Program Approval

Guidelines for Iowa Community Colleges

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Community College &
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Foreword

Dear Community College Administrator,

With the promulgation of new administrative rules this spring, it was necessary to revise the department's guidelines for community college program approval.

The program approval process is designed to ensure the quality of instructional programs and compliance with state requirements. All new career and technical programs and changes to existing programs must be approved by the department.

In Iowa, individual colleges have the primary responsibility for evaluating instructional programs and providing oversight through their own program evaluation processes. The department's program approval process supports and complements college-level planning and decision making by approving institutions' program review processes, ensuring that individual programs meet state standards, and providing technical assistance when appropriate.

Evaluation of programs ensures quality, cost-effective delivery of career and technical programs to students. This document provides an overview of the program approval process, requirements in state law, department guidelines, and other information.

Kevin Fangman

Kevin Fangman

Acting Director
Iowa Department of Education

Table of Contents

Overview 5
New Programs 6
Program Modifications 8
Program Review 9
Award Requirements 10
CTE Program Length Requirements 11
CTE Program Length Waiver Process 11
Credit Hour Requirements 13
Program Content Requirements 14
Program Articulation Requirements 15
Other CTE Program Requirements 16
CIP Numbers and Code Sets 17
Contact Us 17
Appendices (Forms)

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An Overview of Community College Program Approval

Program review and approval is an essential accountability tool by which community colleges demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of the programs and services they offer to students.

The Iowa Department of Education's community college program review and approval process recognizes that individual colleges have the primary responsibility for evaluating instructional programs and to make decisions about improvement and continuation, while maintaining state oversight and ensuring compliance with state and federal law.

Each community college wishing to initiate a new program or modify an existing program shall submit an approval request following the format provided in the guidelines. Community college programs must be approved for students to be eligible to access Title IV financial aid funds for the program.

Iowa does not utilize the same approval process for arts and sciences programs as career and technical programs. Arts and sciences (transfer) programs, generally leading to an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree, are approved as a single program and currently no additional action is required for colleges to add or modify programs. Career and technical programs leading to an Associate of Applied Science (AAS), Associate of Science (AS) (career option programs only), Diploma, and Certificate require Iowa Department of Education approval per Iowa Code Chapter 258 and 281—IAC 46.

New programs must go through a two-stage process to be initiated. The first stage is the intent process whereby a college submits a form declaring its intention to start a given new program. Once submitted, other community colleges are provided with the opportunity to raise concerns regarding duplication of programs.

Following the intent process, a formal program proposal must be submitted to the department for approval. The proposal is reviewed by department staff and approved if it meets state requirements. If issues are identified, the department provides technical assistance. The director of the department ultimately approves (or rejects) proposals for new programs.

State standards for community college career and technical programs include requirements for award and program length, the program length waiver process, determining credit hours, program content, articulation, and more.

Approved programs are reviewed at least once every five years to ensure that they are meeting state standards and effectively offered. Institutional program evaluation processes are used to make decisions about improvement and continuation and aid in college-level planning and budget development. The evaluation processes are reviewed and approved by the department through the state accreditation process and ensure programs continue to be needed, are of high quality, and are offered efficiently.

Career and technical education programs are almost continuously changing to meet the dynamic needs of the economy. Modifications to existing programs also require department approval. The process for evaluating proposed modifications is currently being streamlined to allow colleges to respond quickly to changing needs. The new process is expected to be implemented November 1, 2010. The department maintains a database of all approved programs and with detailed information submitted by colleges. With the new process, all program modifications will be submitted through a batch process as single data file. The file will be reviewed to ensure that program modifications meet state requirements.

To ensure that all required programs are approved, the department expects to reconcile the database of approved programs with actual enrollment data reported through the Community College Management Information System (MIS). Additionally, through the state accreditation process for community colleges, the department will review college catalogs to ensure alignment with the database of approved programs.

Approval Process for New Programs

When new career and technical education (CTE) programs are developed, they must be approved by the department prior to student enrollment. The department's process for approval of new CTE programs is designed to ensure that the program meets the needs of the state and is compliant with state law.

New Program Intent
The approval process for new programs begins with a college signaling its intent to offer a new program (see flowchart on Page 7). A college must submit a complete New CTE Program Intent Form to the department. Upon receipt, the notice will be forwarded to the chief academic officers of each of the state's 15 community colleges for review and identification of concerns. This step should be completed prior to submission of a new program approval proposal.

Upon receiving the program intent form, colleges may comment through submission of a Notice of Concern Form to the chair of the community college chief academic officers' group and the department. Concerns must be filed within 14 calendar days of the date the intent form was circulated. Any issue(s) raised will be referred to the chief academic officers for resolution. The goal of this process is to resolve any concerns including possible duplication or undue proliferation of programs through communication between the institutions involved. If the concern(s) is not resolved, it may be referred to the college presidents for further discussion. If the issue(s) remains unresolved, the department may accept the intent form and a program proposal may be submitted for approval.

New Program Proposal
The new program proposal entails a more thorough review and submission of a packet of materials including a New Program Proposal Form, AS-28 data set, Assurance Form, and Advisory Council Membership Form, as well as the program's standards and benchmarks, articulation agreements, and other relevant documents.

The AS-28 data set includes detailed program information including program title, CIP number, ITSO codes, credit and contact hours by course, courses by term, and other program information. The data set is loaded into the database of approved programs upon approval.

The proposal form itself gathers anticipated enrollment, labor market information demonstrating a need for the program, program content information, and other information which demonstrates the program is meeting state requirements. Proposals must include all required documentation and be submitted electronically to the department.

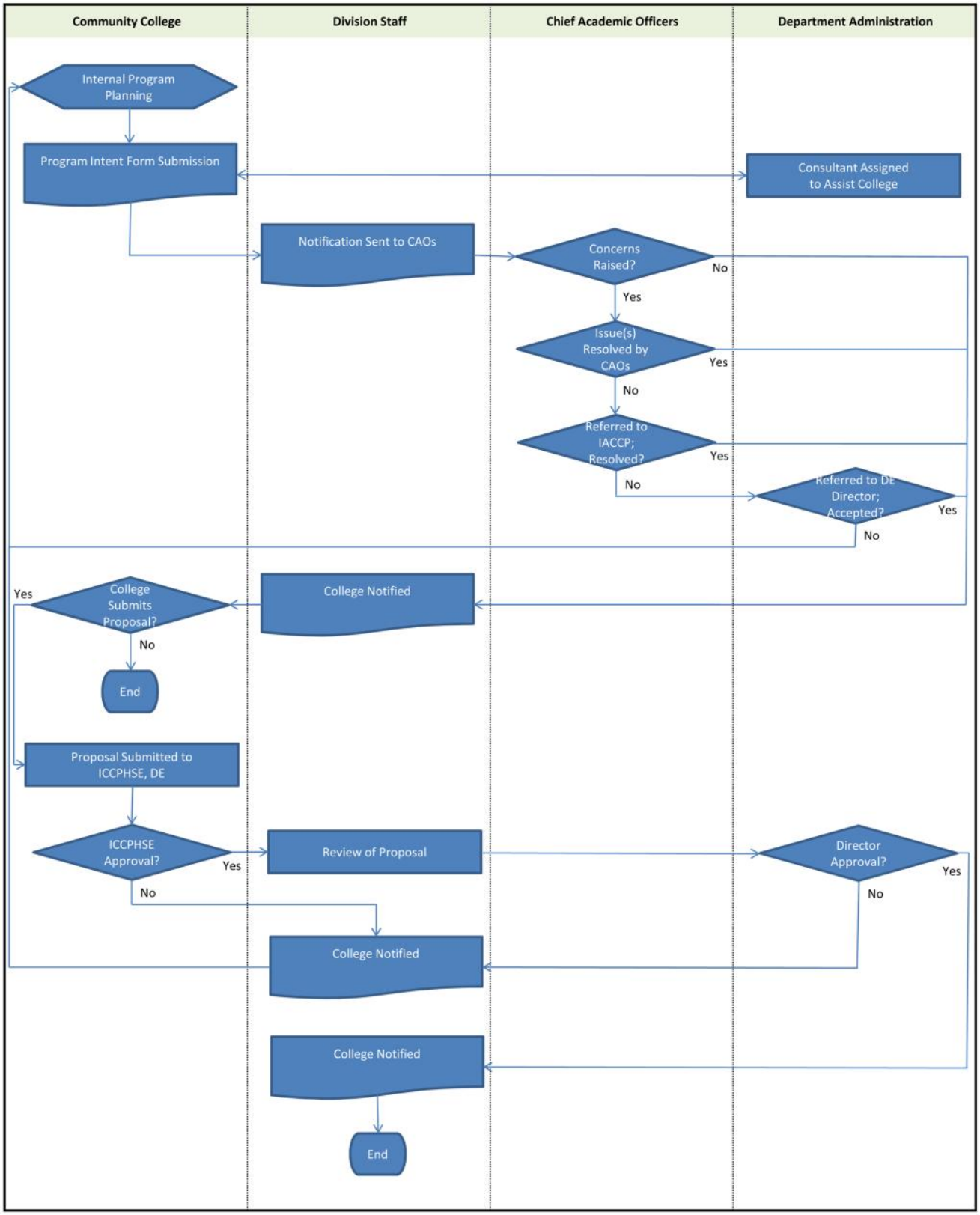
Program approval is granted by the Director of the Iowa Department of Education upon the recommendation by the Administrator of the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation. Colleges will be notified in writing upon department approval. If concerns including compliance issues are identified, department staff will contact the institution submitting the proposal and provide technical assistance. To assist colleges with the identification of potential issues prior to submission, the department has prepared a tool that can be used to review the AS-28 data set by automatically checking for compliance with numeric values (e.g., total credit hours) and generate program summaries equivalent to AS-28 forms used in prior years.

Proposals must be submitted at least 45 calendar days prior to the start-up date of the program. This processing time ensures the review is completed prior to student enrollment. Program approval is necessary prior to marketing the program to the public for recruitment. If the college desires to market the program prior to approval, the materials must state the program is *"*Pending Iowa Department of Education approval."*

ICCPHSE Intent Process
Once approved by the department, a new program intent form is submitted by the department to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education (ICCPHSE) on behalf of the college. The council's main function is to provide an effective means of voluntary cooperation and coordination among the various boards and institutions ultimately responsible for post-high school education in Iowa. While the council has no legal authority, it serves a critical role in statewide coordination. Among its duties is reviewing all proposals for new academic programs and providing advice and counsel to the Iowa College Aid Commission.

If any concerns are identified by other institutions or there are requests for clarification through the ICCPHSE process, the proposing college will be notified through the council's listserv. For more information about the ICCPHSE Intent Process, see the organization's bylaws or contact the council's permanent secretary.

Relevant Forms:
New CTE Program Intent Form
Notice of Concern Form
New Program Proposal Form


Community College
Division Staff
Chief Academic Officers
Department Administration
Internal Program Planning
Program Intent Form Submission
Consultant Assigned to Assist College
Notification Sent to CAOs
Concerns Raised?
No
Yes
Issue(s) Resolved by CAOs
Yes
No
Referred to IACCP; Resolved?
Yes
No
Referred to DE Director; Accepted?
Yes
No
College Notified
Yes
College Submits Proposal?
No
End
Proposal Submitted to ICCPHSE, DE
ICCPHSE Approval?
Yes
No
Review of Proposal
Director Approval?
Yes
No
College Notified
College Notified
End

Approval Process for Modifications to Existing Programs

Changes to existing credit career and technical education programs also require department approval. The approval process for program modifications differs markedly from prior years. The process was streamlined to reduce the burden on colleges as well as the department, while maintaining or enhancing the integrity of the process.

All program modifications shall be submitted as a batch for approval during one of three submission dates set approximately one month prior to the start of the fall (July 1), spring (November 1), and summer (April 1) semesters. These dates provide the department with four weeks to review and approve modifications or work with colleges to resolve any issues preventing approval.

The department will no longer utilize electronic AS-28 forms in MS Excel format or paper forms for program modifications. All proposed modifications will be submitted in bulk as a single data file. This file will contain the same detailed information as the MS Excel-based forms submitted in prior years but it will be easier for colleges to manage and submit. Instructions for submission of program modification information can be found on the program approval section of the department website. Please note the local program title should match the title for the program used in the college's catalog.

Data submitted will be used to update the database of approved programs for the fiscal year.

Due to the streamlining of the review process, the department can assure timely processing of modification requests and notification of department action. That said, colleges are encouraged to plan early and to ensure that all common course numbers (CCNs) needed to complete the program modification request have been established within the CCN system. The department is currently developing a web application to provide this service to colleges and allow colleges to add new courses to the system at any time.

Program Options

Some programs may be approved as options to others. An option is a variant of a primary program. This is particularly common for 'laddered' programs whereby students earn awards that build upon one another (e.g., students earn a certificate, then have the option to continue on to a diploma and/or an AAS degree). It is not unusual for an AAS to have a diploma and one or more certificate options. The department encourages programs with multiple entry and exits points utilizing a series of certificates and diplomas as flexible components of an AAS or AAA degree.

A program may not be an option to another program if the former leads to an award the same size or larger as the latter, unless both lead to the same award type. In other words, an AAS program may have several AAS program options, diploma options, and/or certificate options, but may not have an ASCO program option. Or, if a college has an approved diploma program, it may add a second diploma as an option or add a certificate option, but it cannot add an AAS as an option to the approved diploma program.

Programs that are approved only as an option to another approved program (considered the main option) may not be marketed independently. These programs must be marketed in conjunction with the main option. For example, if a college has an approved AAS program with a diploma option (not approved separately), the diploma may not be advertised to potential students separate from the approved AAS program.

If a program is ineligible to be offered as an option, it must be approved separately.

Please note that an AS-CO program and AAS program may share the same classification (CIP) number and may be presented in the same data set. However, these programs shall not be approved as options to one another and they will have different code sets (ITSOs).

Active vs. Inactive

A program with no enrollment is considered "inactive." If a program has no enrollment reported for three consecutive years, it is removed from the department's list of approved programs (called the program master or PGM) and may not be reactivated. To restart a removed program, new program approval is required.

Compliance Evaluation

The department has developed a tool colleges may use to evaluate program compliance with certain numeric requirements automatically. Programs compliant with these values are far more likely to be approved in a timely fashion.

The department will ensure the database of approved programs is accurate through comparisons with actual enrollment reported through the community college MIS. Additionally, the department compares samples from college catalogs with the database of approved programs to ensure alignment.

Program Review Process

Periodic program review ensures career and technical programs' continuing quality, level of need, and cost effectiveness beyond initial approval. The program review process systematically examines existing approved programs to evaluate the currency of curriculum and faculty, market need, program enrollment and retention, the number of graduates, the adequacy of equipment and facilities, student outcomes, and program cost-effectiveness.

Iowa Code Chapter 258 requires the department to evaluate at least 20 percent of approved career and technical programs annually. The department meets this mandate by charging colleges with reviewing and approving CTE programs using college-developed plans reviewed and approved by the department periodically through the state accreditation process.

College academic administrators have the primary responsibility for evaluating instructional programs and to make decisions about improvement and continuation. Institutional program review processes shall ensure program compliance with state and federal laws governing career and technical education.

Each program shall be reviewed at least once within a five-year period; colleges shall review no fewer than 20 percent of programs annually. Program review results are expected to support institutional planning and budget development.

In addition to institutional program review criteria, Iowa Code Chapter 258 and 281—IAC 46.7(4) requires career and technical programs be reviewed to ensure that they are:

- Compatible with educational reform efforts.
- Capable of responding to technological change and innovation.
- Meet the needs of students and the educational community including students with disabilities, both male and female students, and from diverse racial and ethnic groups.

Individual program reviews must include an assessment of the extent to which:

- The competencies in the program are mastered by students enrolled.
- The costs of the program are proportionate to educational benefits received.
- The curriculum is articulated and integrated with other educational offerings required of all students.
- The program permits students with [secondary] career and technical education backgrounds to pursue other educational interests in a postsecondary setting.
- The program removes barriers for both traditional and nontraditional students to access educational and employment opportunities.

The program review shall also ensure program standards and curricula address:

- New and emerging technologies.
- Job seeking/job keeping and other employment skills including self-employment and entrepreneurship skills that reflect industry standards, leadership skills, entrepreneurial and labor market needs.
- Strengthening of basic academic skills.

Institutional program review processes should be supported by program advisory committees and councils. Advisory groups play a crucial role in providing college faculty and administrators with feedback and ensuring program content meets industry standards. Additional information regarding program advisory committees and councils including state requirements can be found on the department website.

During state accreditation visits, the department shall evaluate institutional program review plans and documentation of program reviews to determine compliance with state and federal requirements.

Award Requirements

Community colleges are authorized to offer AA, AS. AGS, AAS, and AAA degrees as well as diplomas and certificates. Requirements for awards are detailed in 281—IAC 21.2(9).

Associate of Arts (AA) Degree: The Associate of Arts degree is awarded upon completion of a college parallel (transfer) course of study that provides a strong general education component to satisfy the lower division general education liberal arts and sciences requirements for a baccalaureate degree. An AA degree shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 64 semester (96 quarter) credit hours.

Associate of Science (AS) Degree: The Associate of Science degree is awarded upon completion of a course of study that requires a strong background in mathematics or science. The degree is intended to prepare students to transfer and initiate upper division work in baccalaureate programs or prepare them for employment. An AS degree may also be awarded upon completion of a state-approved Associate of Science-Career Option (AS-CO) program of study that includes core technical coursework needed to complete a concentration in a specific field of study. The AS-CO program shall prepare students for entry-level careers and to complete requirements for transfer to a baccalaureate degree. An AS degree awarded upon completion of an arts and sciences course of study shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 64 semester (96 quarter) credit hours. An AS degree awarded upon completion of an AS-CO course of study shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum number of credit hours stated in program guidelines issued by the department. An AS degree awarded upon completion of an AS-CO course of study shall not consist of more than 70 semester (117 quarter) credit hours without an approved waiver pursuant to [281—IAC 21.2(13)i].

Associate of General Studies (AGS) Degree: The Associate of General Studies degree is awarded upon completion of a course of study that is primarily designed for the acquisition of a broad educational background rather than the pursuit of a specific college major or professional/technical program. It is intended as a flexible course of study and may include specific curriculum in lower division transfer, occupational education, or professional-technical education. An AGS degree shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 64 semester (96 quarter) credit hours.

Associate of Applied Sciences (AAS) Degree: The Associate of Applied Sciences degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is intended to prepare students for entry-level career and technical occupations. An AAS degree shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours. The general education component of the AAS degree program shall consist of a minimum of 12 semester (18 quarter) credit hours of general education and shall include at least one course from each of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities, and mathematics or science. The technical specialty component of the AAS degree shall constitute a minimum of 50 percent of the course credits.

Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) Degree: The Associate of Applied Arts degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is primarily intended for career training in providing students with professional skills for employment in a specific field of work such as arts, humanities, or graphics design. An AAA degree shall consist of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours. The general education component of the AAA degree program shall consist of a minimum of 12 semester (18 quarter) credit hours of general education and shall include at least one course from each of the following: communications, social science or humanities, and mathematics or science. The technical specialty component of the AAA degree shall constitute a minimum of 50 percent of the course credits.

Diploma: The Diploma is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is a coherent sequence of courses consisting of a minimum of 15 semester (22.5 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 48 semester (72 quarter) credit hours including at least three semester (4.5 quarter) credit hours of general education. The general education component shall be from any of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities, and mathematics or science. A diploma may be a component of and apply toward subsequent completion of an AAS or AAA degree.

Certificate (credit): The Certificate is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is designed for entry-level employment and shall consist of a maximum of 48 semester (72 quarter) credit hours. A Certificate may be a component of and apply toward subsequent completion of a diploma or AAS or AAA degree and may be developed in rapid response to the needs of business and industry. A Certificate may consist of only career and technical courses without general education course requirements.

Career and Technical Program Length Requirements

The Iowa Administrative Code (281—IAC 21.2(13)) sets requirements for the length of career and technical education programs and provides for a waiver process.

AAS and AAA Programs
Program length for the Associate of Applied Studies and Associate of Applied Arts degree programs shall consist of an academic program not to exceed two academic years. Program length shall not exceed four regular terms and two summer terms (each summer term may have two sessions). All required course offerings are to be available within two academic years. All required offerings in AAS and AAA degree programs shall not exceed a maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours unless the Department of Education has granted a waiver pursuant to [281—IAC 21.2(13)(i)]. Programs shall not exceed an average of 19 credit hours per regular term.

ASCO Programs
Program length for the state-approved Associate of Science degree programs shall consist of an academic program that includes core technical coursework needed to complete a concentration in a specific field of study. The Associate of Science-Career Option (AS-CO) program may prepare students for entry-level careers or allow students to complete requirements for a transfer to a baccalaureate degree.

Program length for the AS-CO programs shall consist of an academic program not to exceed two academic years. Program length shall not exceed four regular terms and two summer terms (each summer term may have two sessions) or the equivalent. All required course offerings are to be available within two academic years. The AS-CO program shall not exceed the credit hour limit stated in Department of Education guidelines. To facilitate the transfer of students enrolling in AS-CO programs and awarded the AS transfer degree, each program shall have articulation agreements with baccalaureate degree programs meeting the articulation agreement requirements stated in Department of Education guidelines. The AS-CO program shall under no circumstances exceed 70 semester (117 quarter) credit hours unless the Department of Education has granted a waiver pursuant to [281—IAC 21.2(13)(i)]. Programs shall not exceed an average of 19 credit hours per regular term. Additional guidelines for AS-CO programs are forthcoming.

Diploma and Certificate Programs
All credit Certificate and Diploma programs as defined in 281—IAC 21.2(9) shall not exceed 48 semester (72 quarter) credit hours unless the department has granted a waiver. Diploma and Certificate programs shall not exceed 52 weeks in length.

Prerequisite Courses
All credit-bearing courses required for program admittance or graduation, or both, must be included in the 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hour maximum, with the exception of developmental/remedial courses. Prerequisites that provide an option to students for either credit or noncredit shall be counted toward the program maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours. Prerequisite options that are only offered for noncredit will not be counted toward the 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hour maximum.

CTE Course Length
Each course offered in the area of career and technical education shall be taught in the shortest practical period of time at a standard consistent with the quality and quantity of work needed to prepare the student for successful employment in the occupation for which instruction is being offered.

A full-time student in career and technical education (CTE) shall be defined as a student enrolling in 12 or more semester credit hours or the equivalent in CTE. Curricula in full-time CTE programs shall ordinarily be offered on the basis of a student workload of 20 to 30 contact hours per week.

CTE Program Length Waiver Process

The Iowa Department of Education has implemented a waiver process for CTE program length requirements (281—IAC 21.2(13)"i"). A college may petition the department for consideration of a waiver if a program requires more credit hours than allowed under administrative rule because of the requirements of nationally-recognized accrediting bodies or because of requirements in state law related to preparation for a specific occupation.

Waiver process
A college may petition the department to suspend in whole or in part a program-length requirement contained in paragraphs

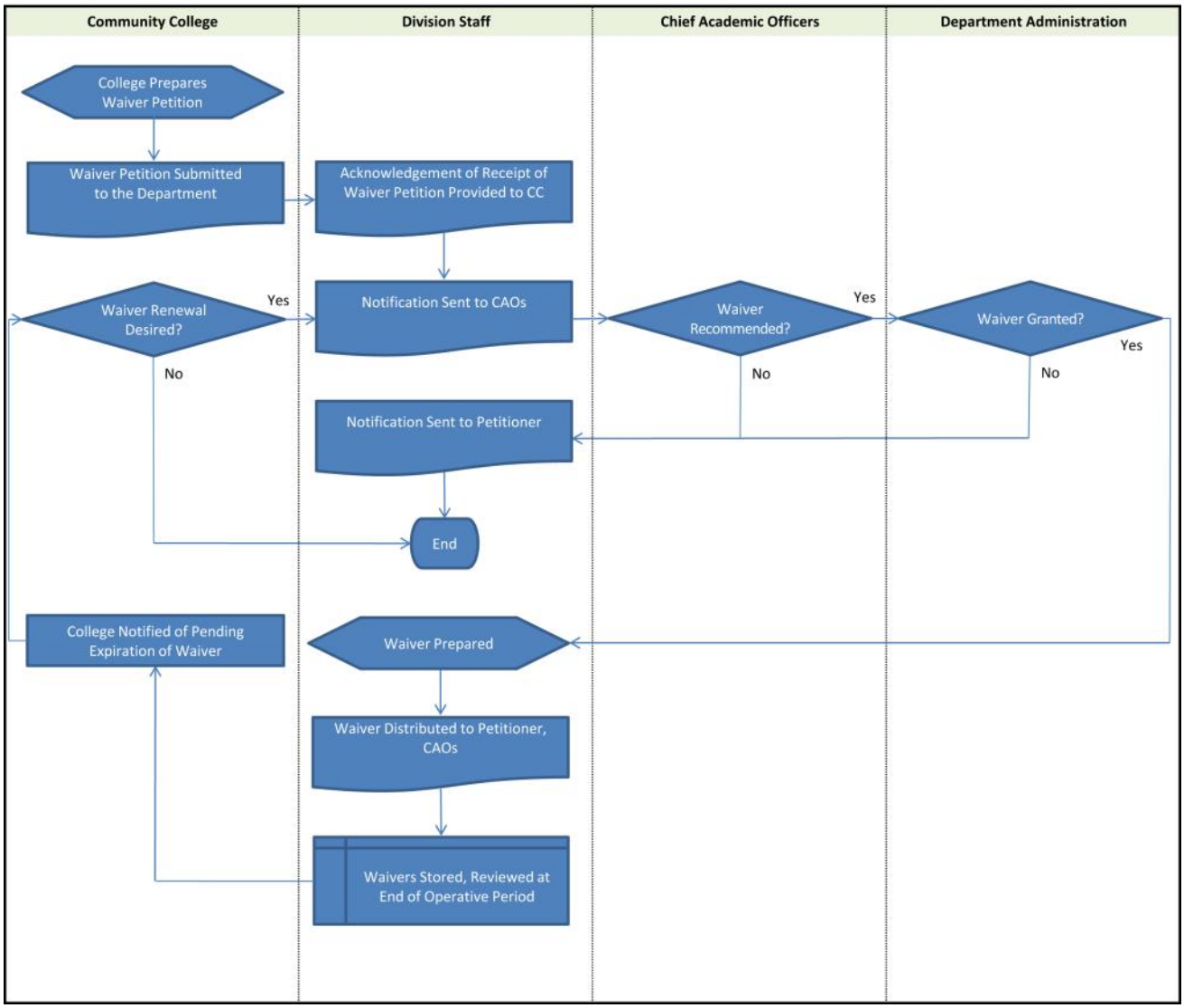
21.2(12)*"h"* to *"m"* as applied to a specific program on the basis of the particular circumstances of that program.

(1) Waivers shall be issued at the director's sole discretion. Waivers shall be narrowly tailored and granted for a period no longer than two academic years, after which reapplication is required. A waiver may be granted on a long-term basis not to exceed ten years if issuing the waiver for a shorter period is not practical.

(2) All petitions for waiver must be submitted in writing to the department. A petition shall include the following information: specific waiver request including scope and duration, the relevant facts that the petitioner believes would justify a waiver, a detailed statement of the impact on student achievement, any information known regarding the department's treatment of similar cases, and any additional information deemed relevant by the petitioner. The department shall acknowledge a petition upon receipt.

(3) The department shall ensure that, within 30 calendar days, notice of pendency of the petition and a concise summary of its contents have been provided to a committee consisting of the chief academic officers of each community college. In addition, the department may give notice to other persons.

(4) A committee consisting of the chief academic officers of a majority of community colleges shall review the waiver request and provide a recommendation to the department regarding whether approval should be granted. Within 90 calendar days of receiving the recommendation, the department shall review the petition and issue a ruling. Failure of the department to grant or deny a petition within the required time period shall be deemed a denial of that petition. If a waiver is issued, the department shall provide a description of the precise scope and operative period to all interested parties.



Credit Hour Requirements

Iowa administrative rule sets requirements for determining credit hours (281—IAC 21.2(12)) based on the amount of instructional contact time and how that instruction is delivered. Credit hours shall be determined consistent with the following procedures. Specifically stated criteria are minimal requirements only, which institutions may exceed at their discretion.

Each course must have a minimum length of one credit hour. A fractional unit of credit may be awarded provided the course exceeds the minimum length of one credit hour. Each credit hour shall consist of a minimum number of contact hours as defined below. One contact hour equals 50 minutes.

Conventional instruction is subdivided into four instructional methods as herein defined.

1. Classroom work: Lecture and formalized classroom instruction under the supervision of an instructor. The minimal requirement for one semester hour shall be 800 minutes (16 contact hours) of scheduled instruction. The minimal requirement for one quarter hour shall be 533 minutes (10.7 contact hours) of scheduled instruction.
2. Laboratory work: Experimentation and practice by students under the supervision of an instructor. The minimal requirement for one semester hour shall be 1,600 minutes (32 contact hours) of scheduled laboratory work. The minimal requirement for one quarter hour shall be 1,066 minutes (21.3 contact hours)
3. Clinical practice: Applied learning experience in a health agency or office under the supervision of an instructor. The minimal requirement for one semester hour of credit shall be 2,400 minutes (48 contact hours) of scheduled clinical practice. The minimal requirement for one quarter hour of credit shall be 1,599 minutes (32 contact hours) of scheduled clinical practice.
4. Work experience: Employment-related experience planned and coordinated by an institutional representative and the employer, with control and supervision of the student on the job being the responsibility of the employer. The minimal requirement for one semester hour of credit shall be 3,200 minutes (64 contact hours) of scheduled work experience. The minimal requirement for one quarter hour of credit shall be 2,132 minutes (42.6 contact hours) of scheduled work experience.

No registration or orientation hours may be included when determining credit hours. Only minutes for students officially registered for courses or programs, including audit registration, may be included when determining credit hours.

Institutions shall take into account the soundness of the learning environment being created by the scheduling sequence and the length of classroom, laboratory, clinical, and work experience sessions. However, the final decision on these matters is left to the institutional administration so long as minimal standards are met.

Each community college is required to have a policy that defines its methods of equating alternative instruction to credit hours and the process for evaluating the effectiveness of the alternative instruction to meet or exceed the expected student outcomes as if the course were taught utilizing conventional methods stated above. Colleges will be held accountable for evaluating and maintaining high quality programs and their evaluations may be subject to Department of Education

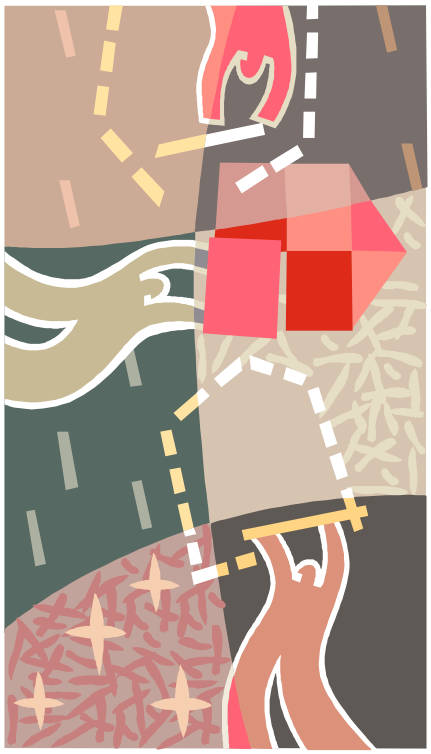
review. Students shall be expected to meet all approved course requirements and shall be expected to demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge and competencies/outcomes at the same level as those obtained in traditional classroom settings, in the time frames set by the institution. Alternative courses or programs of study must be approved by the college's review processes including faculty review and input. Courses shall be listed in the college catalog. Instructional formats for which alternative methods for determining credit hours are applicable include accelerated courses, distance education, self-paced instruction, arranged study, and multi-format instruction. Distance education formats include online courses, hybrid courses, ICN courses, correspondence courses and more. See 281—IAC 21.2(12) for more information regarding instructional formats.

Individualized learning experiences for which an equivalent course is not offered shall have the program length computed from records of attendance using such procedures as a time clock or sign-in records. Individualized learning experiences means independent study courses in which an equivalent course is not offered by the college or listed in the college catalog. Independent study permits in-depth or focused learning on special topics of particular interest to the student.

Program Content Requirements

Career and technical education meets the needs of state through competency-based education grounded in knowledge and skills identified as essential in the workplace. These essential skills are detailed through standards and benchmarks (referred to as "competencies" in administrative rule). Each approved program shall have delineated standards and benchmarks.

The state has developed model sets of minimum standards and benchmarks but community college programs usually follow a state process for establishing their own local standards per 281—IAC46.7(1-2). State developed model standards and benchmarks are primarily used by secondary schools and are based around the six service areas defined in state law or the 16 career clusters used nationally. Locally-adopted standards for community college programs are expected to heavily draw from national and industry standards to ensure the portability of skills attained.



The process for establishing local standards for a program shall include a structured interview process utilizing a technical committee of incumbent workers with an occupational cluster of one of the state's five CTE service areas. The group analyzes a researched list of competencies which include: new and emerging technologies, job seeking, leadership, entrepreneurial, and occupational competencies. The analysis shall include identification of the competencies necessary for the program to offer so participating students have access to all instruction which leads to employment and further training. All competency lists shall also be analyzed to ensure reinforcement of academic skills.

Program content shall contribute to an individual's higher order reasoning and problem-solving skills, work attitudes, general employability skills, and the occupation-specific skills necessary for economic independence as a productive and contributing member of society. The curriculum shall also include recognition of the contributions of individuals with disabilities, men and women in nontraditional roles, and minorities.

Program standards and benchmarks shall be revalidated at least every three years to ensure currency and relevance per 281—IAC46.7(1).

Advisory Councils and Committees

The primary mechanism ensuring the quality and relevance of locally-adopted standards and benchmarks (content) is the program advisory council or committee. Advisory councils and committees consist of a group of stakeholders including industry and labor representatives that assist the college in efforts to plan, evaluate, and keep contemporary one or more CTE programs within an occupational cluster. This role includes ensuring program content and standards are current and align with labor market needs.

Any proposed program or substantial program modification shall be reviewed by the program's advisory group and documented in meeting minutes. Substantive program modifications include: any change in the award types available through the program (through the primary program or any options) or changes to technical core course offerings. Advisory committee review of non-substantive changes, including changes to general education requirements, is encouraged but not required.

Advisory councils or committees must be maintained and meet the requirements set forth in Iowa Code 258.9. Requirements and department guidance on advisory groups can be found on the agency's website.

Programmatic Accreditation

While not always mandatory, programmatic accreditation is applicable to many career and technical programs. Specialized accrediting bodies often set program content requirements and new programs shall meet those requirements, if applicable. Colleges shall obtain and maintain programmatic accreditation, when applicable, and notify the department of any departures from accrediting standards.

Licensing and Certification

Some occupations require a license to practice while others may not have a legal requirement but a widely-recognized certification is essential for success in the labor market. For licensed occupations, programs shall prepare completers for licensure. For other credentials, programs shall prepare completers for industry-recognized certifications, when available and appropriate.

General education

Career and technical programs, except certificate programs, have a general education component. The general education component of a CTE program shall address the ability of students to reason, think, compute, communicate, and adapt to change. The general education component is also encouraged to include human development in civic, consumer, environmental, and social responsibilities.

Each community college shall determine applicable coursework in general education, provided minimum requirements are met (see Award Requirements, Page 9), however it is important to maintain the philosophy that general education represents more than the accumulation of units. Additionally, state general education requirements represent the lowest acceptable proportions and institutions are encouraged to exceed them.

College parallel (transfer) programs leading to associate degrees have the strongest general education learning experience because they are intended to satisfy the lower division general education liberal arts and sciences requirements for a baccalaureate degree. CTE programs designed to transfer (i.e., ASCO programs) shall meet this expectation. Programs leading to an AS degree that are not career option programs shall, at a minimum, meet the expectations of the most current AS statewide articulation agreement with the state's Regent universities.

Program Articulation Requirements

To facilitate the transition of students from secondary education to community colleges and on to four-year universities, articulation agreements are essential. Articulation is the process by which an institution matches course or program content with another institution to avoid duplication and ensure that students will not need to repeat content or courses when moving from one institution to the other.

ASCO Programs

Generally, career and technical programs primarily prepare students for immediate employment upon completion (or upgrading employment skills) while arts and sciences programs primarily prepare students to continue study at a baccalaureate degree granting institution. Associate of Science Career Option (ASCO) programs are the main exception, intended for both purposes. As a consequence of being a transfer-oriented career and technical program, ASCO program curricula shall be designed to substantially satisfy the lower division requirements of the corresponding baccalaureate major at two or more senior institutions and articulation agreements shall be developed for this purpose. Community colleges shall make a good faith effort to ensure students can apply courses toward degree requirements within the intended area of study at specific four-year colleges or universities, particularly for programs exceeding 64 credit hours. To the extent possible, colleges shall ensure programmatic articulation prevents students from having to repeat courses after they transfer.

AAS/AAA Programs

While the primary purpose of AAS and AAA programs is immediate entry into the workforce, transferability to baccalaureate degree granting institutions is often an appropriate secondary purpose. Articulation of AAS and AAA programs to four-year degree programs is not required but is encouraged. Iowa Code 262.9(33) mandates community colleges and public universities to develop a process for examining eight AAS degree programs annually to identify and prioritize new articulation agreements and annual discipline faculty meetings. This requirement expands on requirements for the seamless transfer of credits earned for college parallel (AA/AS programs) coursework. Colleges are encouraged to engage in cooperative planning and the development of program-to-program articulation agreements, when appropriate.

Linkages with Secondary Programs

State law (281—IAC 46.7(3)) requires secondary and postsecondary career and technical instructors and administrators to meet and jointly prepare articulation agreements in specific occupational areas. For each secondary CTE program, school districts must have at least one formal articulation agreement with a postsecondary institution for a credit program or apprenticeship program.

The department encourages CTE programs to be linked to secondary programs through articulation agreements, concurrent enrollment offerings, tech prep/career academy agreements, and through the development of Programs of Study (POS).

Information related to the development of Programs of Study including guidance and templates can be found on the Perkins Grants section of the department website.

Concurrent enrollment program requirements can be found in the guide on the Senior Year Plus section of the department website.

Other Requirements

Career and technical programs must meet a variety of additional requirements including having board approval, sufficient need for the program, qualified faculty, and adequate resources.

Board of Trustees Approval
The college's board of directors is charged with ensuring that all career and technical offerings meet state requirements (Iowa Code 260C.14). A proposed new program shall be approved through the institution's academic governance processes and by the institution's governing board prior to obtaining state approval to initiate the program.

Program Need
Iowa Code 260C.14 requires the department to ensure that programs submitted for approval are needed. The primary purpose of career and technical programs is to prepare students for entry into the workforce (though transfer is often another appropriate purpose). Legitimate employment prospects are crucial, particularly for programs oriented toward specific occupational fields. It is essential to balance the number trained for a given field with the number of job openings and to prepare students for meaningful employment (sufficient wages).

While for college parallel programs, need is assumed if there is student demand for the transfer program, CTE programs including ASCO programs must demonstrate that jobs are available for program completers. Program need is demonstrated through the new program proposal process using current labor market information (LMI). LMI is vital in aligning program offerings with high skill, high wage, and high demand jobs. LMI may take many forms including labor market projections from Iowa Workforce Development (preferred), regional economic or laborshed studies, employer surveys, or other information. Supporting information may include advisory committee minutes, letters from employers, and job advertisements. Discussions with business and industry plays an important role in identifying local labor market needs.

LMI data may be region-specific, statewide, or national (if program completers are likely to seek employment outside the state).

The other side of the economic equation is the supply of new graduates which can be measured through enrollment projections.

Program need, along with other factors including cost-effectiveness, relevance, and quality, are periodically reviewed through the institution's program review process.

Duplication
Iowa Code requires community college boards and the department ensure that programs submitted for approval are not duplicative of programs offered by other public and private

postsecondary institutions. Unnecessary duplication is determined through a review of the needs of the area and whether the proposed program is competitive as to size, quality, tuition, purposes, and area coverage with existing programs offered by public and private institutions within the region (260C.14(1)).

The department addresses the issue of unnecessary program duplication through the program intent process and an assurance by the college president. Prior to the submission of a program proposal, program intent information is shared with the community college chief academic officers to identify and resolve any concerns through communication between the institutions involved.

Faculty Requirements
The staffing of qualified faculty to manage and teach programs is essential for program quality. The Higher Learning Commission's guidance on determining quality faculty states a "qualified faculty" consists of people who by formal education and tested experience know what students must learn. The determination of faculty standards is primarily the responsibility of community college and the institution's qualify faculty plan committee.

In addition to institutional policies, state law requires faculty teaching credit coursework to meet certain minimum standards. The department currently does not require submission of information about faculty credentials through the program

approval process though it is reviewed through the state accreditation process.

By July 1, 2011, all community college instructors teaching college credit coursework must meet state minimum standards — including adjunct faculty. The only exception to these standards are developmental education instructors teaching only courses that are not intended to transfer or to complete a degree.

Community college quality faculty plans ensure the hiring and ongoing development of qualified faculty. For additional information about QFP requirements and minimum faculty standards, see the quality faculty section of the department website.

Financial Support and Program Budget
Colleges are expected to allocate resources necessary to start and maintain a program at a high level of quality. The department does not currently review financial/budget information to determine program viability, but it is expected that colleges will allocate adequate resources to support the program and reevaluate program needs and cost-effectiveness periodically through the program review process.

Jointly Offered Programs
Some programs are offered jointly or collaboratively with one or more other postsecondary institutions. For example, one community college may offer one part of a program and have students finish the program at another institution. During the program proposal process, information shall be provided regarding the entire program, including portions delivered by other institution(s). Partnering institutions shall have a signed Memorandum of Understanding or comparable educational services agreement. The total program shall meet all department requirements.

Facilities and Equipment Plan
Colleges are expected to make capital expenditures including the acquisition or assignment of facilities and equipment necessary for the program. The department does not currently review information about the adequacy of facilities and equipment necessary to support programs. It is expected that facility and equipment needs will be evaluated periodically through the program review process.

Program Admissions Criteria
While Iowa's public community colleges have an open door admissions policy and are committed to equity and social justice, colleges are encouraged to establish admissions criteria for individual programs.

CIP Number and Code Sets

The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) is a taxonomy of academic disciplines at institutions of higher education. This taxonomic scheme allows accurate tracking, assessment and reporting of fields of study for state and federal requirements. The department classifies instructional programs using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) six digit CIP and additional state reporting requirements.

The only exceptions occur when it is necessary to identify an occupational area that was not included or not appropriate to use in the most current NCES CIP publication.

The department utilizes the seventh and eighth digit of the ten digit CIP number to identify certificate and diploma offerings.

The department also assigns instructional code sets to classify courses by the following categories: a) level of instruction, b) type of activity, c) special emphasis, and d) object and purpose.

Prior to submitting a new program intent form, please contact the department consultant assigned to the discipline (see below) for determination of the appropriate CIP number for the proposed program.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about the process or guidelines, contact department staff for assistance.

Program Requirements
Colleen Hunt, 515/281-0319 or Jeremy Varner, 515/281-3866.

Program Modification Data Submission
Vladimir Bassis, 515/281-3671.

Program Master
Jenny Foster, 515/281-8488

Administrative Support
Patty Vrban, 515/281-3125

To ensure speedy approval of new programs and substantial modifications, colleges are encouraged to start working with a discipline consultant as early in the process as possible. For a list of CIPs covered by each consultant, please visit the program approval section of the department website.

Discipline Consultants
Mary Ann Adams, 515/281-4716
Kelli Diemer, 515/281-3615
Dale Gruis, 515/281-4712
Andrew Wermes, 515/281-8353

COMMUNITY COLLEGE &
WORKFORCE PREPARATION