

West Virginia Northern Community College
General Education Curriculum and Joint Degree Programs

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Technical College Education Title 135, Series 11, Section 3

Rule:

This rule establishes standards for West Virginia Northern Community College to determine the appropriate degree designation for academic programs and the general education requirements for the respective degrees. Additionally, this rule delineates the responsibilities of the West Virginia Northern Community College in the approval and discontinuance of academic programs and establishes processes for institutions in seeking West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education approval of new academic programs and joint institutional programs of study.

Certificate and associate degree programs are central to the mission of community and technical colleges. They are a means through which the institution develops and maintains integrity in its educational programs. Appropriately defined, these degrees become an integrating force for the institution, set academic standards and goals for achievement of students, and establish the relationship between the college and other institutions at community college and baccalaureate college levels.

The associate degree program establishes the community college vision of what it means to be an educated person and affirms the college's commitment to program coherence, continuity, and student success. Awarding the associate degree is a way by which an institution indicates the student has completed a program of academic development and has achieved a level of performance reflected in student learning outcomes sufficient to progress to upper division collegiate work or to enter directly into specific occupations in the workplace. The associate degree is recognized by baccalaureate degree-granting institutions and by employers as a critical indicator a student has demonstrated proficiencies at levels deemed appropriate to enter upper-division college programs or to enter a field of work. Certificate and associate degree programs must consist of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, including an evaluation procedure that assesses the outcomes of the learning process.

All degree programs must include a complement of general education requirements appropriate to the level of the degree. Therefore, it is the purpose of this rule to adopt and require the use of nationally standardized nomenclature regarding certificate and associate degrees and the nationally promulgated standards for the general education components of the respective degrees. It is the goal of this rule to ensure a common understanding of the associate degrees awarded by West Virginia Northern Community College; to promote the transferability and portability of degrees among the colleges and with baccalaureate degree granting institutions; and to foster recognition of the degrees as a respected credential for employment. The West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education is charged by statute with general authority for academic program approval for West Virginia community and technical colleges.

To facilitate the discharge of these responsibilities, the procedures and format included within this rule shall be followed by WVNCC in submitting to the chancellor for consideration by the Council proposals to establish academic programs.

Degree Designations.

3.1. Degree program: A degree program is an area of study approved as such by the institution and the Council and listed on the official Council inventory of degree programs, e.g. Business, Criminal Justice, and General Studies. The degree, which is an award signifying a rank or level of educational attainment and which is conferred on students who have successfully completed a degree program, is represented by the official degree designation, e.g. A.A. - Associate in Arts, A.S. - or A.A.S. - Associate in Applied Science. The degree program completed would be listed on the student's diploma.

There are nationally recognized associate degree designations adopted for use. Each has a specific purpose and declares the specific intent of those who framed the academic program requirements. The respective degree designations communicate clearly the primary, predetermined goal for the preparation of the student. Associate degrees require a maximum of sixty-credit hours unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies for completion of the degree and the certificate degree requires a maximum of thirty-credit hours for completion unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies.

The curriculum is the foundation of certificate and associate degree programs. For students to earn the degrees, the program must consist of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, including an evaluation procedure that assesses the outcomes of the learning process. The program must state the proficiency outcomes required for the students to transfer to baccalaureate institutions and/or achieve career goals.

Certificate and associate degree programs must include a full complement of general education requirements appropriate to the level of the degree, including essential communication and computation skills.

3.1.1. The Associate in Arts (AA) degree. The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and similar areas. While a student may enter directly into employment upon attainment of this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful transfer with junior status.

3.1.1.a. General Education. For successful transfer with program emphasis in arts, humanities, social sciences, and similar areas, a substantial component of this degree, at least 24 semester hours of coursework, shall be in general education.

3.1.2. The Associate in Science (AS) degree. The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in the areas with substantial undergraduate requirements in mathematics, natural sciences, and similar areas. While a student may enter directly into employment upon attainment of this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful transfer with junior status.

3.1.2.a. General Education. For successful transfer with program emphasis in agriculture, engineering and technology, and the sciences with a substantial undergraduate requirement in mathematics and the natural sciences, a large component of this degree, at least 24 semester hours of coursework shall be in general education.

3.1.3. The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree. The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to enter directly into employment in a specific career. It gives emphasis to those majoring in occupational programs designed with and through employer advisory committees. It is the goal of this degree to achieve acceptance as an employment credential. While a student may be able to achieve successful transfer of some or all the courses within this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful employment.

3.1.3.a. General Education. For successful entry directly into employment in a specific career and to provide a basic foundation for life-long learning and future career changes, at least 15 semester hours of coursework for this degree shall be in general education unless otherwise required by the accrediting agency. General education shall include communication and computational skills and other general education coursework related to the specific occupational career area.

3.1.4. Certificate in Applied Science Degree [CAS] program. A certificate program in applied science is a coherent, specialized curriculum designed for students in search of a specific body of knowledge for personal/career development or professional continuing education. The purpose and intent of the certificate degree program are to prepare the student to enter directly into employment in a specific career and meet the documented workforce needs of local employers. Generally, certificate programs provide the foundation for the associate in applied science (AAS) degree for occupational programs. Like the AAS degree, the goal of certificates is to achieve acceptance as an employment credential.

3.1.4.a. General Education. As the foundation of the Certificate in Applied Science degree and for successful entry into employment in a specific career, at least 6 semester hours of coursework for the certificate shall be in general education, including essential communication and computation skills.

3.2. Program of Study: A program of study is a defined curriculum within an approved degree program. An institution should include the program of study on the student's transcript. The program of study is identified by a distinct Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code.

3.3. Concentration: Concentrations provide a thematic focus of study that enable the student to spend the time and effort to acquire depth in a particular discipline, in addition to meeting the normal breadth of requirements for the associate degree. A student might choose a concentration to begin early preparation for a specific academic area that they might wish to later pursue in a bachelor degree program. Typically, approximately 12-18 credit hours would be expected for a concentration within an associate degree program. Concentrations should appear on the student's transcript.

3.4. Advanced Skill Set Certificate: A series of courses or competencies that prepare individuals for a specific skill and carry value of 12 or more but less than 30 credit hours or non-credit contact hours equivalent to 12 or more but less than 30 credit hours.

3.5. Skills Set Certificate: A series of courses or competencies that prepare individuals for a specific skill and carry value fewer than 12 credit hours or non-credit contact hours equivalent to fewer than 12 credit hours.

Guidelines for Joint Degree Programs.

4.0. Joint degree programs are one common degree program offered jointly by two participating institutions. The student takes courses from both institutions and, upon graduation receives a degree listing both institutions on the diploma or certificate.

4.1. Institutions desiring to offer a joint degree are to contact the Division of Academic Affairs in the Council office prior to beginning negotiations to offer the degree. Negotiations should begin at a minimum of 120 days from planned implementation. Working with the Council office, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) is generated by the two institutions. The MOA should cover topics such as the courses to be offered by each institution, facilities to be provided by each institution, the administrative structure of the program, the financial obligation of each institution and other details necessary for the successful implementation of the joint degree.

4.2. For reporting purposes, the MOA shall denote the percentage of credit for program completers each institution shall receive in state generated graduation reports. It is presumed institutions will split the number of completers in a 50/50 reporting split. However, should there be a significant enrollment disparity between the institutions, the institutions may agree to other mutually agreeable reporting percentages. Each institution shall use enrollment numbers in their own courses as part of their headcount reporting.

4.3. Each institution must contribute coursework to the degree/certificate program with the minimum curricular contribution being 25 percent of the total number of credit hours necessary for completion of the degree/certificate.

4.4. The student shall be admitted to both institutions. However, a “home institution” shall be identified for the student and is responsible for advising, fee and tuition collection, course registration, and administering other processes necessary to allow the student to successfully complete the course requirements.

4.5. Once the MOA has been signed, it is attached to a program proposal as outlined in section 7 of this document and submitted for approval to the Council.