Iowa Community College Program Approval Guidelines

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IOWA™

Department of Education

State of Iowa
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Contents

Overview of Community College Program Approval

Program approval and review are critical accountability tools by which community colleges demonstrate the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the programs and services they offer their students.

The Iowa Department of Education's Division of Higher Education recognizes that individual colleges have the primary responsibility for establishing and evaluating the content, implementation, modification and review of instructional programs. Consequently, the Department's approval process is conducted in a collegial manner via the State of Iowa Curriculum System (STICS), a web-based app that provides a structured environment for colleges to submit new courses and programs and modify existing courses and programs. The Department's role in the approval process is to provide oversight and guidance to ensure programmatic compliance with state and federal laws, as well as with state and institutional accreditation standards.

For questions about the Program Approval Process, Common Course Number (CCN) or STICS:

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For program-specific questions by discipline consult the Discipline Consultants by Subject Area in STICS.

Program Approval Process

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

Career and technical education (CTE) programs leading to an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) or Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) degree, diploma or certificate require Department approval and must comply with state and federal requirements per Iowa Code 258; Iowa Code 260; Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 46 and Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21. When new CTE programs are developed, they must be approved by the Iowa Department of Education at least 30 days prior to student enrollment. The Department's program approval process is designed to ensure that the program meets state economic needs, state and institutional accreditation standards and is compliant with state and federal law. See the CTE Program Requirements section for more information.

New Programs

Assessment of Program Need/Duplication and Program Development

Each community college wishing to initiate a new instructional program must first submit a notice of intent (NOI) to offer the program. Before submitting the NOI change request to propose a CTE program, faculty and administrators within the program's discipline need to first determine the need for the program. This is done by analyzing region-specific, statewide and national labor market information and discussing employment opportunities for successful graduates.

Additionally, program faculty and administrators should establish an advisory council of practitioners in the field and utilize a DACUM (**D**eveloping **A C**urriculum) process to:

- Identify standards and benchmarks;
- Plan the program, develop curriculum and identify resources;
- Assess training needs, materials and methodologies (labs, clinics, etc.) and
- Identify required certifications/licensures and test preparation.

Once the college has gathered the information listed above, the college administrator should work with a Department Discipline Consultant to ensure that the program has the correct Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code (see Appendix A for more information on CIP numbers) and meets CTE program requirements as described in the CTE Program Requirements section. The college should also work with the discipline consultant to identify similar programs offered at other Iowa colleges to avoid duplication and undue proliferation of resources, learn about their challenges and potential threats and possibly establish partnerships. See the CTE Program Requirements section of this document for more information about program development, including determining program need and duplication.

Notice of Intent (NOI) Change Requests

After the CIP code has been determined and all of the necessary information has been gathered, the NOI is submitted as a change request in STICS. The NOI change request must be submitted at least 90 days prior to planned implementation.

The NOI form will ask colleges to provide the following:

- Anticipated annual and five-year enrollment for the program, as well as the anticipated annual and five-year number of completers for the program;
- Whether or not the program will include any required work experience and/or training;
- Information about the primary award for the program, including award type, ITSO (Instructional level, Type of program, Special emphasis, and Object purpose) code, award description, when the program will first be offered and how the award will be delivered;

- Occupational information, such as labor market information, if the occupation is nontraditional by gender, if there are minimum educational requirements for the occupation and if there are any professional credential requirements for the occupation;
- Industry information, such as external accreditation requirements;
- Linkages the program may have with secondary and/or post-secondary pathways, if there is any shared content the program will have with other colleges, efforts to collaborate with other postsecondary institutions with similar programs, any special need for the program in the state and information regarding possible program duplication and
- Completer information from programs offered at other colleges in the state.

Once the NOI is submitted and approved by the Department Program Quality Consultant and the Discipline Consultant, all 15 Iowa community college Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) are notified of the proposed program and given 14 calendar days to raise concerns, with particular attention to the duplication of programs (see flowchart below). If a college has a particular concern, the CAO will reject the NOI in STICS, and the Program Quality Consultant and Discipline Consultant will work with the proposing and concerned colleges to resolve the concern. If this intervention is not successful, the Department will convene an ad hoc Program Quality Steering Committee to attempt to devise a strategy for resolution to allow the college to continue developing their program. If no resolution is reached, even after involving high-level administrators, the Department may still allow the college to submit a New Program change request, but close attention will be paid to the stated program need, targeted population and content to ensure that all concerns have been addressed.

Notice of Intent (NOI) Approval Flowchart
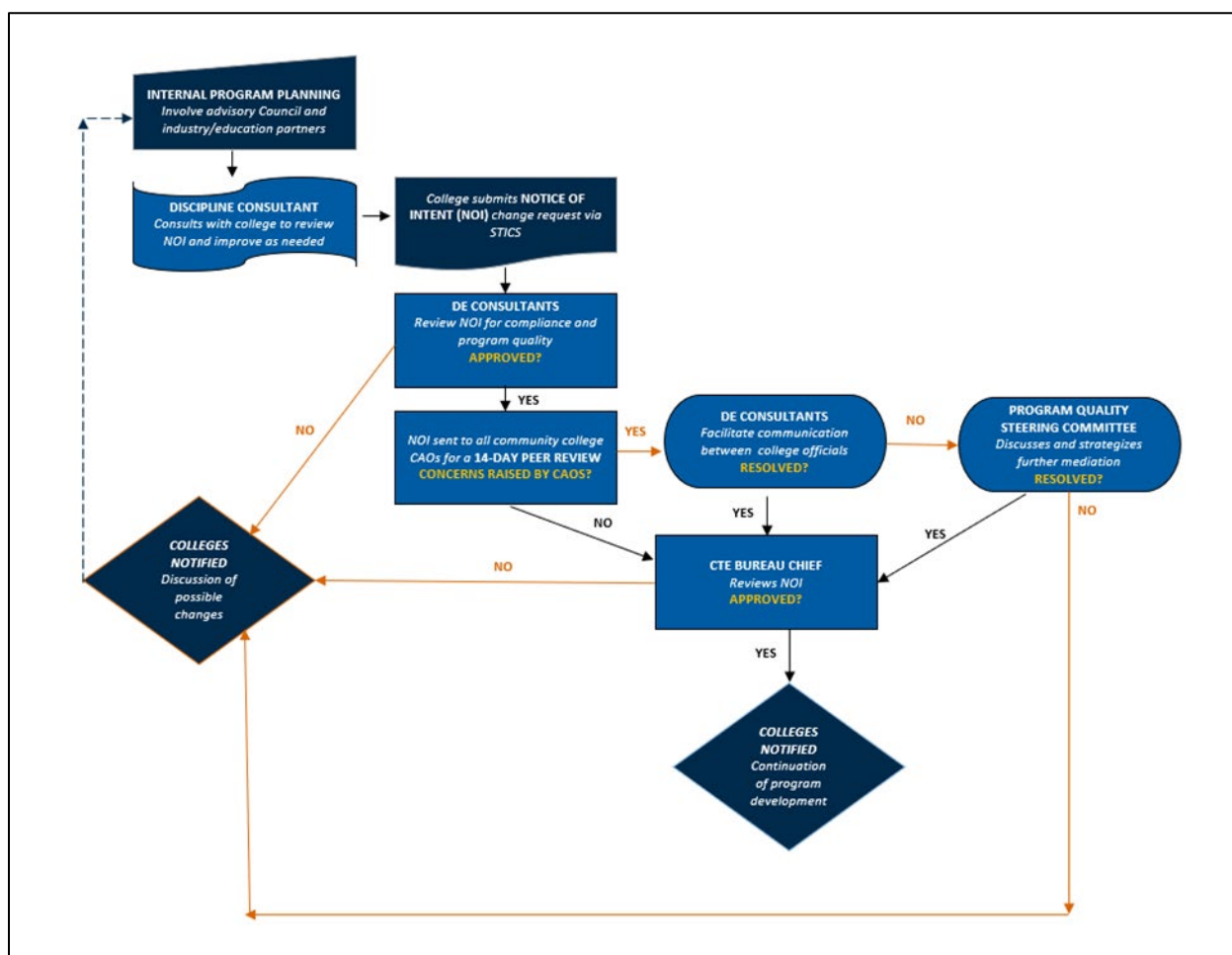
Notice of Intent Checklist of Activities

Please complete the following before submission that must occur at least 90 days prior to the designed implementation term (initial enrollment):

- ☐ Establish an advisory council and conduct a DACUM (Developing A Curriculum) to discuss program need and develop the framework of the program.
- ☐ Create a concise, yet informative program description for the primary award.
- ☐ Contact a Department Discipline Consultant to determine the proper CIP number for the program. Contact the Program Quality Consultant to determine the proper ITSO number for the program and its awards.
- ☐ Work with the Discipline Consultant to identify similar programs offered at other Iowa community colleges. Match exact CIP numbers and programs with similar titles.
- ☐ Discuss potential duplication or competition with other colleges, particularly those closest to your college. Create a sound case for the uniqueness of your proposed program and how you will avoid harmful competition with other Iowa community colleges and other public/private institutions.
- ☐ Gather labor market information to determine program need and student interest to make reliable enrollment, completion and job placement projections. If applicable, provide employer support of the program such as providing equipment, sponsoring internships/apprenticeships, providing clinical space and hiring graduates.
- ☐ Identify existing or potential linkages and articulation agreements with secondary schools/districts, other community colleges and four-year institutions.
- ☐ Identify business and industry partnerships to assist with equipment, internships/apprenticeships and job placement.

New Program Change Requests

Following approval of the NOI, a formal New Program change request must be submitted via STICS within one calendar year to the Department for approval. This phase of the process requires extensive college planning, research and curriculum development as described in the CTE Program Requirements section. Throughout the approval process, if concerns regarding program content, assessment or compliance are identified, the Department consultants will provide technical and subject-matter assistance to address the concerns.

The following is required for the New Program change request:

- Program details, such as the primary award type, the Iowa Variation, when the program will first be offered, link to the website used to market the program and the plan for assessing student attainment or program standards and benchmarks;
- Details for each award in the program, including the award title, ITSO code, award description, total number of weeks for the award, total number of credits for the award, how the award will be delivered, course numbers and titles listed by term, technical and general education course designations and footnotes and
- Assurance sign-offs, including advisory board approval, approval through the college's curriculum process and Board of Trustees approval.

Once the New Program change request is submitted, the proposal is reviewed by the Department Program Quality Consultant and assigned Discipline Consultant. The New Program request will be approved if it complies with state and federal regulations. These regulations pertain to the award type to be granted, program length, the determination of credit hours and program content. If issues arise, the Department consultants will provide content and technical assistance to guide the college to

compliance, if possible. New Program change requests must be submitted at least 60 days prior to the implementation term (i.e., initial student enrollment). College users and the college's president will receive an approval notification via STICS containing pertinent documents about the program. The program will be listed in STICS as "pending" until the implementation term begins.

New Program Approval Flowchart
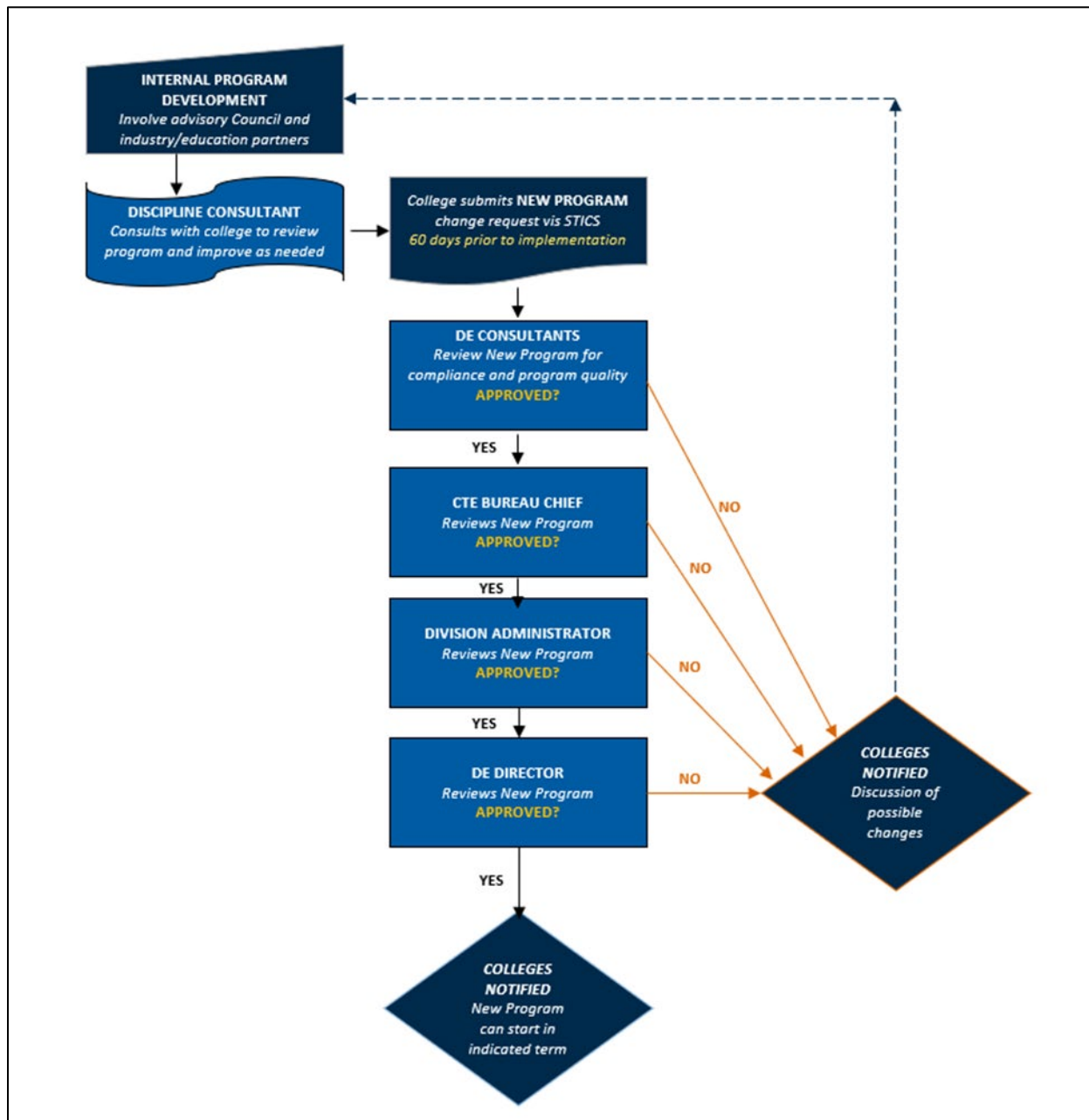
Note: Department approval is necessary prior to marketing a program for recruitment purposes. Any program marketing material prior to official approval must state that the program is "Pending Iowa Department of Education approval."

Once CTE programs are approved and active, Iowa Code requires that they be reviewed at least once every five years to ensure compliance with current state and federal requirements and accreditation standards. This mandate has been placed on the colleges to systematically review programs and use the findings to make decisions about program improvement, budget allocation and continuation. Each

institution's program review processes are evaluated and approved by the Department via the state accreditation process to ensure that program demand, quality, effectiveness and efficiency are routinely addressed and modified accordingly. More information about state accreditation can be found on the Department's [Community College Accreditation page](#).

New Program Checklist of Activities

Please complete the following before submission that must occur at least 60 days prior to the designed implementation term (initial enrollment):

- ☐ Create a concise, yet informative program description, with a unique description for each award.
- ☐ Contact the Program Quality Consultant to determine the proper ITSO number for the program and its awards.
- ☐ Work with the Discipline Consultant to identify programmatic standards and benchmarks.
- ☐ Use the Common Course Numbering (CCN) database in STICS to choose appropriate courses for the program, or create courses to meet program standards and benchmarks.
- ☐ Ensure that the program meets the compliance requirements for each award.
- ☐ Ensure that the program has been approved through the college curriculum process.
- ☐ Acquire Board of Trustees approval.

ICCPHSE Intent Process

Once a program is approved, STICS generates an *Intent to Offer a New Program or Location* form that the Department submits to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education (ICCPHSE) on the college's behalf. The council's primary function is to provide an effective means of coordination among the various institutions responsible for post-high school education in Iowa. While the council has no legal authority, it serves a critical statewide role by reviewing new academic programs and providing a forum for addressing concerns regarding duplication and undue proliferation of funds.

If concerns are identified by other institutions or requests for clarification are made through the ICCPHSE review process, the council will notify the proposing college. More information about the ICCPHSE can be found on the [Board of Regents website](#).

Program Modification Change Requests

Any program modifications deemed necessary to better meet the dynamic needs of industry require Department approval to ensure ongoing compliance. The approval process for program modification has been streamlined through the use of STICS and can be done year-round. Colleges must submit a Program Modification change request and work with an assigned Discipline Consultant to ensure ongoing state and federal compliance. Modifications should be submitted at least 30 days prior to implementation to allow Department consultants time to review and work with the college to improve the change request, if necessary, before final approval is granted.

Addition or Deletion of Program Awards

Program modifications can be used to add, modify or delete an award to a program (referred to as the "main" or "parent" program). These stacked awards, commonly known as "ladder" programs, allow students to earn awards that build upon one another. For example, students can earn a certificate and then continue on to a diploma or AAS degree. It is quite common for an AAS award to have one or more diploma or certificate awards. Colleges are encouraged to offer multiple entry and exit points, utilizing certificate and/or diploma awards as flexible components of a degree program.

An award may be added to a program if it leads to a lower-level award or to the same type of award. In other words, an AAS program may have several other AAS, diploma or certificate awards, but they may not have an AAA or APS award. Additionally, if a college has an approved diploma program, it may add a diploma or certificate award, but it cannot add an AAS award to the program. The addition of a higher level award would require a new program approval rather than just a program modification. If a college decides to delete an award for a program, they must ensure that a plan is in place for students who are still working on completing that award.
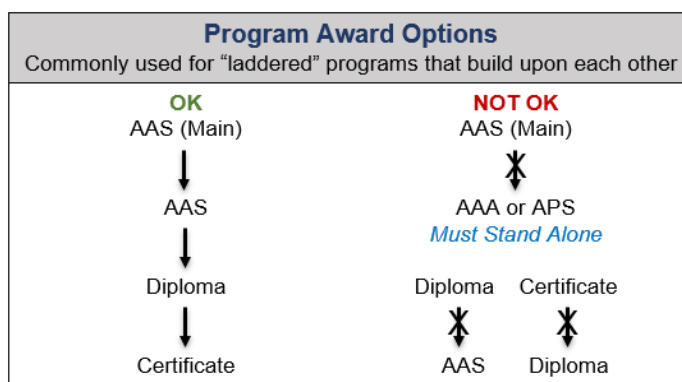
It is important to note that an award approved as an option to a main program may not be marketed independently, but rather in conjunction with the main award. In other words, if a college has an approved AAS program with a diploma award, the diploma may not be independently advertised to potential students separate from the AAS program.

CIP Reclassification

In order to maintain an accurate database of academic programs, colleges are strongly discouraged from changing CIP codes without Department approval. However, in situations where there is a CIP number that matches the intent/content of the program better than the current CIP number, a CIP reclassification may be necessary (**Note:** CIP reclassifications should not be done for Last Dollar Scholarship eligibility without approval from the Program Quality Consultant and Discipline Consultant). For a CIP reclassification, the college starts the process by discussing the proposed change with a Department Discipline Consultant. If it has been determined that a CIP reclassification is the best course of action, the next step is to submit an NOI change request in STICS. After the NOI is approved, the college will then submit a Program Modification change request which reflects the new CIP number.

Program Modification Checklist of Activities

Please complete the following before submission that must occur at least 30 days prior to the designed date of implementation (enrollment in revised program):

☐ Conduct advisory council meeting(s) to discuss program viability, relevance and quality to determine areas in need of modification (i.e., program structure, adding awards, changing awards, revising courses, etc.)

☐ If an award is to be added, consider whether it fits under the current CIP category or requires a distinct code. If distinct, the program would need to be proposed as a new program.

☐ If a main program or award changes in terms of credit hours, determine whether the ITSO code needs to be changed. If so, the ITSO change and modifications should be made using the Program Modification change request.

☐ Provide unique descriptions for each award added.

Program Deactivation Change Requests

A college may choose to deactivate a program that has no or very little enrollment or has been deemed unnecessary as part of the program review process. Colleges that choose to deactivate a program will use the Program Deactivation change request, indicating the semester that the program is to be

deactivated (i.e., no new students admitted). From that semester on, the program will be listed as inactive in STICS and on the Program Master (PGM) download. It is very important that a college have a "teach out" plan for any residual students in the program.

If a college wishes to reactivate an inactive program, it is highly recommended that the college contact the Program Quality Consultant before taking any actions in STICS. After consultation with the Program Quality Consultant, for programs that have been inactive for less than three years, the program can be reactivated using a Program Modification change request. However, if it has been more than three years since the program has been active, the college will need to submit a new NOI change request. After approval of the NOI, the college can then reactivate the program using a Program Modification change request.

Arts and Science Programs

College parallel (transfer) programs leading to Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degrees have strong general education components because they are intended to satisfy lower-division, liberal arts and science general education requirements for bachelor degrees. Furthermore, these degrees will meet the requirements of the Regents statewide articulation agreement or those specified in articulation agreements with public and private university programs. For more information about statewide articulation agreements between Iowa's Community Colleges and Public Universities, see *The Public Connection* document on the [Transfer in Iowa website](#).

Non-Transfer Major Programs

Each community college will offer a general college parallel program of study leading to an AA award or an AS award. These programs will offer courses equivalent to the first two years of a baccalaureate program and will not be discipline-specific. In Iowa, university transfer programs leading to general AA or AS degrees have been approved as a single program and no additional action is currently required for colleges to initiate or modify these programs.

Transfer Major Programs

As detailed in Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.3, a community college may establish discipline-specific transfer major programs to improve student recruitment, advising and success and enhance transferability of associate-level courses into aligned baccalaureate degree programs. The transfer major program should consist of discipline-relevant credits from an approved discipline framework. The discipline framework consists of a minimum of 18 discipline-relevant semester credits (27 quarter hours) that align with a framework of elements based on accepted practices of an aligned baccalaureate degree program of study at a public university in Iowa. Discipline frameworks are established according to the flowchart below. After these frameworks are approved at the state level, colleges can adopt these transfer majors discipline frameworks in order to offer transfer major AA and AS programs at their college. A community college should ensure all students are appropriately advised regarding the availability, structure, purpose and other pertinent information related to the transfer major program. More information about transfer majors, including the specific transfer majors offered by each college, can be found on the Department's [Iowa Community College Transfer Majors page](#).
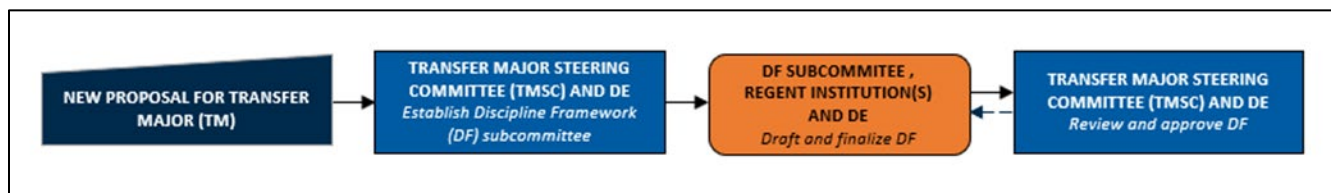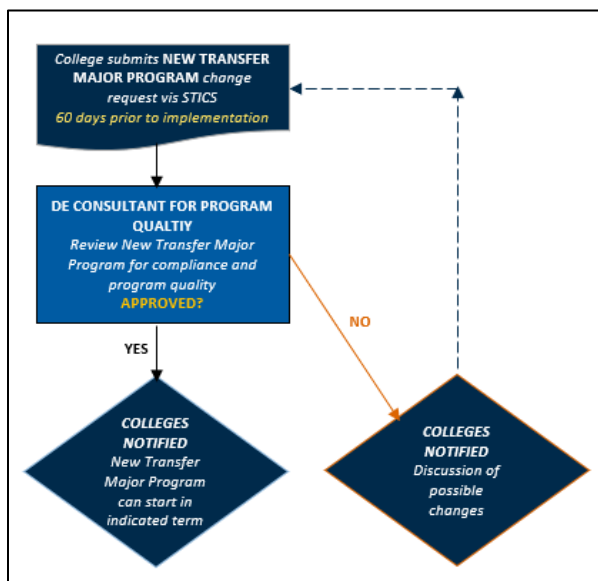
New Transfer Major Program Change Requests

Unlike CTE programs, an NOI is not required for a new transfer major program. In order to offer a new transfer major program, a New Program change request must be submitted via STICS to the Department for approval 60 days prior to enrollment of students.

The following is required for a New Transfer Major Program Change Request:

- Program plan, such as the CIP number, rationale/need for the program, anticipated annual enrollment for the program and anticipated annual number of completers for the program;
- Linkages the program will have with any secondary pathways or with external institutions;
- Program details, such as title, primary award type, the Iowa Variation, when the program will first be offered, link to the website used to market the program and the plan for assessing student attainment or program standards and benchmarks;
- Details for each award in the program, including the award title, ITSO code, award description, total number of weeks for the award, total number of credits for the award, how the award will be delivered, course numbers and titles listed by term, general education and LACTS category course designations, footnotes and discipline framework labels and
- Assurance sign-offs, including approval through the college's curriculum process and Board of Trustees approval.

The figure to the right illustrates the process a college needs to take in order to offer a transfer major program at their college. Per Iowa Administrative Code 281 Chapter 21.3(2), a community college can only use the term "transfer major" to record the completion of an approved transfer major program on the student's official transcript and other academic records, publish in the college catalog and market the transfer major program to current and potential students and the general public. A college should not transcript, catalog or market an AA or AS program using other terms which contain or are synonymous with the term "major" or which imply a specialization within a subject area. The college is allowed to use the term "Advising Pathway" or "Academic Pathway" for these types of programs.

Transfer Major Program Modification Change Requests

The approval process for transfer major program modification has been streamlined through the use of STICS and can be done year-round. Colleges must submit a Program Modification change request and work with the Program Quality Consultant to ensure ongoing state compliance. Modifications should be submitted at least 30 days prior to implementation.

Program Compliance

Award Types and Requirements

Iowa community colleges are authorized to offer several types of associate degrees, as well as diplomas and certificates. Requirements for awards are detailed in Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.2(9).

Associate of Arts (AA) Degree

An AA degree is awarded upon the completion of a college parallel (transfer) course of study that provides a strong general education component to satisfy the lower-division liberal arts and science requirements for a bachelor's degree. It should consist of between 60 and 64 semester (90-96 quarter) credit hours. See specific requirements in *The Public Connection* document on the [Transfer in Iowa website](#).

Associate of Science (AS) Degree

An AS degree is awarded upon the completion of an arts and science course of study with a strong emphasis on mathematics and science. The degree is intended to prepare students to transfer into related upper-division baccalaureate programs. It should consist of between 60 and 64 semester (90-96 quarter) credit hours, 20 of which must be in mathematics or science. See specific requirements in *The Public Connection* document on the [Transfer in Iowa website](#).

Associate of General Studies (AGS) Degree

An AGS degree is awarded upon completion of an individualized course of study designed for the acquisition of a broad educational background rather than the pursuit of a specific college major or technical program. This degree is intended to be flexible and may include between 60 and 64 semester (90-96 quarter) credit hours of lower-division transfer (non-developmental), occupational or professional/technical coursework.

Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree

An AAS degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved CTE program intended to prepare students for entry-level technical occupations. It should consist of between 60 and 86 semester (90-129 quarter) credit hours. Of those, a minimum of 15 semester (22.5 quarter) credit hours must be general education to include at least one course from each of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities and science or mathematics. A maximum of 3 semester (4.5. quarter) credit hours can count towards the required 15 general education credits. The college must provide documentation that this embedded general education is integrated, embedded and interdisciplinary in nature. The technical core component should constitute at least 50% of the program's credits.

Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) Degree

An AAA degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved CTE program intended to provide students with skills for employment in a specific field such as art, humanities or graphic design. This degree consists of between 60 and 86 semester (90-129 quarter) credit hours. Of those, a minimum of 15 semester (22.5 quarter) credit hours must be general education to include at least one course from each of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities and science or mathematics. A maximum of 3 semester (4.5. quarter) credit hours can count towards the required 15 general education credits. The college must provide documentation that this embedded general education is integrated, embedded and interdisciplinary in nature. The technical core component should consist of 50% of the program's credits.

Associate of Professional Studies (APS) Degree

An APS degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study intended to prepare students for transfer into aligned baccalaureate programs or immediate related employment. Colleges will only be approved for APS programs if they can demonstrate that other award types cannot meet their needs. The APS degree should consist of between 62 and 68 semester (93-102 quarter) credit hours. Of those, a minimum of 30 semester (45 quarter) credit hours must be general education to include:

- 3 semester (4.5 quarter) credit hours from each of the following areas: speech, mathematics, humanities, social and behavioral sciences and science;
- 6 semester (9 quarter) credit hours of writing;
- 9 semester (13.5 quarter) credits hours distributed among mathematics, social and behavioral sciences, humanities and science.

The technical core component should consist of a minimum of 16 semester (24 quarter) credit hours of career and technical coursework accepted by a receiving baccalaureate degree-granting institution with an aligned program as applying toward a specific major or program of study. The technical core of the degree will also consist of a minimum of 16 additional semester (24 quarter) credit hours of career and technical coursework accepted by the receiving institution as electives.

In addition, the APS degree program should have a minimum of three program-to-program articulation agreements with baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, at least one of which must be with a public institution. Among these, at least one agreement must be effective prior to APS program implementation, providing all three are effective within the program's first year of student enrollment. The agreements should provide for the application of no fewer than 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours toward the graduate requirements of each articulated baccalaureate degree program.

Diploma

A diploma is awarded upon the completion of a state-approved CTE program that is a coherent sequence of courses consisting of 15 to 48 semester (22.5-72 quarter) credit hours, including at least three semester (4.5 quarter) credit hours of general education. The general education component may be embedded within an existing course in the technical core and should be from any of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities and science or mathematics. The technical core component should constitute at least 70% of the program's credits. A diploma may be a component (option) of, and apply toward, subsequent completion of an AAS or AAA degree.

Certificate

A certificate is awarded upon completion of a state-approved CTE program designed to prepare students for entry-level employment. They may consist of only CTE courses, as there is no general education requirement. It should consist of a maximum of 48 semester (72 quarter) credit hours and may be a component of, and apply toward subsequent completion of a diploma, AAS or AAA degree. Certificates are often developed in rapid response to business and industry needs.

CTE Program Length Requirements

Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.2(13), sets requirements for the length of CTE programs and courses.

AAS, AAA and APS Programs

Program length for the AAS, AAA and APS degrees should consist of an academic program not to exceed two academic years (104 calendar weeks). All required offerings in AAS and AAA degree programs should not exceed a maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours unless the

Department of Education has granted a waiver (see below). All required offerings in APS degree programs should not exceed a maximum of 68 credit hours. Programs should not exceed an average of 19 credit hours per regular (i.e., non-summer) term.

All credit-bearing courses required for program admittance or graduation, or both, should be included in the award's credit hour maximum, with the exception of developmental course credits. Prerequisites that provide an option to students for either credit or noncredit should not be counted toward program length parameters.

A high school course (i.e., non-concurrent enrollment course) prerequisite is permissible, provided it is deemed reasonable, but should not count toward a CTE's program credit-hour maximum. Such a course is "reasonable" if a community college demonstrates that students entering the program, having taken the course, meet the prerequisite without prior college coursework.

Diploma and Certificate Programs

Credit diploma and certificate programs should not exceed 48 semester (72 quarter) credit hours unless the Department grants a waiver (see below). It is recommended that full-time diplomas and certificates not exceed one academic year (52 calendar weeks).

Program Length Waiver Process

Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.2(13i) provides a waiver process for CTE program length requirements. A college may petition for a waiver if an AAS, AAA, diploma or certificate program exceeds the maximum credit hours stated above due to requirements of a nationally-recognized accrediting body, or state or federal laws related to preparation for a specific occupation. APS programs should not be eligible for a program-length waiver.

In accordance with Iowa Administrative Code, a community college may petition to suspend in whole or in part a program-length requirement for a CTE program on the basis of particular circumstances, in accordance with the following stipulations:

1. Waivers should be issued at the Director's sole discretion. Waivers should be narrowly tailored and granted for a period of no longer than two academic years, after which reapplication is required. A waiver may be granted on a long-term basis, not to exceed 10 years, if issuing a shorter period is not practical.
2. All petitions for a waiver must be submitted in writing to the Department. A petition should 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 should acknowledge a petition upon receipt.
3. The Department should ensure that, within 30 calendar days, notice of pendency of the petition and a concise summary of its content have been provided to the CAOs of each community college. In addition, the Department may give notice to other persons.
4. The CAOs of a majority of community colleges should 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 will review the petition and issue a ruling. Failure to grant or deny a waiver request within the required time period should be deemed a denial of the petition. If a waiver is issued, the Department will provide a description of the precise scope and operative period to all interested parties.

CTE Course Length Requirements

Each CTE course offered in a program should be taught in the shortest practical period of time, at a standard consistent with the quality and quantity of work needed to prepare students for successful

employment in the related occupation. To gauge course length, a full-time CTE student should be enrolled in at least 12 semester (18 quarter) credit hours. Curriculum in these full-time programs should ordinarily be offered on the basis of a student workload of 20 to 30 contact hours per week.

Program Compliance Evaluation

STICS is programmed to stop non-compliant programs when colleges are submitting New Program or Program Modification change requests. In addition, colleges can check whether or not programs are compliant by downloading a Compliance Report in STICS. This download will give users a list of program requirements by award type and includes information such as the number of terms, number of weeks, number of total credit hours, average credit hour per term, general education credit hours, number of credits in specific general education categories, percentage of technical core credits and technical core credit hours. Issues are highlighted in yellow font in the downloaded spreadsheet. Colleges are encouraged to review programs and submit program modifications to correct compliance issues. The Program Quality Consultant will also check for curriculum compliance and ensure programs in STICS match those listed in college's catalogs during state accreditation visits.

CTE Program Requirements

Career and technical education is intended to meet the economic needs of Iowa through competency-based education grounded in knowledge and skills identified as essential in the workplace. For most CTE programs, these essential skills have been established in nationally-recognized Industry Standards or state, regional or national certification or licensure requirements. These program standards and benchmarks should be detailed on the Program Details page of the New Program change request in STICS. Advisory Councils should be involved in every phase of program development, review and modification.

Program Need

Iowa Code 260C.14(1) requires the Department to ascertain that all courses and programs submitted for approval are needed. The primary purpose of CTE programs is to prepare students for entry into or advancement in the workforce. Thus, legitimate employment opportunities are crucial to support program need, relevance and sustainability. Consequently, it is important to balance the number of students trained in a field with the number of potential job opportunities.

College parallel programs often base need on student demand for the transfer program. However, CTE programs should go beyond student interest and demonstrate that jobs are available for program completers. The measure of need can be documented on the NOI change request form using current state or regional labor market information. Labor market information is vital in aligning program offerings with high skill/high wage/high demand jobs. Labor market information may take many forms including labor market projections from occupational projections from Iowa Workforce Development, and EMSI. If labor market information is insufficient, other forms of documentation, such as advisory council minutes; letters from employers, preferably expressing a commitment to hire program completers and local, state or federal job postings should be submitted. Discussions with local businesses and workforce development partners play a key role in identifying program need.

Labor market information data may be region-specific, statewide or national, if program completers are likely to seek employment outside of the state. Employment opportunities should closely align with the annual projection of the program completers to ensure that students and employers are well-served by the program. Program need, along with other factors, including internal and external resources, cost-effectiveness, relevance and quality are key components of program approval and should be routinely reviewed via a college's program review process.

Program Content

The Department's website offers numerous resources to assist with new program development, including model sets of minimum standards and benchmarks utilized predominantly by secondary CTE programs of study (see the Department's Career and Technical Education page). These state-developed standards and benchmarks have been formulated around the six content areas defined in state law or the nationally-recognized career clusters provided in the website's resources.

If CTE program developers choose not to incorporate these specific standards, they must provide evidence that a process for establishing local standards was followed, as per IAC 281, Chapter 46.6(4). The subsequent list of locally-adopted standards for CTE programs is expected to heavily draw from national and industry standards to ensure the portability of skills attained from high school to college and on to further study or employment. There are numerous sources of occupational/industry standards and benchmarks available. Programmatic standards and benchmarks should be established by the faculty and advisory council, through the DACUM process discussed in the Program Approval section, prior to the development of courses. Competency lists should be analyzed for reinforcement of academic skills by Department Discipline Consultants.

Program content should contribute to a students' 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. Additionally, the curriculum should recognize the contributions of individuals with disabilities, men and women in non-traditional roles and minorities. Program content, including standards and benchmarks, should be revalidated during the CTE program review process.

General Education

According to Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.4, 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, enabling people to function effectively in a complex and changing world. It also emphasizes oral and written communication, critical analysis of information, knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultures, ways of knowing and human expression, knowledge of mathematical processes and natural sciences investigations and ethics. Each community college is responsible for clarifying, articulating, publicizing and assessing its general education program.

Career and technical education programs, except certificate awards, must have a general education component. Each community college should determine applicable coursework to fulfill this CTE general education requirement. However, it is important to maintain the philosophy that general education represents more than the accumulation of credits. If program developers believe that additional general education courses would benefit the students in a particular program, colleges are encouraged to exceed the minimal credit requirements. CTE programs designed for transfer should also meet general education requirements, as specified in articulation agreements or as stated for APS programs. When adding general education courses to a CTE program, it is strongly recommended that colleges consider the transferability of these courses to Iowa public and private universities in case students desire to continue their education in the future.

Programmatic Accreditation

While not always mandatory, programmatic accreditation is applicable to many CTE programs. Specialized accrediting bodies often have their own industry standards and benchmarks. Colleges can provide this information on the Industry Information page of the NOI change request form. These requirements do not need to be detailed, but should be linked for Department reference. When applicable, colleges should obtain and maintain program accreditation or notify the Department of any departure from standards established by the accrediting body.

Licensure and Certification

Some occupations require a license to practice, while others require state, regional or national certification for attainment of related employment. For occupations that require licensure or certifications, programs should prepare completers for tests to attain these standardized credentials. In many cases, there are established industry-recognized standards associated with these requirements that can guide colleges in its new program development. Colleges can provide this information on the Occupational Information page of the NOI change request form.

Program Articulation Requirements

To facilitate the smooth transition of students from secondary to post-secondary education at community colleges and/or four-year institutions, articulation agreements are essential. Articulation is the process by which an institution aligns with, and accepts credit for, program content earned at another institution. The intent of these agreements is to establish program conditions, content and requirements to avoid duplication and ensure that students will not need to repeat courses or activities

when moving from one institution to another. Agreements provide students with a career ladder to advance in their chosen career or technical area of interest.

Linkages with Secondary Programs

Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 46.6 states that teachers and administrators from both secondary and postsecondary instructional levels should (when applicable) meet to identify competencies required at each level, and to jointly prepare agreements of articulation for specific occupational areas. In addition to monitoring compliance with this articulation requirement placed on CTE programs, the Department's NOI change request form in STICS requests information about linkages the college has established with secondary and post-secondary institutions. Such linkages may include concurrent enrollment offerings, career academy agreements or articulation agreements. If nothing formal exists or can be established, the college is asked to document their efforts at establishing such linkages and encouraged to involve educational partners with similar programs in program or curriculum development.

Information related to the development of CTE programs of study, including guidance and templates, can be found on the Department's Career and Technical Education page. Concurrent enrollment program requirements can be found in the guide on the Senior Year Plus page.

APS Programs

Primarily, CTE programs prepare students for immediate or upgraded employment upon completion, while arts and science programs prepare for continued study at four-year institutions. As a transfer-oriented CTE degree program, APS program curricula should satisfy the lower-division requirements of the corresponding baccalaureate major. In addition, the state-approved APS program should have a minimum of three program-to-program articulation agreements with baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, at least one of which must be with a public institution. Among these, at least one agreement must be in effect prior to program implementation, with all three effective within the program's first year of student enrollment. These agreements should provide for the application of at least 60 semester credit hours toward the articulated baccalaureate degree graduation requirements.

Duplication

Iowa Code 260C.14(1) requires the Department to ascertain that the curriculum being offered by an area school does not duplicate programs provided by existing public or private facilities in the area. Duplication is determined through consideration of the needs of the area and whether the proposed programs are competitive as to size, quality, tuition, purposes and area coverage with existing public and private educational or vocational institutions within the merged area.

The Department carries out this state mandate via the NOI approval process. As illustrated in the Program Approval Process section of this guide, prior to submission of a New Program change request, the college submits an NOI via STICS that is forwarded to all 15 Iowa community colleges for a 14-day peer review. If a concern is raised, the Department will work with college administrators to help resolve the issue.

Faculty Credentials and Experience

The staffing of qualified faculty to manage and teach in CTE programs is essential for program quality. For more information about faculty qualifications for instructors who teach in CTE programs, see the Guidelines for Faculty Qualifications document. The Department currently does not require information regarding faculty credentials through the program approval process. However, this information is carefully reviewed through the state accreditation process. It is expected that the academic administration has processes to ensure the hiring and ongoing professional development of qualified

faculty. For more information about faculty professional development, see the Department's [Quality Faculty Plan page](#).

Financial Support and Program Budget

Colleges are expected to allocate sufficient resources to start and maintain all of its programs at a high level of quality. The Department does not currently request financial information via STICS to determine program viability. However, it is expected that colleges have addressed this critical component of program development and strategic planning. The college is also expected to reevaluate program cost-effectiveness and efficiency periodically through its program review process.

Facilities and Equipment Plan

Colleges are expected to expend adequate capital for the acquisition or assignment of facilities and equipment for a proposed CTE program. The Department does not currently request information regarding the college's budget or the adequacy of facilities and equipment during the program approval process. However, this component is reviewed as a part of the state accreditation process. It is expected that instructional facility and equipment needs are evaluated periodically through the college's budget and program review process.

Jointly-Offered (i.e., Shared) Programs

Some programs are offered jointly or collaboratively with one or more postsecondary institutions or agencies to the extent that one college may offer the first part of a program and have students finish the program at another institution. A shared program is a program where two or more colleges agree to accept the courses offered at each college and share the number of graduation slots. Students are often required to enroll and/or attend the appropriate courses in the curriculum at both colleges to complete the program. The college that is approved to offer the occupational job entry courses grants the award. The colleges participating in a shared program should provide a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or articulation agreement detailing the parameters of the collaboration, including each institution's responsibilities and the awarding of credit. The entire program must meet all Department requirements for final approval and will be reviewed like all CTE programs.

Program Admissions Criteria

While Iowa's public community colleges have open-door admissions, colleges may need to establish admission criteria for some CTE programs of study. The college must list CTE programs with entrance requirements that are different from the general college admissions criteria, such as prerequisite coursework, assessments or specific experiences required to get into the program, as part of the Annual Notice of Nondiscrimination on the college's website. Furthermore, colleges are expected to document concerted efforts toward recruiting non-traditional students, based on occupational demographics. This is particularly true when certain admissions criteria are required for state or national funding.

College-Level Approval

Iowa Code 260C.14(1) charges that the board of directors of each community college should determine the curriculum to be offered and that all career and technical education offerings are competency-based, provide any minimum competencies required by the Department of Education comply with any applicable requirements in Iowa Code Chapter 258 and are articulated with local school district vocational education programs. Additionally, Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.2(14) states that faculty should be organized in such a way to promote communication among administration, faculty and students and to encourage faculty participation in the development of curriculum, instructional practices, general policies and such other matters as appropriate. To this end, a proposed new

program should be approved through the college's curriculum approval processes and by the governing board for consideration of these requirements before submission to the Department.

Evaluation of CTE Programs During State Accreditation

According to Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.62(4), Career and Technical Education Evaluation is one of the components of state accreditation. To this end, the Iowa state accreditation process calls for colleges to conduct ongoing, systematic reviews of their CTE programs. During state accreditation visits, Department staff evaluate institutional program review processes, as well as individual CTE program reviews to determine compliance with state and federal requirements. This extensive review also includes scrutiny of the composition and level of involvement of advisory councils. The college should provide the team with current lists of council members' contact information (including gender and race/ethnicity), as well as council meeting notes illustrating ongoing discussion of program relevance, quality and suggestions for improvement. For more information about the Department's accreditation process, see the Community College Accreditation page.

Appendix A - CIP Numbers and ITSO Codes

6-Digit CIP Numbers

The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) is a taxonomy of academic disciplines at higher education institutions. This coding enables accurate tracking, assessment and reporting of academic programs. The Department classifies instructional programs using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 6-digit CIP code. It is imperative that a college determines the proper CIP code before submitting change requests in STICS. If assistance is needed to determine the proper codes, the college should contact the appropriate discipline consultant at the Department. CIP reclassification must be done via the NOI and Program Modification approval processes.

10-Digit CIP Numbers

The Department uses 10-digit CIP numbers when classifying programs. The additional four digits are used for state coding and is known as the Iowa Variation. For example, the Department utilizes the seventh and eighth digits of a ten-digit CIP number to identify one-year versus two-year programs (see Table 1). If assistance is needed to determine the proper Iowa Variation, the college should consult the program quality consultant at the Department. If a college wishes to change the Iowa Variation for a program, this can be done via the Program Modification change request in STICS.

Table 1 – Iowa Variations for Each Award Type

Award Type	Iowa Variation
Associate of Applied Arts (AA)	0200–2 year degree
Associate of Applied Science (AAS)	0200–2 year degree *Also 1200, 2200, 3200, 4200, 5200, and 6200 for special programs
Associate of Professional Studies (APS)	0200–2 year degree
Diploma	0100–Diploma *Also 1100 for special programs
Associate of Arts (AA)	0200–2 year degree
Associate of Science (AS)	0200–2 year degree
Associate of General Studies	0200–2 year degree
Certificate	1000–Certificate *Also 2000 and 3000 for special programs

ITSO Codes

The Department also assigns "ITSO" instructional code sets to classify awards in programs. ITSO stands for **I**nstructional level, **T**ype of program, **S**pecial emphasis, and **O**bject purpose. For credit programs, the Instructional Level (I) is always *03 – Postsecondary*, the Special Emphasis (S) is always *11 – No Special Emphasis* and the Object Purpose (O) is always *03 – Credit*. Table 2 illustrates the different types of programs available for each award type.

Table 2 – Program Types for Each Award Type

Award Type	Type of Program
Associate of Applied Arts (AA)	13–Associate of Applied Arts
Associate of Applied Science (AAS)	02–Full-Time Preparatory[1] 07–Part-Time Preparatory[3] 12–Preparatory Advanced Standing[4] 32–Shared Full-Time Preparatory[5]
Associate of Professional Studies (APS)	11–Associate of Professional Studies
Diploma	02–Full-Time Preparatory[1] 03–Short-Term Preparatory[2] 07–Part-Time Preparatory[3] 12–Preparatory Advanced Standing[4] 32–Shared Full-Time Preparatory[5]
Associate of Arts (AA)	08–Associate of Arts/Undeclared Program of Study
Associate of Science (AS)	09–Associate of Sciences
Associate of General Studies	10–Associate of General Studies
Certificate	02–Full-Time Preparatory[1] 03–Short-Term Preparatory[2] 07–Part-Time Preparatory[3] 12–Preparatory Advanced Standing[4] 32–Shared Full-Time Preparatory[5]

1 = *Type 02–Full-Time Preparatory is used for awards that are 22 or more credits.*
2 = *Type 03 –Short-Term Preparatory is used for awards that are less than 22 credits.*
3 = *Type 07–Part-Time Preparatory is used for awards that are designed for part-time attendance.*
4 = *Type 12—Preparatory Advanced Standing is used for programs that required the completion of courses or a program for admission.*
5 = *Type 32 –Shared Full-Time Preparatory is used for programs that are shared between two colleges. For these types of programs, the college that the student starts at is coded as Type 32–Shared Full-Time Preparatory and the college the students finish at is coded as Type 02–Full-Time Preparatory.*

In situations where a program has been modified (i.e., change in number of credits), ITSO codes can be changed through the Program Modification process. If assistance is needed to determine the proper ITSO code or to change an ITSO code, the college should consult the Program Quality Consultant at the Department.

Appendix B - Common Course Numbering (CCN)

Common course numbers and titles are essential elements of a seamless educational system. Currently, all common course numbers share the same name, course number, number of credit hours and variable/not variable course type. To maintain a consistent, system-wide process between and among Iowa's 15 community colleges, a Common Course Numbering (CCN) system has been established and is housed in STICS. This system provides a platform for colleges to add and modify courses in its dynamic database. Colleges should plan well in advance of submission of program-related change requests to ensure that all courses needed for the program have been established in the CCN system in STICS. Colleges should also ensure that courses meant to be added to programs have an implementation date that is the same or before the implementation date for the program change request. Newly approved courses will be listed as "pending" until the implementation term. For more information, see the Common Course Numbering Protocol.

Appendix C - Credit Hour Requirements

Conventional Instructional Formats

Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 21.2(12) sets requirements for determining credit hours based on the amount of instructional contact time and delivery method. When determining course credit, colleges must follow some basic rules as stated in Iowa Administrative Code, starting with the requirement that each course must be assigned 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 should consist of a minimum number of contact hours based on its delivery method (Note: one contact hour equals 50 minutes). Conventional instruction is subdivided into four instructional methods with the minimum number of required contact hours as defined below.

The criteria listed below are minimum requirements only, which institutions may exceed at their discretion.

- **Classroom work:** Lecture and formalized classroom instruction under the supervision of an instructor.
  - One *semester* credit hour = minimum of 800 minutes or 16 contact hours of scheduled instruction
  - One *quarter* credit hour = minimum of 553 minutes or 10.7 contact hours of scheduled instruction
- **Laboratory work:** Experimentation and practice by students under the supervision of an instructor.
  - One *semester* credit hour = minimum of 1,600 minutes or 32 contact hours of scheduled laboratory work.
  - One *quarter* credit hour = minimum of 1,066 minutes or 21.3 contact hours of scheduled laboratory work.
- **Clinical practice:** Applied learning experience in a health agency or office under the supervision of an instructor.
  - One *semester* credit hour = minimum of 2,400 minutes or 48 contact hours of scheduled clinical practice.
  - One *quarter* credit hour = minimum of 1,599 minutes or 32 contact hours of scheduled clinical practice.
- **Work experience/work-based learning (WBL):** 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.
  - One *semester* credit hour = minimum of 3,200 minutes or 64 contact hours of scheduled work experience.
  - One *quarter* credit hour = minimum of 2,132 minutes or 42.6 contact hours of scheduled work experience.

Institutions should consider the soundness of the learning environment created by the scheduling sequence and the length of classroom, laboratory, clinical and work experience sessions. Final decisions on these matters are left to the college administration as long as minimal standards are met. In addition to the requirements listed above, no registration or orientation hours may be included when determining credit hours. Also, only minutes for students officially registered for courses or programs, including audit registration, may be included when determining credit hours.

> **Did You Know?**
>
> In order for school districts to receive supplementary weighted funding for postsecondary courses contracted with the community college under the Senior Year Plus Concurrent Enrollment program (Iowa Code 261E), the course must be structured in a manner to include classroom work, laboratory work or a combination of classroom work and laboratory work. Courses that only contain clinical practice and/or a work experience component would not be eligible for supplementary weighted funding.

Alternative Instructional Formats

Each community college must establish 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 the conventional methods stated above. Colleges will be held accountable for evaluating and maintaining high-quality programs, and their evaluations may be subject to Department review. Students should be expected to meet all approved course requirements and should 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 should be listed in the college catalog.

Instructional formats for which alternative methods of determining credit hours are applicable include the following:

- **Accelerated courses/study/programs:** Courses or programs of study that allow students to complete courses or programs at a faster pace than if offered by conventional methods. Courses and programs should be tailored to involve more student participation and self-directed study. Instructors may teach in traditional classroom settings or by alternative methods defined below.
- **Distance education:** Courses or programs of study taught over the Internet, Iowa Communications Network (ICN) or other electronic means that allow students to receive instruction in the classroom or other sites, over personal computers, television or other electronic means. Courses may or may not be interactive with direct communication between the teacher and students. Credit hours should be awarded in accordance with the credit hours that would have been assigned if the course or program were taught by conventional methods. Distance education courses include correspondence courses, television courses, video conference courses, internet courses and in-class hybrid courses.
- **Self-paced instruction:** Courses or programs that permit a student to enter at variable times or progress at the student's own rate of speed. Start and end dates may or may not correspond to the official college calendar. Contact or credit hours for self-paced programs or courses should be computed by assigning to each registration the total number of credit or contact hours the student would have received if the student were enrolled in a conventional program or course with stipulated beginning and ending dates.
- **Arranged Study:** Instruction offered to students at times other than stated or scheduled class times to accommodate specific scheduling or program needs of students. Credit hours should be awarded in accordance with the credit hours that would have been assigned if the course or program were taught by conventional methods.
- **Multiformat nontraditional instruction:** Instruction utilizing a variety of nontraditional methods that may incorporate self-paced learning, text, video, computer instructional delivery, accelerated training, independent study, Internet delivery or other methods that do not follow

standard classroom work guidelines. Credit hours should be awarded in accordance with the credit hours that would have been assigned if the course or program were taught by conventional methods.

Individualized learning experiences for which an equivalent course is not offered should 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.

Keep in mind that the alternative instructional methods listed above are defined according to Iowa Administrative Code. Programmatic and institutional accreditors may have different definitions for different types of instructional methods. Colleges should ensure that they are following both state and accreditor standards when determining alternative instructional methods.