviewers in the order in which they are received. Notification and possible feedback will be received within 10 to 16 weeks of the application submission.

Applications containing incomplete or inadequate evidence will be rejected. A request for clarification will only be made when evidence in the application is unclear. The applicant will then have one week to provide the necessary clarification.

Application Schedule

Applications submitted between September 15th and January 15th each year will be reconciled by NLT May 1st. Successful applicants may elect to receive their certificates at a formal recognition ceremony in June or November.

Applications submitted between January 16th and May 1st each year will be reconciled by NLT October 1st. Successful applicants may elect to receive their certificates at a formal recognition in November, or the following June.

Knowledge Unit and Criteria Update Process

Anyone may propose updates to the KUs, FAs, and CAE Criteria by emailing the CAE program office at: AskCAEIAE@nsa.gov.

Current CAE-CD point of contacts can also propose, review, comment and vote on proposed updates through the CAE Community portal: https://www.caecommunity.org.

Please direct CAE-CD program questions or concerns to AskCAEIAE@nsa.gov.