



Procedure 3.36.1 Academic Programs

Part 1. Purpose

To establish standards, processes, and conditions that enable consistent implementation of academic program policy.

Part 2. Definitions

Academic award

A certificate, diploma, or degree.

Academic program

A cohesive arrangement of college-level curricular requirements leading to an academic award.

Academic program characteristics

Attributes that operationally describe an approved academic program including:

1. name,
2. academic award,
3. federal Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code,
4. credit length,
5. location(s),
6. emphases, if any,
7. transfer or collaborative agreements, if any, among colleges, and universities, or other parties, and
8. status (active, suspended, closed).

Academic program closure

An academic program change in status which permanently closes the academic program to new enrollment.

Academic program curriculum components

Program elements with set curricular requirements.

Applicable to colleges

Emphasis

A specialized area of study of at least nine credits within an academic program.



Applicable to universities

Emphasis

A specialized area of study of at least nine credits within a major.

Major

A specialized area of study within a baccalaureate academic program intended to provide significant upper division study in discipline(s), a professional field of study, or an occupation.

Minor

A specialized area of study within a baccalaureate academic program.

Other Components

Other components of an academic program may include electives, required courses, and general education.

Academic program inventory

The official list of academic programs offered by colleges and universities.

Academic program redesign

A change to an existing academic program characteristic.

Academic program reinstatement

An academic program status change from suspended to active.

Academic program relocation

Academic program relocation occurs when an active academic program is closed at its present location and approved for delivery at a different location.

Academic program replication

Academic program replication occurs when an active academic program is offered at an additional location.

Academic program suspension

Academic program suspension is a change in status which temporarily closes the academic program to new enrollment.

Accreditation

A process and a status that assures higher education institutions and programs meet a set of standards developed by peers.

a. Institutional accreditation

Accreditation of a college or university is determined by institutional accreditors (formerly regional or national accreditors), indicating that the college or university is achieving its mission, objectives, and the accreditor's standards.

b. Program/specialized accreditation

Accreditation of college or university programs that involves examination of the individual academic units, programs, or disciplinary offerings to ensure they are providing students with a quality education in a particular area of study. Programmatic accreditation may be required in some fields for graduates to seek licensure or certification. Programmatic accreditation in other fields serves to provide a recognition of quality.

Collaborative agreement

A formal agreement between two or more parties, at least one of which is a system college or university, to co-deliver an academic program. Each college or university may, as appropriate, confer the award.

Competency based education (CBE)

An academic program with an outcomes-based approach to earning a college degree or other credential based on competency statements regarding what students can do with the knowledge learned at the course and program level. A course/credit-based approach and a direct assessment approach are essential to CBE or a hybrid approach which combines elements of the course/credit and direct assessment approaches.

1. Course/credit-based approach

Students demonstrate competencies embedded in a conventional curriculum offered during a traditional academic term which awards credits toward a degree or credential. Prior learning assessment credit is accepted in this approach.

2. Direct assessment approach

A subset of CBE not based on semesters or academic terms or credits but based on the evaluation of student achievement and demonstration of competency in awarding a degree and/or credential. Grades and term length are not assigned and transcript details with a credit-hour equivalency of student learning outcomes may be provided. Prior learning assessment is not acceptable in this approach.

3. Hybrid approach

A combination of the course/credit-based and direct assessment approach where a student can complete a degree or credential with direct assessment competencies and course/credit hours.

Course

A set of designed experiences with defined student learning outcomes.

Credit

A unit of measure assigned to a college or university course offering or an equivalent learning experience that takes into consideration achieved student learning outcomes and instructional time.

Credit hour

1. An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than -
 - a. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, such as in distance learning environments; or
 - b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1.a.) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the college or university including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.
2. Or, for a program that is subject to a clock/credit-hour conversion, the lesser of
 - a. Clock hours in the credit-hour program divided by 37.5 clock hours of instruction or
 - b. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system approved credit hour.

Curriculum

A coherent set of instructional experiences designed through established college and university procedures to achieve desired student learning outcomes. Curriculum may refer to an academic program, an academic program element such as the major, an instructional unit, the general education component, or the entirety of offerings of a college or university.

Fine arts

The disciplines of creative writing, dance, music, theatre, the visual arts, and performing arts in which artistic purposes are primary.

General education

A cohesive curriculum defined by college or university faculty to develop reasoning ability through an integration of learning experiences in the liberal arts and sciences.

Graduate course enrollment

There are four types of graduate course enrollment that specify which students are permitted to enroll in a graduate course. *See Operating Instructions 3.36.1.1 Course Numbering Convention.*

Master's dual-enrollment. Master's dual-enrollment courses are open to undergraduate students and graduate students at the master's level.

Master's. Master's courses are open only to graduate students at the master's level.

Doctoral dual-enrollment. Doctoral dual-enrollment courses are open to graduate students at the master's and doctoral levels.

Doctoral. Doctoral courses are open only to graduate students at the doctoral level.

Liberal arts and sciences

Liberal arts and sciences include communications, natural sciences, mathematics, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities and fine arts.

Location

A geographic place where a college or university has been approved to deliver an entire academic program or a baccalaureate completion program.

Minnesota transfer curriculum

Curriculum comprised of general education courses, goal area definitions, and competencies that transfer between Minnesota public colleges and universities.

Mission statement

A mission statement conveys the broad intentions and distinctive character of a college or university; describes its primary educational programs and their purposes; recognizes the diversity of its learners; identifies the students to be served, including particular constituents; defines a primary service area; and communicates a commitment to the advancement of society's values and common purposes and the advancement of excellence in higher learning. Use of this definition is restricted to this procedure and related guidelines, if any.

New academic program

An academic program identified by curricular content and an academic award significantly different (more than 50%) from other academic programs at a college or university.

Occupational program

An academic program designed to prepare program graduates for entry, retention, or advancement in a specific occupation or set of closely allied occupations.

Online academic program

An academic program that is offered entirely or almost entirely over the Internet. When pedagogically necessary, limited portions of an online academic program may require face-to-face instruction, professional practice or applied activities that are not appropriate for online delivery. Two types of online academic programs are recognized by the system:

Online exclusive. Online exclusive means an online program only offered online; no participation in face-to-face delivery is available.

Online plus. Online plus means an online program is offered online with face-to-face options available for one or more courses.

Preparatory course

A lower-division college-level course outside of an academic program that compensates for insufficient high school or equivalent preparation based on assessment for course placement. See System Procedure 3.3.1 Assessment for Course Placement.

Prerequisite course

A college-level course within an academic program that all students must complete before enrolling in another college level course or a major.

Program Advisory committee

A group established to provide guidance on academic program development and improvement including need, design, accountability, and closure.

Program service area

The region encompassing a significant majority of prospective or current students for a program location. The service area may be described as a list of communities, cities, counties, zip codes, states, number of miles from the program site, Minnesota planning or economic development regions, or by one or more employer sites.

Program transfer

All courses from a completed certificate, diploma, or degree that apply toward completion of another certificate, diploma, or degree but may not necessarily do so with equal course credits.

Stackable credentials

Academic awards that allow students to progress toward higher levels of education and skills, where all credits in one credential apply and count toward the requirements of the next credential level.

Task analysis

A process used to identify the knowledge, skills, tools, and abilities needed to perform an occupation.

Teach out communication plan

A plan developed by a college or university that provides for the equitable treatment of students when a program is suspended or closed before all students have completed their program of study, which may include a teach-out agreement between institutions.

Technical credits

Credits in a field of study in applied scientific, technological, or occupational/professional fields in an approved CTE program, excluding MnTC credits.

Transfer agreement

A formal agreement between two or more educational entities identifying the courses and credits within a program that transfer to a specific academic program using the system transfer agreement template, or the transfer pathway map or equivalent evidence of course transfer encoded in the Degree Audit Reporting System.

Transfer pathway associate degrees

Associate of arts (AA), associate of science (AS), and associate of fine arts (AFA) degrees designed to ensure completion of designated baccalaureate degree programs at Minnesota State universities within 120 credits.

Undergraduate course level

Course level reflects the degree of difficulty, the breadth and depth of learning expectations, or the sequential learning required of knowledge. Course content and level are determined by college and university faculty through established procedures.

Developmental. Developmental course content prepares students for entry into college level courses. Developmental level course credits do not apply toward a certificate, diploma, or degree.

Lower-division. Lower-division course content prepares students for specific academic program outcomes or for upper-division undergraduate coursework at a university.

Upper-division. Upper-division course content builds upon or integrates knowledge gained in lower-division undergraduate courses. Content of upper-division courses is determined by the university faculty through established procedures.

Unnecessary program duplication

When two or more academic programs serve overlapping program service areas in which the number of prospective and enrolled students is insufficient to sustain one or more of

the programs or, for occupational programs, the number of current and projected job openings is insufficient to maintain an acceptable related employment rate for graduates.

Work-based learning

Paid or unpaid applied work experiences designed to address one or more program learning outcomes in courses or programs designed and evaluated by faculty members. Work-based learning involves a method such as apprenticeship, clinical experience, cooperative education, experiential learning, externship, internship, or practicum.

Part 3. Authorized Academic Awards

Subpart A. College and university award authority

A college or university may change its college or university type or become authorized to confer new academic awards for which it is not authorized by submitting an application to the chancellor and obtaining approval from the Board of Trustees. The application must include demonstration of college or university readiness and capacity to deliver the new award.

Subpart B. Academic award attributes

Academic awards must have the following attributes.

- 1. Undergraduate certificate.** An undergraduate certificate is awarded upon completion of a 9 to 30 credit academic program. An undergraduate certificate may have an occupational outcome or address a focused area of study. An undergraduate certificate must not have emphases.

The catalog description must clearly describe to students how the certificate stacks into or stacks on top of other credentials in a focused area of study, or if it is a stand-alone certificate.

If there is a diploma or associate degree offered in the same field of study, all technical credits earned for a certificate must be applicable toward any available degree offered by the college in the same field of study. *See Operating Instruction 3.36.1.4 Stackable Credentials.*

The certificate catalog description must clearly describe to students how it stacks into other credentials in a pathway.

At least one-third of the credits in the undergraduate certificate must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

An undergraduate certificate less than 9 credits in length may be approved when the academic program prepares an individual for employment and the length or the designation as a certificate is endorsed by a program advisory committee and is required by an employer, a licensing body or another regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board. These certificates are often referred to as industry-recognized credentials.

Advanced Certificates are undergraduate certificates designed to up-skill alumni and practitioners in the field with advanced technical skills. Advanced Certificates are designed to stack on top of an applicable diploma or associate degrees.

- 2. Diploma.** An undergraduate diploma is awarded upon the completion of a minimum of 31 credits that prepare students for employment. A minimum of 24 credits must be in occupational or technical courses.

If there is an associate degree offered in this field of study, all technical credits earned for a diploma must be applicable toward any available degree offered by the college in the same field of study. See Operating Instructions 3.36.1.4 Stackable Credentials.

If there is no associate degree offered in this field of study, a diploma between 45 and 60 credits in length may be approved when the academic program prepares an individual for employment and the length is endorsed by a program advisory committee and is required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a length of 60 credits when the waiver criteria in Part 3, Subpart D is met.

A diploma may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits when there are at least 30 credits in the major that are common to the emphases.

A diploma may be individualized according to the standards outlined in Part 5. Subpart F, to provide a student an opportunity to design an academic program to meet specific occupational goals that cannot be met by current program offerings.

At least one-third of the credits in the diploma must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation by the faculty and approval by the president of the college.

- 3. Associate of arts degree.** An associate of arts degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 credit academic program in the liberal arts and sciences. It is designed for transfer to a baccalaureate degree-granting college or university.

An associate of arts degree requires completion of at least a 40 credit curriculum that fulfills the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum goal areas.

The associate of arts degree program is named Liberal Arts and Sciences or [Discipline] Transfer Pathway.

An associate of arts degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each in liberal arts and science fields, provided there is a transfer agreement with a related baccalaureate major offered by one or more system universities.

At least 15 credits in the associate of arts degree or associate of arts transfer pathway degree must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president or designee of the college or university.

An associate of arts degree (AA) that is a transfer pathway is awarded upon completion of a 60 credit academic program in the liberal arts and sciences and is titled “[Discipline] Transfer Pathway.” Transfer pathway programs are designed to ensure completion of designated baccalaureate degree programs at Minnesota State universities within 120 credits.

- 4. Associate of fine arts degree.** An associate of fine arts degree is a named degree awarded upon completion of a 60 credit academic program in particular disciplines in the fine arts.

An associate of fine arts degree is designed to transfer in its entirety to a related fine arts discipline baccalaureate degree program. An articulation agreement with a related baccalaureate degree program at a regionally accredited university is required. A Minnesota State college shall pursue a transfer agreement with a Minnesota State university before establishing a transfer agreement with a non-system university.

An associate of fine arts degree (AFA) that is a transfer pathway is awarded upon completion of a 60 credit academic program in the liberal arts and sciences and is titled “[Discipline] Transfer Pathway.” Transfer pathway programs are designed to ensure completion of designated baccalaureate degree programs at Minnesota State universities within 120 credits.

An associate of fine arts degree requires a minimum of 24 credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. Requirements for the following disciplines have been adopted.

Art. An associate of fine arts degree in art requires a minimum of 24 credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

Creative Writing. An associate of fine arts degree in creative writing requires completion of the entire Minnesota Transfer Curriculum with a minimum of 40 credits from all ten goal areas.

Dance. An associate of fine arts degree in dance requires completion of the entire Minnesota Transfer Curriculum with a minimum of 40 credits from all ten goal areas.

Music. An associate of fine arts degree in music requires at least 30 credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

Theatre arts. An associate of fine arts degree in theatre arts requires completion of the entire Minnesota Transfer Curriculum with a minimum of 40 credits from all ten goal areas.

An associate of fine arts degree must not have emphases.

An associate of fine arts degree program may be individualized according to the standards outlined in Part 5, Subpart F, to provide a student an opportunity to design an academic program to meet specific academic or occupational goals that cannot be met by current program offerings. Associate of fine arts individualized studies degree programs do not require a transfer agreement.

At least 15 credits in the associate of fine arts degree or associate of fine arts transfer pathway degree must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a length of 60 credits when (1) the waiver criteria in Part 3, Subpart D, are met and (2) an articulation agreement specifies the transfer of a greater number of credits.

- 5. Associate of science degree.** An associate of science degree is awarded upon completion of a 60-credit academic program in scientific, technological, or other professional fields.

The associate of science degree is designed to transfer in its entirety to one or more related baccalaureate degree programs. A Minnesota State college shall pursue a

transfer agreement with one or more Minnesota State universities before establishing a transfer agreement with a non-system university.

An associate of science transfer pathway degree (AS) is awarded upon completion of an academic program in scientific, technological, or other professional fields and is titled “[Discipline] Transfer Pathway”. Transfer pathway programs are designed to transfer all courses within the pathway into designated baccalaureate degree programs identified by system universities.

An associate of science degree may address a single specialty or a set of allied specialties such as, but not limited to, (1) agriculture, (2) business, (3) computer and information sciences, (4) education, (5) engineering, (6) engineering technologies, (7) environmental sciences, (8) health sciences, and (9) natural sciences.

The associate of science degree requires a minimum of 30 credits selected from at least six of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

All technical credits earned for a certificate and/or a diploma must be applicable toward an AS degree offered by the college in the same field of study. *See Operating Instructions 3.36.1.4 Stackable Credentials.*

An associate of science degree or associate of science transfer pathway degree must not have emphases.

An associate of science degree may be individualized according to the standards outlined in Part 5, Subpart F, to provide a student an opportunity to design an academic program to meet specific occupational goals that cannot be met by current program offerings. Associate of science individualized studies programs do not require a transfer agreement.

At least 15 credits in an associate of science degree or associate of science transfer pathway degree must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a length of 60 credits when (1) the waiver criteria in Part 3, Subpart D, are met and (2) a transfer agreement specifies the transfer of a greater number of credits.

- 6. Associate of applied science degree.** An associate of applied science degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 credit academic program in a named field of study in scientific, technological or other professional fields.

An associate of applied science degree prepares students for employment in an occupation or range of occupations. An associate of applied science degree may also be accepted in transfer to a related baccalaureate program.

An associate of applied science degree requires a minimum of 15 credits selected from at least three of the ten goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. At least 30 credits must be in the academic program's occupational or technical field of preparation.

All technical credits earned for a certificate and/or a diploma must be applicable toward an AAS degree offered by the college in the field of study. *See Operating Instruction 3.36.1.4 Stackable Credentials.*

An associate of applied science degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each when there are at least 30 credits in the major that are common to the emphases.

An associate of applied science degree program may be individualized according to the standards outlined in Part 5, Subpart F, to provide a student an opportunity to design an academic program to meet specific occupational goals that cannot be met by current program offerings.

At least 15 credits in an associate of applied science must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the college or university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a length of 60 credits when (1) the waiver criteria in Part 3, Subpart C, are met and (2) an articulation agreement, where applicable, specifies the transfer of a greater number of credits.

- 7. Baccalaureate degree.** A baccalaureate degree is awarded upon completion of a 120 credit academic program incorporating general education, major requirements and, as appropriate, a minor.

The bachelor of arts degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major that focuses on study in the liberal or fine arts.

The bachelor of science degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major that prepares individuals to apply knowledge and skills in areas other than the liberal or fine arts.

A bachelor of applied science (BAS) degree features application of knowledge, skills, and abilities and includes at least 30 credits focused on an occupation or set of

closely allied occupations. A bachelor of applied science degree may incorporate a variety of methods to achieve its applied focus such as experiential learning or a capstone project. A bachelor of applied science degree may achieve its applied focus through an articulation agreement with an applied occupational certificate, diploma, or degree and may reflect a model such as:

- a. Career Ladder: A career ladder model adds additional technical course work to an applied certificate, diploma, or degree,
- b. Management: A management model adds business and administrative course work to an applied certificate, diploma, or degree, or
- c. Completion: A completion model adds general education course work to one or more applied certificates, diplomas, or degrees.

The chancellor or designee may approve academic programs culminating in a more specific baccalaureate degree type, for example, bachelor of applied science, bachelor of fine arts, bachelor of music, bachelor of science in nursing, bachelor of social work, or another designated type.

At least 40 of the required credits for the baccalaureate degree must be at the upper-division level.

A baccalaureate degree requires at least a 40 credit curriculum that fulfills all of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

A baccalaureate degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each when at least 18 credits in the major are common to all the emphases.

Each university shall identify and publish a current list of designated baccalaureate degree programs accepting transfer pathways.

A baccalaureate degree program may be individualized according to the standards outlined in Part 5, Subpart F, to provide a student an opportunity to design an academic program to meet specific occupational goals that cannot be met by current program offerings.

At least 30 credits in a baccalaureate degree must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. These requirements may be decreased upon recommendation by the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

A waiver may be granted to exceed a length of 120 credits when the waiver criteria in Part 3, Subpart C, are met.

A baccalaureate completion program consists of at least 40 upper division credits, and leads to the completion of a baccalaureate degree offered by a university beyond its campus.

8. **Graduate certificate.** A graduate certificate is awarded upon completion of a 9 to 30 credit academic program in a focused area of study at the graduate level.

A graduate certificate must not have an “emphasis.”

All credits in a graduate certificate must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

9. **Master’s degree.** A master’s degree is awarded upon completion of a 30 to 54 graduate level credit academic program beyond a bachelor’s degree in a discipline or professional field.

A master of arts degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major that focuses on study in the liberal or fine arts.

A master of science degree is awarded upon completion of a curriculum with a major that prepares individuals to apply knowledge and skill in areas other than the liberal or fine arts.

The chancellor may approve academic programs culminating in a more specifically named master’s degree type, for example, master of arts in teaching, master of business administration, master of fine arts, master of public administration, or master of science in nursing.

At least one-half of the required credits in a master’s degree must be restricted exclusively to graduate student enrollment. No more than 15 credits of the master’s degree may be master’s dual enrollment courses.

A master’s degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits when at least 18 credits in the major are common to all the emphases.

All credits in the master’s degree must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

A master’s degree more than 54 credits in length may be approved by the chancellor when the length is (1) required by an employer, a licensing body or other regulatory agency, accrediting association, or board, or (2) consistent with nationwide common practice.

10. Education specialist degree. An education specialist degree is awarded upon completion of a 60 to 72 credit academic program at the graduate level in the professional education field. The education specialist degree may be awarded to a holder of a master's degree after the successful completion of a course of graduate study of at least 30 semester credits.

An education specialist degree may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits each when at least 18 credits are required in the post-master's portion of the degree.

No more than 16 credits of an education specialist degree may be master's dual-enrollment courses.

All credits in the education specialist degree must be taught by the faculty recommending the award. This requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval by the president of the university.

11. Doctorate. A doctorate is awarded upon completion of a graduate level academic program of at least 72 credits beyond the baccalaureate degree in an applied professional field. Minnesota State is not authorized to offer doctorate of philosophy degrees.

Minnesota state universities are authorized to grant the doctorate in audiology, business, education, nursing, psychology, and physical therapy.

At least 45 credits in graduate level courses must be taught by the faculty recommending the award, including up to 12 credits for a dissertation or equivalent project. At least 36 of these 45 credits must be in doctoral only courses. This 45-credit requirement may be decreased upon recommendation of the faculty and approval of the president of the university.

No more than 16 credits of the doctorate may be master's dual enrollment courses. A doctorate may have one or more emphases of at least 9 credits when there are at least 18 credits in the post-master's portion of the academic program.

Subpart C. Program Credit Length Waivers for Associate and Baccalaureate Degrees

- 1. Authority.** The system office determines the approval or disapproval of all requests for waivers to exceed program credit length limitations.
- 2. Criteria for granting waivers.** Credit length waivers may be granted when determined necessary to ensure that the degree provided meets industry or

professional standards. Waivers must be granted only when a need for a longer program credit length is demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- a. Industry Standards
 - 1) National or international program certification;
 - 2) National or international standards, including skill standards;
 - 3) Standards recommended by a primary employer or multiple employers within a program service area-
- b. Professional Standards
 - 1) National specialized program accreditation;
 - 2) State licensure requirements;
 - 3) National practices or standards-

3. Waiver process for associate of science, associate of fine arts, and baccalaureate degrees. The following process must be followed to request a waiver:

- a. Preparation of a waiver application for submission to the system office must be consistent with accepted college or university curriculum approval processes. Group waiver requests for baccalaureate, associate of fine arts, and associate of science degree programs in the same discipline must be pursued by all colleges and universities offering that degree program. Any proposed changes to a group waiver must be approved by all colleges and universities offering that academic award. An associate of arts program cannot seek a degree credit cap waiver.
- b. Program advisory committees may provide recommendations on learning requirements. Program advisory committee recommendations that support the standards may be submitted with the waiver request. For student representation on college or university program advisory committees, see Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1 Student Involvement in Decision-Making.
- c. Waiver applications will be distributed for review and comment to state student associations, faculty union leadership, and college and university administrators.
- d. The Academic Affairs Unit in the system office will act on the waiver application and notify the applicant.
- e. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be submitted to the senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs. The senior vice chancellor or designee shall make the final determination on the waiver appeal and the decision is binding on all parties.
- f. Public information regarding the waiver process, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be available on the system office website.

4. Waiver process for diplomas and associate of applied science degrees. The following process must be followed to request a waiver:

- a. Preparation of a waiver application for submission to the system office must be consistent with accepted college or university curriculum approval processes.

- b. An associate of applied science waiver application must compare and contrast credit lengths of comparable programs and provide a program analysis describing learning outcomes not found in shorter programs.
- c. Program advisory committees shall provide recommendations on learning requirements. For student representation on college or university academic advisory committees, see Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1.
- d. Waiver applications must document the approval of the college or university curriculum committee, the program advisory committee, and the college or university student representative on the program advisory committee. If there was no student representative on the program advisory committee, the college or university student association shall review and comment on the waiver application.
- e. Waiver applications will be distributed for review and comment to state student associations, faculty union leadership, and college and university administrators.
- f. The Academic Affairs Unit in the system office will act on the waiver application and notify the applicant.
- g. Appeals related to waiver decisions will be submitted to the senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs. The senior vice chancellor or designee shall make a final determination on the waiver appeal and the decision is binding on all parties.
- h. Public information regarding the waiver process, review criteria, rationale for decisions, and decisions reached will be available on the office website.
- i. Associate of applied science programs approved to exceed 60 credits must include an explanation of why the program is longer than similar programs in the catalog description.
- j. All programs with an approved credit waiver must be reviewed at least every five years to ensure the academic program and waiver remain necessary.

Subpart D. Clock hour to credit equivalence

Student work-based learning experiences measured in clock hours may be equated to credits.

Colleges and universities shall collaborate to establish a common number of credits for a work-based learning experience when a state or federal agency or regulatory board requires a set number of clock hours.

Subpart E. Reporting credit hours for federal student aid

For purposes of determining program eligibility for federal student aid, colleges and universities shall report credit hours in conformance with requirements of U.S. Code of Federal Regulations 34 CFR 600.2 and 668.8 (k) and (l).

Part 4. Authority to Establish Academic Program Locations

Approval of an academic program location-

Location approval is required for a college or university to deliver a new, replicated, or relocated academic program at a location where it is not currently delivering any academic program. Location approval requires academic program approval and, when applicable, lease approval.

The academic program application must specify the location name, postal address, and lease information as applicable. For a location not owned by the system, the location application must include information regarding approval of the lease as required in System Procedure 6.7.2, Part 4.

Part 5. Academic Program Approval

The chancellor shall establish processes for academic program applications and continued maintenance and administration of programs.

Subpart A. Approval of new academic programs

A new academic program requires approval by the chancellor before it is offered by a college or university.

All college-level courses required for academic program completion, with the exception of preparatory courses, must be included in the total number of credits for an undergraduate academic program.

New program applications must address the following items as detailed in the program application form available online:

1. Alignment with the college or university mission
2. Transfer agreements, partnership agreements, and program accreditation information
3. Curriculum attributes (Credit Length, Gen Ed/Technical Course requirements, Equity Lens, Program Learning Outcomes, CIP/SOC codes, etc.)
4. Enterprise system requirements
5. Program supply and demand data and unnecessary duplication
6. Related Grants (if applicable)

The chancellor may conditionally approve an academic program.

Subpart B. Maintenance of academic program records

Colleges and universities shall maintain their academic program records in the system program inventory to inform students, address consumer disclosure requirements, and support college or university business practices. Program information to be maintained includes the following:

1. Accreditation for the program, if applicable

2. Career clusters, pathways, and assessments (colleges)
3. Center of excellence affiliation, if applicable
4. Closed enrollment status and organization(s) served
5. Delivery mode
6. Effective begin and end terms
7. Emphases, if applicable
8. Locations
9. Name
10. Catalog program description
11. Program learning outcomes
12. URL of program webpage
13. Time to completion
14. Admission Requirements
15. Classification Instructional Code (CIP)
16. Industry Certifications
17. Credit Length
18. Award type and level
19. Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, if applicable
20. Transfer Pathway Designation
21. Baccalaureate Completion Programs
22. Traditional or competency based

Subpart C. Approval of names for academic programs and emphases

Colleges and universities have considerable latitude to name an academic program consistent with its content and purpose, although consideration should be made for clarity, brevity, and professionalism.

1. Names for academic programs must:
 - a. represent program learning outcomes as reflected by core content of the curriculum,
 - b. reflect the assigned Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code unless a suitable CIP code is not available,
 - c. be less than or equal to 50 characters in length, including spaces so that a name can appear on student awards and transcripts. If this title exceeds 50 characters (including spaces), a short title must also be identified due to ISRS field limitations,
 - d. include the word “advanced only” when justified relative to preceding programs, comparison to entry level job standards, or special admissions criteria,
 - e. be permitted to use the prefix “pre-” when
 - i. the program prepares individuals for an associate of science degree that a graduate must complete to be admitted to a baccalaureate-level program

- that is the minimum necessary qualification for practice, such as any of the engineering specialties,
- ii. marketing a baccalaureate degree for a post-baccalaureate professional field such as pre-dentistry, pre-medicine, pre-pharmacy, pre-veterinary medicine, pre-nursing, pre-chiropractic medicine, pre-occupational therapy, pre-optometry, and pre-physical therapy.
- f. Transfer pathway programs must follow the naming convention “[Discipline] Transfer Pathway”.
2. Academic program names must not include ampersands or references to:
 - a. the words “program,” “awards” (certificate, diploma, associate, baccalaureate, master’s, doctorate), “delivery mode,” “emphasis,” “option,” or other curricular descriptors,
 - b. the term “pathway” in a program title is limited to designated transfer pathway programs
 - c. words such as “basic,” “careers,” “concepts,” “core,” “general,” “introduction,” and “orientation” when the program is intended for occupational preparation,
 - d. accreditation or external curriculum approvals, such as AACSB, ABET, ACS, or NCATE. An acronym, if essential, may be used in conjunction with relevant text to communicate program content,
 - e. licensure when licensure is granted by an external agency and not a college or university. An emphasis title may include the word “non-licensure” to indicate that the program does not prepare a student to apply for licensure,
 - f. certified or registered when this recognition is granted by an external agency and not a college or university. Either term is allowed in an academic program name if doing so is required by an external agency. Nursing program titles recommended by the Minnesota Board of Nursing must exclude use of the words “certification” and “registered”, for example:
 - “Nursing Assistant” for nursing assistant certification and home health aide certification,
 - “Practical Nursing” for licensed practical nursing, or
 - “Nursing” for registered nursing.

Subpart D. Approval of changes to existing academic programs

1. **Redesign.** Prior approval must be obtained from the chancellor for an academic program redesign that affects the approved name, CIP code, the addition of emphases, a change in award, or a change in credit length when the change exceeds the maximum or fails to meet the minimum credit lengths defined in policy.

Prior approval is not required for deletion of emphases or changes in credit length when the change is within the limits established by board policy. Colleges and universities shall report these changes to the chancellor or designee.

- 2. Suspension and reinstatement.** A college or university may suspend an academic program for three years. The college or university shall apply to the chancellor for suspension of an academic program. The application must include documented reasons for suspension and a reinstatement plan with a date for reinstatement. The suspension may be extended for up to one year. The chancellor shall close an academic program that has not been reinstated following a suspension.

Reinstatement requires approval of the chancellor based on review of required documentation. The reinstatement plan must describe reasons for the suspension, identify specific actions to resolve the problems, and address the following factors, as applicable:

- a. suspension rationale,
- b. student enrollment data (past three years),
- c. graduate data (past three years),
- d. the teach out plan to accommodate students currently enrolled in the academic program, that includes:
 - A communication plan that includes two forms of written correspondence to all students (who have declared the academic program) with information of any planned disclosures or other communications concerning their options, and the timeline and deadlines to complete all program requirements. The college or university may communicate to other applicable students.
 - Notification to all partner institutions that the college/university has articulation or transfer agreements in writing to end date them, and information to students that are part of an articulation or transfer agreement allowing them to finish the program.
 - Any applicable shared/consortia agreements for the teach out of students with a partner college or university.
- e. communication plan for appropriate constituent groups (students, faculty, advisory committee, closed enrollment partners, and community)
- f. academic program accreditation or licensure, alternatives considered, and other Minnesota State colleges and universities continuing to offer a similar program
- g. the effective start and end term dates of the suspension (one to three years)
- h. other factors affecting academic program operation.
- i. A suspended academic program must not be relocated or replicated until reinstated.

3. Closure. Closure of an academic program must be approved by the chancellor or designee. Approval will only be granted under one of the following circumstances:

- a. the closure is requested by a college or university, and the documentation provided supports closure,
- b. the chancellor determines that closure is warranted, or
- c. the academic program has not been reinstated following a suspension.

The academic program closure application must be documented, as applicable, regarding:

- a. rationale
- b. student enrollment data (past three years),
- c. graduate data (past three years),
- d. the teach out plan to accommodate students currently enrolled in the academic program,
- e. any impacted articulation or transfer agreements
- f. communication plan for appropriate constituent groups (students, faculty, advisory committee, closed enrollment partners, and community)
- g. alternatives considered, and other Minnesota State schools continuing to offer a similar program
- h. the effective term date to close the program
- i. other factors affecting academic program operation.

Once closed, a program can only be reopened, replicated, or relocated by submitting a new program application.

4. Academic program replication or relocation. Replication and/or relocation of an academic program requires approval by the chancellor when the replication or relocation:

- a. is offered at a location that is new to the college or university,
- b. affects an existing agreement between colleges and/or universities,
- c. is in the same service area or within a reasonable commute of a similar academic program offered by another college or university,
- d. is a baccalaureate completion program delivered by a state university, or
- e. involves leasing non-system property.

If none of the above applies, only notification by the college or university president to the chancellor of the location is required.

Relocation to another college or university requires approval of the chancellor. The college or university to which an academic program is reassigned must provide for the viability of the academic program.

Subpart E. Student consultation and review regarding academic program decisions

When academic program changes are proposed as described in Part 5, Subpart D, students must be provided an opportunity to be involved as required by Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1.

Subpart F. Approval of individualized academic programs

- 1. Guidelines.** Individualized studies programs must:
 - a. not have emphases,
 - b. be called “Individualized Studies” and use the CIP code 30.9999, and
 - c. transfer in their entirety (when designed for transfer) to a specific or individualized baccalaureate degree program.

- 2. Student program plan.** Individualized studies programs require colleges and universities to manage student program plans such that each student prepares their plan with guidance from a faculty advisor and with approvals as required by the college and university. The student program plan must be kept on file by each participating college and university.
 - a. For associate degree programs designed for transfer (AA, AFA, and AS), the student program plan will include:
 1. a statement of the student’s intent to transfer to a specific baccalaureate degree program at one or more universities,
 2. a statement of the intended program outcomes,
 3. identification of the courses to be completed in the associate degree program, and
 4. when applicable, assessment of student job prospects upon program completion.

 - b. For non-transfer programs, the student program plan will include:
 1. a statement of the intended program outcomes,
 2. identification of the courses to be completed in the program, and
 3. when applicable, assessment of student job prospects upon program completion.

- 3. Minnesota transfer curriculum.** Individualized studies programs offered by a college or university must meet the minimum number of Minnesota Transfer Curriculum goal areas as specified for the academic award in this procedure.

- 4. Program design.** Students may consider the following program designs:
 - a. thematic focus indicates coursework is in two or more disciplines organized around a theme, for example, food safety, from the perspectives of sociology, economics, and health.

- b. interdisciplinary focus indicates coursework is in two disciplines, such as gerontology and exercise science.
- c. disciplinary focus indicates that coursework is all in the same discipline, for example, computer science.

Subpart G. Expedited approval of 9-16 credit certificate programs

Approval of certificate programs designed to meet a near-term workforce training need requested by employer(s), workforce center(s), or other entities can be expedited depending upon the potential for unnecessary program duplication. Documentation must demonstrate training need for the current or next semester, but evidence of other labor market information and student interest is not required.

1. **Potential duplication.** When another college or university offers a similar program online or within an overlapping program service area or within a 45 mile commute distance, a notice of intent must be distributed to other colleges or universities through Program Navigator with a five-day waiting period. Upon approval, the proposed program can be offered for one or more cohorts within a 12-month period from the start of the first cohort. Subsequently, a new program application must be submitted for the program to be considered for continuation.
2. **Non-duplicative.** When another college or university does not offer a similar program online or within the program service area, a notice of intent is not required. Upon approval, the proposed program may be offered without conditions.

Subpart H. Competency-based education program approval

Competency-based programs must be approved by the system office and the institutional accrediting agency as a course/credit based, direct assessment, or hybrid program. Colleges and universities must complete a substantive change application for approval before offering the program.

Colleges and universities must obtain college or university approval, system approval, program specialized accreditor agency approval (if required), and institutional accreditor approval before enrolling students and offering the program.

Part 6. Student Options when Academic Programs are Suspended, Closed, Relocated, or Changed

A college or university shall establish plans to address students' opportunities to complete an academic program when it has been suspended, closed, relocated, or when the requirements have changed.

Subpart A. Notification of academic program suspensions, closures, or relocations

A college or university shall develop a plan to serve students who were admitted to an academic program proposed for suspension, closure, or relocation. The teach out plan must identify admitted students who are covered by the plan and their options to complete the academic program. The college or university shall notify students about their options and

assist them with their individual plans. After college/university and system office approval of suspension, students must be notified as soon as possible of their options to complete the program and the timeline to do it.

Subpart B. Notification of academic program changes

A college or university shall notify students who have been admitted to an academic program of any changes to the academic program. Students must be given an opportunity to graduate under the catalog requirements at the time of their admission to the college or university or under any subsequent catalog requirements.

Part 7. Academic Program Review

Periodic review of academic programs is the responsibility of the college or university. The review must encompass all instructional areas and be structured according to discipline, academic program or program cluster, department, or other academic unit.

Date of Adoption: 08/01/07
Date of Implementation: 08/01/07
Date of Last Review: 03/17/25

Date and Subject of Amendments:

- 03/17/25 – *Full Review.* The amendment (1) added new definitions for accreditation, institutional accreditation, program specialized accreditation, competency based education, course/credit-based approach, direct assessment approach, hybrid approach, stackable credentials, teach-out plans, and technical credits. (2) Clarified the NESS legislation rules for stackable certificates, diplomas and associate degrees. (3) Clarified the dual enrollment course credits allowed in a Master’s Degree, (4) Added language to the 60/120 credit cap waiver section requiring waivers to be reviewed and renewed every five years, (5) for diplomas that exceed 60 credits to get waiver approval in the same fashion that associate degrees do, (6) and added new language regarding competency-based education program approval.
- 08/28/24 – *Full Five-Year Review.* Updated language on Master’s degrees and Minn. Stat. 136F.32 DEGREES; DIPLOMAS; CERTIFICATES (NESS legislation).
- 06/21/23 – *Removed Articulation Agreement, Baccalaureate completion program, Advisory Committee, and Colleges and Universities from the Part 2 Definitions. Limited Review of Part 3, Subpart C, 3 and 4. Deleted “associates of arts” in title of Part 3, Subp. C, 3, added requirement that Group Waiver requests for similar academic programs must be pursued by all schools offering that degree program, added “The senior vice chancellor or designee shall make the final determination on a waiver appeal and the decision is binding on all parties.” to clarify waiver application process, and added to Part 5, Subp. D, 1 the requirement that “once closed, a program can only be reopened, replicated, or relocated by submitting a new program application.”*

Additional HISTORY.