

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

August 13, 2026

Agenda Item:	Rules – Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 21 (amend)
State Board Priority:	Goal 4
State Board Role/Authority:	This rulemaking is proposed under the authority provided in Iowa Code section 256.139, as amended by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.
Presenter(s):	Thomas A. Mayes General Counsel and Rules Coordinator
Attachment(s):	One
Recommendation:	It is recommended that the State Board give notice of its intent to amend Chapter 21.
Background:	This proposed rulemaking implements 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610, by establishing a statewide common course numbering system and a statewide lower division general education framework for Iowa community colleges. This proposed rulemaking establishes processes for identifying equivalent courses, assigning common course numbers, developing common course descriptions and learning outcomes through a faculty process, and implementing a common lower division general education framework. A hearing on the Department's regulatory analysis occurred on August 11, 2026.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT[281]

Notice of Intended Action

The State Board of Education hereby proposes to amend Chapter 21, “Community Colleges,” Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is proposed under the authority provided in Iowa Code section 256.139, as amended by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code section 256.139, as amended by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.

Purpose and Summary

This proposed rulemaking implements 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610, by establishing a statewide common course numbering system and a statewide lower division general education framework for Iowa community colleges. This proposed rulemaking establishes processes for identifying equivalent courses, assigning common course numbers, developing common course descriptions and learning outcomes through a faculty process, and implementing a common lower division general education framework.

A hearing on the Department’s regulatory analysis occurred on August 11, 2026.

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the state of Iowa.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the State Board for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to chapter 7—2504.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit comments concerning this proposed rulemaking. Written comments in response to this rulemaking must be received by the Department no later than 4:30 p.m. on September 22, 2026. Comments should be directed to:

Thomas A. Mayes, Rules Coordinator
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Phone: 515.281.8661
Email: thomas.mayes@iowa.gov

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

September 22, 2026, Room B50, Grimes State Office Building, from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Or by video conference at meet.google.com/bqq-inqz-hha, or by phone at

1 609-438-1406 PIN: 271 490 390#

Persons who wish to make oral comments at the public hearing may be asked to state their names for the record and to confine their remarks to the subject of this proposed rulemaking.

Any persons who intend to attend the hearing and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the State Board and advise of specific needs.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its regular monthly meeting or at a special meeting. The Committee's meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

The following rulemaking action is proposed:

ITEM 1. Rescind subrule 21.4(1) and adopt the following **new** subrule in lieu thereof:

21.4(1) *General education.* General education is intended to provide breadth of learning to the community college experience. General education imparts common knowledge, promotes intellectual inquiry, and stimulates the examination of different perspectives, thus enabling people to function effectively in a complex and changing world. General education courses are not intended to be developmental in nature. Each community college is responsible for local implementation, publication, and assessment of student learning of its general education courses while ensuring ongoing compliance with the statewide lower division general education framework.

a. Uniform framework. Effective July 1, 2027, all community colleges will implement the statewide lower division general education framework for associate of arts (AA) and associate of science (AS) awards pursuant to Iowa Code section [256.139](#) as enacted by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.

b. Core disciplinary categories. The statewide lower division general education framework shall be established by the department and consist of the following four core disciplinary categories: communications, humanities, social science, and mathematics and science. To ensure seamless systemwide transferability, the department will collaborate with community colleges and consult with the liaison advisory committee on transfer students and the board of regents on the administration of the framework. The department has final administrative authority over the inclusion and modification of these categories within the statewide lower division general education framework.

c. Credit allocation guidelines. The specific credit allocation and credit distribution rules in the core disciplinary categories identified in paragraph [21.4\(1\)](#) “b” will be broadly aligned with the transfer standards developed pursuant to the statutory articulation pathways authorized by Iowa Code section [262.9\(31\)](#). The department shall coordinate with the community colleges and the board of regents to integrate these standards into the statewide lower division general education framework. The department-issued Iowa General Education Lower Division Framework Operational Guide will establish the administrative workflows necessary to submit, audit, and add courses, as well as the collaborative processes for updating credit allocations.

d. Statewide common course numbering integration. All courses approved to fulfill a distribution category requirement within the statewide lower division general education framework will follow the structural elements of paragraph [21.4\(7\)](#) “a.”

ITEM 2. Adopt the following **new** subrule 21.4(7):

21.4(7) *Statewide common course numbering system.* To ensure statewide transfer and alignment, all credit-bearing community college courses shall comply with requirements of the

statewide common course numbering system pursuant to Iowa Code section [256.139](#) as enacted by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.

a. Structural elements. A common course entry within the centralized statewide common course numbering directory consists of the following standardized elements:

- (1) Course prefix.
- (2) Course number.
- (3) Course name.
- (4) Course credit hours.
- (5) Course description.
- (6) Course learning outcomes.

b. Central registry and system maintenance. The department will maintain a centralized statewide common course numbering directory. Procedural guidance, submission timelines and administrative workflows will be established within the Iowa Common Course Numbering Operational Guide.

c. Equivalent course identification. The department will maintain a centralized statewide common course numbering directory. New courses will be submitted by institutions for department approval prior to adoption by a community college.

d. Statewide integration. Standardized course identifiers from the statewide common course numbering system will be utilized universally across all community college course catalogs, registration systems, and official student transcripts.

e. Rule of construction. Individual community colleges retain the autonomy to include additional learning outcomes to fulfill unique regional or transfer needs, provided the course includes all common course outcomes.