

# THE IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGES STATE ACCREDITATION GUIDE

A Resource for Administrators and Accreditation Reviewers

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**COMMUNITY COLLEGES &  
WORKFORCE PREPARATION**  
*PROSPERITY THROUGH EDUCATION*  
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**IOWA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**



Grimes State Office Building

Phone: 515-281-8260  
Fax: 515-242-5988  
www.educateiowa.gov

Ann Lebo  
Director, Iowa Department  
of Education  
515-281-3436  
ann.lebo@iowa.gov

Jeremy Varner  
Administrator, Division of  
Community Colleges and  
Workforce Preparation  
515-281-8260  
jeremy.varner@iowa.gov

Amy Gieseke  
Chief, Bureau of  
Community Colleges  
515-858-2234  
amy.gieseke@iowa.gov

Heather Meissen  
Education Consultant  
Program Quality  
515-725-2247  
heather.meissen@iowa.gov

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**State of Iowa  
Department of Education**  
Grimes State Office Building  
400 E. 14th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

**State Board of Education**

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**Division of Community Colleges  
and Workforce Preparation**

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**Bureau of Community Colleges**

Amy Gieseke, Bureau Chief  
Heather Meissen, Education Consultant  
Program Quality

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# Letter

## *from the Director*

Dear Community College Educators,

The Iowa Department of Education is pleased to share these guidelines for the state accreditation process for community colleges.

Iowa's accreditation process confirms each college is offering students quality programs and services consistent with the state standards per Iowa Code 260C.48 and Iowa Administrative Code 281-IAC 24. Accreditation assures the public that its tax-supported educational institutions are operating at expected levels of efficiency and effectiveness.



This document provides an overview of the community college state accreditation process, including requirements in state law, Department guidelines, and information about the site visit. Not only will you find the guide helpful as your college prepares for its review, but the accreditation team leaders within the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation are eager to help you with specific questions.

During your desk review and site visit, you will experience a supportive team of professionals whose goal is to review your programs and processes for compliance, while learning about the outstanding opportunities you provide to your students and communities.

Thank you for your contributions to Iowa's education system.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Lebo".

Ann Lebo  
Ed.D Ed.S.  
Director  
Iowa Department of Education

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# History

## *of Iowa's Accreditation Process*

The state accreditation process for Iowa's community colleges has evolved since its establishment two decades ago. Developed collaboratively with the colleges and continuously changing, the process ensures state standards are satisfied while avoiding duplication with other evaluation processes.

The changing role of community colleges in higher education and increasing emphasis on institutional effectiveness led to the passage of legislation in 1990 requiring the creation of a state accreditation process for Iowa's community colleges. This legislation outlined requirements for new standards and an accreditation process to address the issues of quality, access, accountability and institutional improvement.

In the spring of 1991, the Iowa Department of Education established a cross-departmental work team to coordinate development of the accreditation process and standards. Rather than being prescriptive, the team held the philosophy that the new standards should provide goals toward which colleges should strive, including those qualities that characterize the best in community college education. Understanding that community college involvement was essential to the success of this project, the team organized a task force on accreditation and program review made up of community college chief academic officers. An accreditation advisory committee of representatives from business and industry, government and other stakeholder groups was formed to gather broad community input.

By October 1992, the work team and the task force reached consensus on a preliminary set of 47 standards and

### ACCREDITATION TIMELINE

#### FIRST LAW PASSED

The state legislature authorizes the creation of a state accreditation process for Iowa community colleges.

#### WORK TEAM ESTABLISHED

Iowa Department of Education establishes a work team and task force of community college chief academic officers to coordinate development of standards

#### CONSENSUS REACHED

Work team and task force reach consensus on a preliminary set of 47 standards.

#### CRITERIA APPROVED

The State Board of Education approves 36 state criteria and a pilot process.

#### RULES ADOPTED

State Board of Education adopts 18 criteria based on community colleges' recommendation to reduce the number of criteria. Rules for accreditation become effective on October 1, 1997.

#### QUALITY FACULTY PLAN

State eliminates community college faculty licensure and implements the quality faculty plan process.



## ACCREDITATION TIMELINE, CONT.

2005

### HLC ALIGNMENT

Accreditation guidelines and administrative rules changed to align Iowa's accreditation criteria and core components with those of HLC.

2007

### STANDARDS EXPANDED

Senate File 588 expands minimum faculty standards to apply to faculty under contract for half time or more as well as full-time faculty.

2008

### STUDY MANDATED

Iowa General Assembly mandates a comprehensive study of the accreditation process and the compliance requirements contained in the accreditation criteria.

2010

### ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Proposed rules for the state accreditation process to take effect in 2011, along with HLC's five criteria and a number of additional state requirements, set the standards for Iowa's community colleges.

2011

### STANDARDS EXPANDED

House File 2679 requires all community college instructors teaching credit coursework to meet minimum standards, including adjunct faculty.

2016

### REVISED CRITERIA

Iowa Code is aligned with revised HLC criteria regarding faculty qualifications, thus increasing the required number of graduate credits in the field of instruction from 12 to 18 semester hours. Code is also aligned with HLC general education requirements and the equity review process is integrated with accreditation

2017

### CRITERIA EFFECTIVE

Statewide compliance with the revised standards pertaining to faculty qualifications becomes effective September 1, 2017.

accompanying rationale for each. Feedback was sought through 15 open forums conducted across the state in late 1992. Based on this feedback, the work team and task force revised the standards and changed the name from "Preliminary Accreditation Standards" to "State Criteria for Evaluation of Iowa Community Colleges" in order to better reflect the institutional improvement focus of the accreditation process.

The State Board of Education approved 36 state criteria and authorized a pilot process in June 1994. Based on the pilot process conducted in 1995 and 1996, community college personnel recommended to reduce the number of criteria by consolidating similar standards. In August 1997, the State Board of Education adopted 18 criteria. The rules for community college accreditation became effective on October 1, 1997.

The development of the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), and a major revision of HLC's accreditation criteria in early 2005, prompted extensive changes to both Iowa's community college accreditation guidelines and the administrative rules governing community college accreditation. Most significant was a new alignment of Iowa's accreditation criteria and core components with those of HLC. For more than a decade, the accreditation cycles of HLC and the Department were coincident. The content of the respective accreditation process was the same, regardless of whether the college had adopted HLC's AQIP process or continued to prepare for the accreditation review using the commission's more traditional Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ).

Since the inception of the state accreditation process, the state has set additional standards beyond those set by HLC. These standards have changed over time. For example, in 2003, the state eliminated community college faculty licensure and implemented the quality faculty plan process to ensure the competence of instructors. In 2007 and 2008, legislation was



passed expanding state accreditation standards for faculty qualifications and the quality faculty plan process.

In 2008, the 82nd General Assembly mandated a comprehensive study of accreditation and accountability mechanisms. The Department was directed to review the accreditation process and the compliance requirements contained in the accreditation criteria. The review requirements specified for the Department to consider measures to ensure: statewide consistency in program quality; adequate State Board of Education oversight of community college programming; consistency in definitions for data collection; identification of barriers to providing quality programming; identification of methods to improve compensation of faculty; and development of system performance measures that adequately respond to needs and concerns. The bill also required the Department to look at accreditation processes and system performance measures from other states and regions.

The Iowa Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee was reconvened to conduct the mandated review. The committee included individuals representing the various functional units of community colleges, including presidents, chief academic officers, faculty, human resource administrators, business officers, student services administrators and academic deans. Membership included at least one member from each college and was balanced between PEAQ and AQIP institutions.

To manage the wide scope of the study, specialized work teams were established to address program quality, data quality and reporting, faculty remuneration and national review of state accreditation and review processes. In conducting the review, the Department collaborated with community college quality faculty plan committees.

The Iowa Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee developed recommendations, which the Department included in the final report to the legislature in January 2010. The report recommended an overhaul of the state accreditation process to make it more focused and efficient while reaffirming Iowa's approach to ensuring state standards are met through peer review. Recommendations included removing duplication with HLC accreditation process by focusing state reviews on standards in state law not reviewed by HLC, as well as issues identified by the state or colleges. Additionally, enhanced pre-visit desk reviews and streamlined interim visits were recommended to reduce the time and cost of site visits.

The Department accepted the report recommendations, and those of the advisory committee, and began overhauling the state accreditation process and review protocol. In 2010, the legislature mandated the Department review its implementation of the recommendations and present findings and recommendations to the legislature by December 31, 2010.

The rules for the state accreditation process, as currently approved, set the standards for Iowa’s community colleges as HLC’s five criteria and a number of additional state requirements, including minimum faculty standards, faculty load, special needs, career and technical program review, strategic planning, physical plant and facilities, quality faculty plan, and Senior Year Plus standards.

While the state accreditation process was being modified, HLC released information about its intent to transition to a new model for continued accreditation. The new model separated threshold standards from continuous improvement and was intended to increase public confidence in accreditation as a mechanism for quality assurance. In 2015-16, under the new model, PEAQ transitioned to a new Open Pathway while AQIP was planned for phase out. The Standard Pathway remained a third option.

As under the previous model, HLC standards and criteria continued to remain the same, regardless of the model selected.

State code updates and related accreditation processes have been made by the Iowa Department of Education and are included in this guide. These updates include components of the equity review processes, faculty qualification and load guidance, program review procedures and updates to HLC standards and processes.

As the Department implements changes to the accreditation process, it will continuously seek feedback from stakeholders. The Iowa Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee will continue to play an important role in assisting with the development of review protocol and providing feedback to the Department.



#### HLC ACCREDITATION CRITERIA\*

- Criterion 1 - Mission
- Criterion 2 - Integrity: Ethical & Responsible Conduct
- Criterion 3 - Teaching & Learning: Quality, Resources & Support
- Criterion 4 - Teaching & Learning: Evaluation & Improvement
- Criterion 5 - Resources, Planning & Institutional Effectiveness

\*The state accreditation team reviews the college’s most recent HLC report and only addresses significant issues of concern

#### ADDITIONAL STATE STANDARDS

- » Faculty Qualifications
- » Faculty Load
- » Special Needs & Protected Classes
- » CTE Program Evaluation
- » Strategic Planning
- » Physical Plant & Facilities
- » Quality Faculty Plan
- » Senior Year Plus Programs



# Overview

## *of Iowa's Accreditation Process*

### Accreditation Purpose

Accreditation is a process of external quality review that colleges participate in to confirm they offer quality programs and services consistent with state standards. Relying on institutional self-evaluation, peer review and institutional response, it evaluates formal educational activities, as well as other activities essential to the effectiveness of a college, such as governance and financial stability. Accreditation assures the public that its tax-supported educational institutions operate at expected levels of efficiency and effectiveness. This is especially important with respect to the mission of community colleges to address the economic well-being of Iowa through improved workforce preparation and to prepare community college students for transfer to baccalaureate institutions.

State law sets the accreditation standards for Iowa's community colleges. These standards include HLC's accreditation standards, as well as additional state standards.

### HLC Accreditation

Iowa's community colleges are accredited by both the state of Iowa and a institutional accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education. The institutional accreditor for Iowa's community colleges is HLC.

Institutional accreditation is the primary means by which American colleges and universities assure quality to students and the public. The process ensures requirements of HLC are evaluated. In addition, accredited status is required for colleges to have access to federal funds, including student financial aid.

HLC currently supports two pathways by which postsecondary educational institutions can maintain their institutional accreditation:

Standard and Open. A third pathway, the Candidacy Pathway, is for colleges seeking initial candidacy. With this revision of the Guide for State Accreditation of Iowa Community Colleges, the Iowa Department of Education accepts all of HLC-approved accreditation processes. The most current HLC pathway information can be found on their website here for [Standard](#) and here for [Open](#) pathways.

### Standard Pathway

The Standard Pathway, which follows a 10-year cycle, begins with an annual institutional update, followed by comprehensive evaluations in year four and year 10. The comprehensive evaluation relies on peer review and evaluation of college reports and materials to determine compliance with HLC's criteria for accreditation.

The Standard Pathway is focused on quality assurance and institutional improvement. These improvement topics are integrated into comprehensive evaluations conducted during the cycle, as well as through interim monitoring, as required.

Colleges on the Standard Pathway are expected to demonstrate improvement by addressing concerns from past evaluations. Colleges without previously identified improvement requirements may identify and showcase improvement in areas of their choice.

HLC offers assistance to colleges on the Standard Pathway as they formulate improvement plans, and provides feedback on plans that have been drafted. Although participation is not required, HLC encourages colleges to take advantage of these offerings. HLC's assistance to colleges does not guarantee approval nor successful completion of the college's improvement component on the Standard Pathway.

The 10-year cycle for the Standard Pathway includes both regular monitoring through an annual institutional update and a comprehensive evaluation that occurs in years four and 10. The institutional update, which is reviewed by HLC to monitor organizational health, complies with certain federal requirements and identifies any changes that may require follow up by HLC. In addition, HLC also applies changes processes, as appropriate, to planned institutional developments and monitors colleges through

reports, visits and other means as it deems appropriate.

Colleges undergo a comprehensive evaluation to ensure they are meeting the criteria for accreditation, pursuing institutional improvement and complying with certain requirements set by the U.S. Department of Education. The year four evaluation may include a determination that interim monitoring is necessary. The year 10 evaluation leads to an action regarding the reaffirmation of the college's accreditation.

NOTE: Colleges undergoing a first comprehensive evaluation following the granting of initial accreditation or removal of probation will be considered for reaffirmation of accreditation as part of the year four comprehensive evaluation. If reaffirmation is granted, the college moves to year five of the Standard Pathway cycle.

For all colleges, a comprehensive evaluation includes the following components:

- » Submission and review of [institutional materials](#) demonstrating compliance with HLC's criteria for accreditation
- » [Federal Compliance Review](#)
- » [Student Opinion Survey](#)
- » [On-site peer review visit](#)
- » [Multi-campus visit](#) (for colleges with multiple branch campuses)
- » [Embedded change requests](#) (if applicable)

## Open Pathway

The Open Pathway, like the Standard Pathway, follows a 10-year cycle. The Open Pathway model has an annual institutional update, a year four assurance review and a year five through nine continuous improvement component called a Quality Initiative Project.

Colleges submit annual updates, complete an assurance review in year four, design and undertake a quality initiative project approved by HLC peer reviewers during years five through nine, and submit a comprehensive evaluation in year 10.

A college can choose to participate in an HLC Academy for its quality initiative project.

The quality initiative, gives colleges the independence to pursue improvement projects that are geared toward their current needs and aspirations.

A college will be placed on the Standard Pathway if it is in the process of change of control, structure or organization (or has in the last two years); is under HLC notice or sanction within the last five years; is assigned a focused visit; has undergone dynamic changes; has raised significant concerns about circumstances or developments at the college; or has failed to make an effort to conduct the qualitative initiative.

### HLC ACCREDITATION PATHWAY COMPARISON

| Component                                | Standard                    | Open                       |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Follow HLC Criterion and Core Components | X                           | X                          |
| Review Cycle                             | 10 Years                    | 10 Years                   |
| Annual Institutional Update              | X                           | X                          |
| Comprehensive Evaluation                 | Year 4 & Year 10            | Year 10                    |
| Typical On-Site Peer Review Visit        | 1.5 Days                    | 1.5 Days                   |
| Assurance Review Filed                   | Year 4 & Year 10            | Year 4 & Year 10           |
| Federal Compliance Review                | Year 10                     | Year 10                    |
| Address Improvement Efforts              | Expanded Assurance Argument | Through Quality Initiative |
| Quality Initiative between Years 5 and 9 |                             | X                          |
| Action on Reaffirmation Taken            | Year 10                     | Year 10                    |

## State Accreditation

Iowa's state accreditation process for community colleges is designed to avoid duplication by building off of HLC's Standard and Open accreditation processes. State review teams utilize documentation from HLC to determine whether HLC standards are met. Additional state standards not evaluated by HLC are reviewed through the state evaluation process.

Similar to HLC's pathways, state accreditation has two components: (1) assurance review and (2) continuous improvement. The former includes a review of documentation to determine whether HLC standards are being met and an evaluation of the college's compliance with Iowa's state standards.

The continuous improvement component, included only in comprehensive accreditation review, involves a peer review of a topic(s) of interest to the college. The intent is to provide

the college the opportunity to receive feedback and recommendations from peers who have expertise regarding the identified issue. The continuous improvement component does not involve sanctions and may or may not involve public reporting.

State review teams consist of Department staff, as well as administrators and faculty members from peer institutions. Upon completion of the evaluation, a report is prepared and presented to the State Board of Education. The board is charged with accrediting Iowa community colleges.

As recommended by the Iowa Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee, state evaluations occur on a 10-year cycle, with interim evaluations on the fifth year and comprehensive evaluations on the tenth year, regardless of a college's HLC accreditation pathway or placement in the accreditation process.



### COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

- » Every tenth year in a cycle
- » Assurance component
- » Iowa Department of Education and external Review Team
- » Continuous Quality Component (special topic review)

### INTERIM REVIEW

- » Every fifth year in a cycle
- » Assurance component
- » Iowa Department of Education Review Team

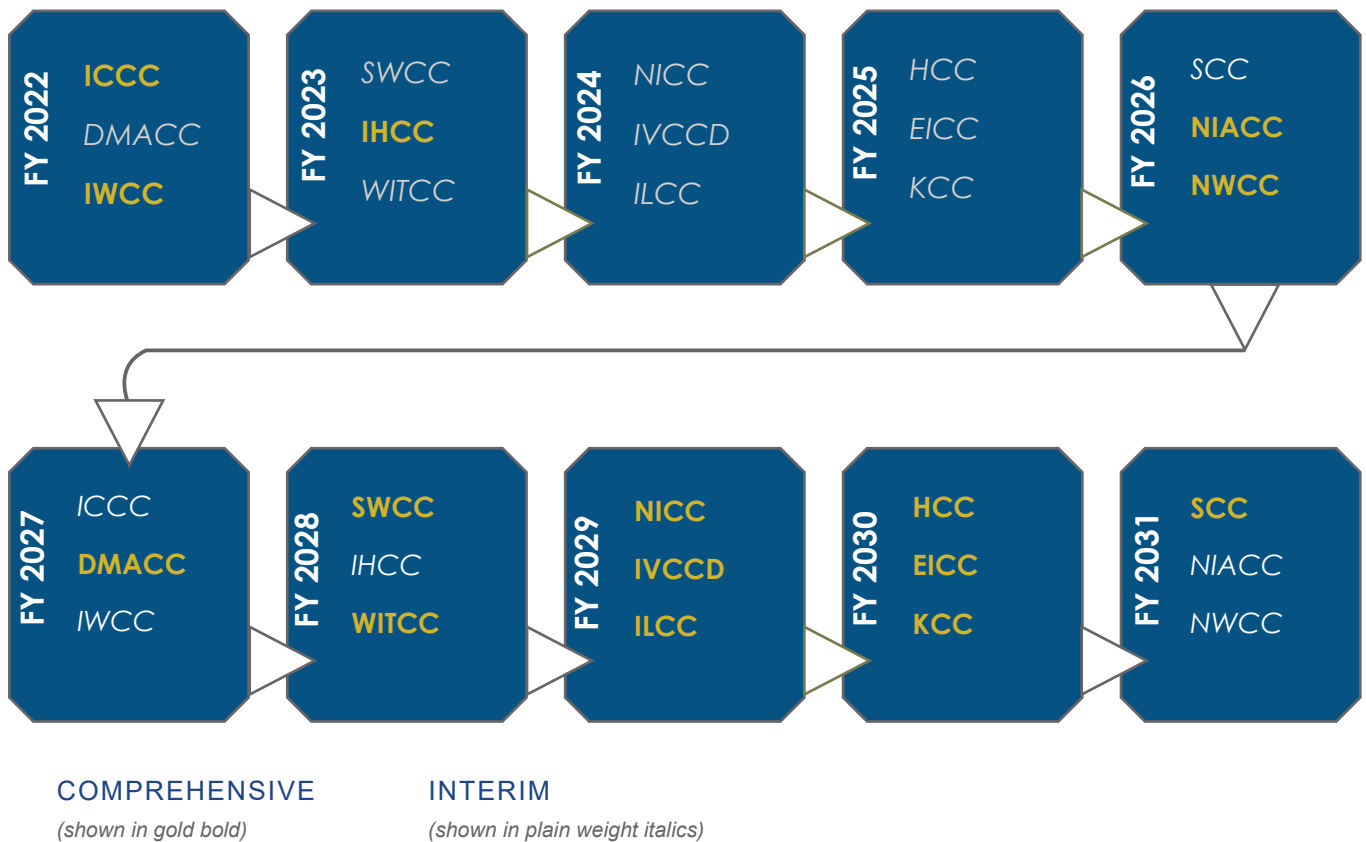
# Evaluation Schedule

## Comprehensive and Interim Evaluation Schedules

The proposed evaluation schedule (see below) decouples accreditation evaluations from the HLC site visit schedule since it is no longer necessary for both reviews to occur in the same year. This rotation began in fiscal year (FY) 2012 after the administrative rules were amended.

The schedule is based on a 10-year cycle with comprehensive evaluations in year 10 and interim evaluations in year five. Three colleges will be reviewed each year so that all 15 colleges are evaluated at least once every five years. Colleges were placed into the schedule, outlined below, based on the time since their last interim or comprehensive accreditation evaluation.

### STATE EVALUATION SCHEDULE





# State Process

## Steps and Timeline

To avoid duplication, the state accreditation process builds off of HLC processes and includes both comprehensive and interim evaluations. In addition, focus evaluations may be conducted at the discretion of the director of the Iowa Department of Education.

### Comprehensive Evaluations

Comprehensive accreditation evaluations are conducted on a 10-year cycle with interim evaluations occurring in the fifth year. Interim state evaluations are similar to the comprehensive evaluations, but are more limited in scope and do not include review of special topics. They are conducted approximately halfway between comprehensive evaluations.

Comprehensive evaluations include assurance and continuous improvement components. The assurance component includes a review of compliance with state standards and HLC criteria. The continuous improvement component consists of a peer review of a special topic(s) identified by the college. Colleges are not sanctioned based on the continuous improvement component; its inclusion in the final report to the State Board of Education is at the college's discretion.

Comprehensive state evaluations have four phases: (1) pre-evaluation preparation; (2) desk review; (3) site visit and (4) reporting. These phases are summarized in the chart on the right.

### COMPREHENSIVE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

#### PREPARATION

The community college is provided the Iowa Community College State Accreditation Guide in advance of its review and provided with an orientation to the process. The college is also given the opportunity to identify a special topic(s) to receive focused attention. Members of the review team are selected and a profile of the college is generated using the college input and community college MIS data.

#### PRE-VISIT DESK REVIEW

The state review team examines the college's most recent HLC report and any communication between HLC and the college the data in the community college profile, and other documentation to identify potential compliance issues. Any outstanding questions are addressed by the team during the site visit.

#### SITE VISIT

The site visit is expected to last no longer than three days and includes:

- Group interviews to evaluate state standards and areas of concern from HLC report.
- Follow-up regarding previously identified compliance issues.
- Review of special topic(s).
- An exit interview with college staff to discuss the team's initial assessments and potential findings or recommendations.

#### REPORTING

The college is given the opportunity to review a preliminary report before the team seeks approval from the director of the Iowa Department of Education. Once approved, it is presented to the Community College Council and the State Board of Education, the latter of which takes action regarding the college's accreditation status. A final copy is sent to the college along with any required actions on the part of the college.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

### Prior to a Comprehensive Evaluation

In advance of a comprehensive review, the Department provides the college with a copy of the Iowa Community College State Accreditation Guide. This provides the college time to review the process and to identify and inform the Department of any special topic(s) it wishes to receive special attention during the state review.

Prior to the evaluation, the Department convenes a state accreditation review team and generates a Community College Profile Report based on summative data extracted from the Community College Management Information System (MIS). The MIS is also used to generate samples (e.g., minimum faculty standards and faculty load) for review protocol which require them. In addition, the Department utilizes the database of approved programs, as well as the MIS, to generate a summary of potential compliance issues for the review team to investigate.

### Desk Review

The desk review portion of the state evaluation allows review teams to conduct as much of the evaluation as possible prior to a site visit. Steps in the desk review phase of the evaluation are outlined in the diagram on the previous page.

All information requested by the Department for the desk review is provided by the college. This includes institutional plans (e.g., quality faculty plan, institutional strategic plan), the most recent HLC accreditation review report, and other documents that can be shared electronically.

If any significant issues were identified by HLC, the college must also submit a narrative summary of action taken to remedy the concern and any additional documentation requested by the review team. Minor issues and recommendations of HLC will not be addressed.

Any unresolved questions from the desk review will be addressed during the site visit.

### Site Visit

The site visit portion of the state evaluation is intended to allow review teams to evaluate standards that cannot be reviewed through a desk review (e.g., review of human resources files), conduct interviews as needed, share with one another, review selected special topic(s) and begin creation of the preliminary accreditation report. In most cases, the site visit, including the creation of the preliminary report, is expected to last at least two days, but no longer than three days. Up to an additional day could be added when combined with an equity visit.

The team follows up on issues identified during the previous state accreditation visit, documented concerns and previously identified potential compliance issues, if any. Follow-up may include review of additional documents or additional interviews with select college personnel. This may also include reviewing documentation to verify that any significant issue(s) identified by HLC was remedied or that adequate progress is being made on activities implemented as a result of the finding(s).

The team may request the college provide a written assurance statement in response to an identified concern.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the team conducts an exit interview with college administration and anyone else the college identifies (e.g., board of directors, staff) to discuss initial findings and recommendations, including those for any special topics identified by the college.

### Reporting

During the site visit, the review team prepares a preliminary summative report with findings from the evaluation. This document serves as a draft of the report that will later be submitted to the State Board of Education. The report includes recommendations to the board concerning continued accreditation, as well as findings regarding compliance with state standards. At the college's discretion, the report may also include a summary of the special topic(s) reviewed .

After the visit, in consultation with the review team, the team leader completes the final report and gives the college the opportunity to identify and correct any factual errors before seeking approval from the director of the Iowa Department of Education. Once approved, the report is presented to the Community College Council and the State Board of Education, the latter of which takes action regarding the college's accredited status.

A copy of the final report is submitted to the college. If formal recommendations

are made, the Department will notify the college and specify required action, including timelines. The Department may provide technical assistance to the college in areas in which corrective action is necessary. If a recommendation is made for accredited status to be withdrawn resulting from failure to address a problem satisfactorily, the community college has one year to remedy the problem or lose accreditation for that program (see "Addressing Deficiencies" on page 35).

### Interim Evaluations

Interim state evaluations are similar to comprehensive evaluations but are limited in scope. They focus on state standards and issues identified during or since the last state evaluation. They are conducted approximately halfway between comprehensive evaluations.

As with comprehensive evaluations, an interim evaluation includes a desk review and a site visit (on-site interim visits are required by [Iowa Code 260C.47\(1\)\(b\)](#)). During the desk review the team reviews the college's most recent HLC report, any significant issues identified since the last state review, compliance with state standards and any documented issues received by the Department.

The length of the site visit may vary depending on the college and the needs of the review team, but in most cases the site visit portion is expected to take no more than two days, including preparation of the preliminary report. Up to one additional day could be added when combined with an equity visit,

Based on the desk review, interviews will be conducted for further clarification of potential state standard compliance issues. The review team may also request that the college provide additional documentation or a written assurance statement in response to an identified concern. During the site visit the team will also review human resource files and follow up on potential issues. Interim evaluations do not include review of a special topic(s).

## Focus Evaluations

With the approval of the director of the Iowa Department of Education, a focus evaluation may be conducted if the situation at a particular college warrants. Focus evaluations may be recommended by an evaluation team, the State Board of Education or the director of the Department.

Focus evaluations may result from issues identified through the database of approved programs or MIS (annual compliance monitoring is mandated by [Iowa Code 260C.47\(1\)\(a\)](#)), complaints received by the Department or adverse HLC actions. Community colleges should inform the Department of any focus evaluations or additional assurance reviews required by HLC (281–IAC 24.4(6)). Focus evaluations may also occur as a result of repeated citations for a specific standard or as a means to monitor progress remedying a compliance issue identified during a prior state evaluation.

If the Department is directed to conduct a focus evaluation, a focus evaluation team will be assembled, consisting of at least two Department staff persons. The team may also include one or more representatives from a peer institution. The focus evaluation may include a visit to the college or a desk audit. Once initiated, a focus evaluation may be conducted annually until problems are resolved or changes are fully approved and implemented.

The focus evaluation may or may not result in a report, depending on whether action by the State Board of Education is recommended. If significant noncompliance with state standards is identified, the Department may refer the issue to the State Board of Education with a recommendation for further action per [Iowa Code 260C.47](#).



## Recommended Timeline

The general timeline for comprehensive and interim reviews are nearly identical. They differ based on the depth and scope of the reviews, identification of special topics (comprehensive) and the amount of time spent on site. The following represent approximate time frames for pre-visit, visit, and post-visit activities.

### PRIOR TO STATE EVALUATION

#### 3-5 MONTHS

The Department provides the college with an overview of the accreditation process and expectations for the evaluation prior to selecting and inviting team members. The college is notified when the team is organized.

#### 2-4 MONTHS

The team leader contacts the college to set up an orientation and arranges for materials to be provided electronically for the pre-visit desk review. The team leader provides materials to team members and explains expectations. The college identifies a special topic(s), if applicable.

#### 1-3 MONTHS

The team leader contacts the college and makes arrangements for the evaluation site visit, including lodging (if appropriate), facilities, materials needed for the review and the tentative visit schedule.

#### 1 MONTH

The pre-visit desk review begins. The team reviews the most recent HLC accreditation report and other documentation provided. The team leader finalizes the site visit arrangements.

### STATE ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

The site visit is conducted, including document review, interviews, exit interview and preliminary report creation.

### AFTER THE STATE EVALUATION

#### WITHIN 4 MONTHS

The final draft of the report is provided to the college administration to fact-check, review and return for report finalization.

#### WITHIN 6 MONTHS

Depending on the State Board of Education's meeting schedule, the report is presented to the Community College Council and the State Board of Education. The Board then takes action in regard to the college's accredited status.

#### WITHIN 7 MONTHS

The Department notifies the college of the board's action and provides additional information, if appropriate.

If the report identifies areas of noncompliance, the Department, in cooperation with the community college, shall establish a plan prescribing the procedures to be taken to correct the deficiencies, as outlined per [Iowa Code 260C.47\(3\)](#).



# The Review Team

## *for State Accreditation*

### Team Composition

Evaluation teams are composed of Department staff, one of whom serves as the team leader, and community college personnel. The size of the team will be determined by the size of the college and the needs of the particular evaluation visit.

The following process will be used for the nomination and selection of team members, although team composition is ultimately determined by the director per [Iowa Code 260C.47\(1\)\(b\)](#). Team members will receive an orientation, including training in state evaluation procedures, and an overview of the state accreditation process.

### Team Selection

The Department selects team members for evaluations using the following criteria:

- » Comprehensive evaluation teams will include at least one community college administrator and one faculty member.
- » Team members will include individuals who have completed Department or HLC training as accreditation evaluators. Individuals with HLC expertise will be included on each team, when possible.
- » Teams may include members with and without prior experience on state accreditation teams.
- » All community colleges will be given the opportunity to provide team members over a period of two years. Team members may be selected based on expertise in the special topic(s) identified by the college, issues identified by HLC, or potential issues identified from Department data or complaints received.
- » The Department will seek to maintain gender balance on review teams and to include members with diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds or with disabilities.
- » Teams may include representation from other organizations external to higher education (e.g., business and industry) if the expertise is valuable for review of a special topic identified by the college.
- » Exceptions may be made to the above criteria to accommodate unique community college accreditation needs.

The size of the team may vary based on the size of the college and the needs of the particular evaluation. Interim review teams are notably smaller than comprehensive review teams.

Focus review teams include at least two Department staff members and may include one or more individuals from a peer community college(s) who have expertise in the focus issue.

## PLANNING CHECKLIST FOR THE ACCREDITATION TEAM LEADER

### Orientation

The Department periodically provides training on the state accreditation process for new members. Additionally, a short orientation will be provided prior to each accreditation review.

### Compensation

For comprehensive reviews only, team members, excluding those from the Department, will be compensated for expenses incurred by the college being reviewed. Department team members' expenses are covered by the Department.

### Responsibilities of the Team Leader

The team leader is a Department staff member who coordinates the state evaluation. Team leader responsibilities include the following:

- » Determining potential team members using criteria listed above.
- » Creating a list of members and conveying names to the community college contact (usually the accreditation chair).
- » Reviewing the team membership list with the president and the college's accreditation contact.
- » Contacting and confirming each selected team member.
- » Reviewing the team membership list with Department administration for approval.

1

Conduct orientation for new evaluators. Request team members to review the *Iowa Community Colleges State Accreditation Guide* and any procedural documents.

2

Confirm that all pre-visit materials are received by team members. Distribute necessary information to the team and make assignments of areas of special responsibility for the review.

3

Ensure discussion takes place among team members prior to the site visit.

4

Make hotel reservations for the site visit and notify team members of the arrangements. Reserve a team meeting room at the hotel, if possible.

5

Contact the college to provide a meeting room for the team on campus.

6

Coordinate with the college to put together a detailed schedule for the visit. Arrange for meetings and interviews during the visit.

7

Announce the visit and the availability of the team to confer with college personnel during "open time."

8

Confirm that material needed by the team during its visit has been placed in the team's meeting room on campus or is available electronically.

9

Create the accreditation report.

## Responsibilities of Team Members

The primary responsibility of the accreditation team is to determine whether the college meets the requirements set forth in the Iowa Administrative Code for state accreditation of community colleges. Individual team member responsibilities include the following:

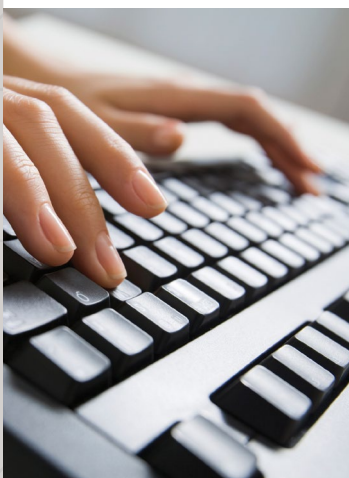
- » Becoming familiar with state standards and the content in the accreditation guide.
- » Reviewing protocol or procedures provided by the team leader.
- » Reviewing all materials provided for the pre-visit desk review. Performing all reviews within the time frame allotted by the team leader.
- » Determining individual questions and concerns, particularly those in the team member's assigned area of responsibility.
- » Discussing questions and concerns with fellow team members. Identifying potential issues, if any, for further investigation and documentation (or interviews) necessary to determine compliance.
- » Meeting with the team at the start of the visit to discuss individual views regarding assigned areas.
- » Reviewing compliance with standards as assigned during the site visit, and following up on assigned areas to determine answers to identified questions or concerns.
- » Participating in the entire site visit. Interim and comprehensive visits may

begin early in the morning and end late in the afternoon.

- » Writing statements with specific supporting documentation for all criteria assigned and participating in the development of the team report.
- » Participating in a final on-site team meeting to reach consensus regarding the preliminary accreditation report.
- » Attending the exit interview.
- » Reviewing the final accreditation report prior to its submission to the college visited.
- » Completing an accreditation evaluation form.

Team members' time during the evaluation process also includes the following duties:

- » Reviewing documentation.
- » Conducting interviews in scheduled blocks of time during the site visit and reviewing information on assigned criteria. The validity of the final team report depends upon quality research and inquiry by each team member.
- » Using independent time for reviewing findings and writing the preliminary report.
- » Participating in the introductory team meeting with community college personnel.
- » Participating in meetings with team members. Prior to the visit, these may be conducted over the phone or through electronic correspondence.



Team members are expected to demonstrate professionalism in conduct throughout the visit. All discussions held in team meetings are considered confidential and are not to be shared with anyone outside the team, except as mutually agreed upon. Team members are permitted to share opinions and information with community college personnel as the site visit takes place; however, team members are not permitted to offer advice that may be construed as team recommendations or requirements. Recommendations are the collective decision of the team and are made through the formal report process. There is a difference between opinion and advice, and the Department relies on the professionalism of team members to make these distinctions.

The accreditation report, including recommendations for institutional improvement, is written collectively, but the final report itself is prepared by the team leader. The final report is distributed in draft form to team members for corrections and comments before general distribution.

### Responsibilities of the Visited College

Responsibilities of colleges seeking continued accreditation include the following:

- » Assigning a contact person.
- » Reviewing the proposed membership of the accreditation team.
- » Preparing all requested documentation for review by the accreditation team.
- » Arranging on-site meetings of the accreditation team members with college personnel as requested.
- » Submitting an overview of the college to the review team prior to the site visit (comprehensive reviews only).

# State Standards and HLC Criteria

## State Standards

[Iowa Code section 260C.48](#) and [Iowa Administrative Code 281-24](#) establish state standards for accreditation of Iowa community colleges. These include standards set by HLC and additional state standards addressed in the next section.

## HLC Criteria for Accreditation

HLC criteria for accreditation, embodied in [Iowa Code 260C.48](#) (see the chart on the right), are used to evaluate all colleges of higher education accredited by HLC regardless of the model used to evaluate the college (currently, “[Standard Pathway](#)” and “[Open Pathway](#)”). All HLC-accredited colleges must meet the same requirements; however, the timelines and processes for maintaining accredited status differ depending on the selected pathway. See [hlcommission.org/accreditation/standard-and-open-pathways.html](http://hlcommission.org/accreditation/standard-and-open-pathways.html) for more information.

## HLC CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

The following criteria for accreditation are the standards of quality by which HLC determines whether a college merits accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. More information is available on the HLC website:

<https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html>

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | <b>MISSION</b><br>The college's mission is clear and articulated publicly. It guides the college's operations.   |
| 2 | <b>INTEGRITY: ETHICAL &amp; RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT</b><br>The college acts with integrity. Its conduct is ethical and responsible.  |
| 3 | <b>TEACHING &amp; LEARNING: QUALITY, RESOURCES &amp; SUPPORT</b><br>The college provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.   |
| 4 | <b>TEACHING &amp; LEARNING: EVALUATION &amp; IMPROVEMENT</b><br>The college demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services and evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement. |
| 5 | <b>INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, RESOURCES AND PLANNING</b><br>The college's resources, structures and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings and respond to future challenges and opportunities.  |



## State Evaluation of HLC Criteria

The final report issued by HLC after its last visit to the college serves as the state review team’s main source of documentation to demonstrate that a college is meeting HLC criteria as required by state law. This is supplemented by the official letter from HLC stating the college’s accreditation status.

The college is responsible for providing the Department with all documents provided to HLC by the college and by HLC to the college per [281–IAC 24.4](#). This includes all accreditation reports, additional reviews, documents or communications related to the

assurance processes or compliance with federal requirements. The required documentation does not currently include Annual Institutional Data Updates (AIDUs) or the instructional review file. Other sources of documentation include information provided by the college regarding its response to issues raised by HLC review. If an issue is identified, the review team may request the institution provide documentation demonstrating that the issue was remedied or is being addressed. This may include a narrative statement explaining how the issue was remedied or what activities have been implemented to address the concern.

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### EVALUATING COMPLIANCE WITH HLC CRITERIA

#### REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- » HLC Final Report
- » Official HLC Accreditation Status Letter
- » Accreditation Reports
- » Comprehensive Evaluations
- » Additional Reviews
- » Documents Related to Assurance Review
- » Documents Related to Compliance with Federal Requirements

#### OTHER POTENTIAL SOURCES

- » Responses to Issues Raised by the HLC Review
- » Narrative Statement from the College About How an Issue Was Addressed.

#### NOT REQUIRED

- » Annual Institutional Data Updates (AIDUs)
- » Institutional Review File



# State Standards

## for Accreditation

In addition to HLC criteria, Iowa community colleges are required by state law to meet additional standards to maintain accredited status. These standards are incorporated in [Iowa Code section 260C.48](#) and [Iowa Administrative Code 281—IAC24](#) and include:

- » Faculty Qualifications (281—IAC24.5(1))
- » Faculty Load (281—IAC24.5(2))
- » Special Needs and Protected Classes (281—IAC24.5(3))
- » CTE Program Evaluation (281—IAC24.5(4))
- » Physical Plant and Facilities (281—IAC24.5(5))
- » Strategic Planning (281—IAC24.5(6))
- » Quality Faculty Plan (281—IAC24.5(7))
- » Senior Year Plus (281—IAC24.5(8))

Protocol for evaluating compliance with state standards is subject to change and, consequently, will be maintained in procedural documents separate from or included in this guide.

### Faculty Qualifications

All instructors under contract with a community college for at least half time, including those who teach in CTE or arts and sciences (including adjuncts), are required to meet the state's minimum faculty standards.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** These standards were updated during the 2016-17 academic year to align with the 18 credits required by HLC and in 2020-21 to align with the new CTE faculty qualification options. More information can be found on the [Quality Faculty page](#) on the Department's website.

### Arts and Sciences

Arts and sciences instructors shall meet one of the following qualifications:

1. Possess a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited graduate school in each field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes; or
2. Possess a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited graduate school and have completed a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in a combination of the qualifying graduate fields identified as related to the field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes. These 18 graduate semester hours must include at least 6 credits in the specific course content being taught, with at least 12 credits required for courses that serve as prerequisites for junior-level courses at transfer institutions
3. For courses identified as applied liberal arts and sciences, possess at least a bachelor's degree and a combination of formal training and professional tested experience equivalent

6,000 hours. The instructor shall hold the appropriate registration, certification or licensure in occupational areas in which such credential is necessary for practice.

The determination of what constitutes each field of instruction is based on accepted practices of regionally accredited two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

*Note:* Developmental education and noncredit instructors are not subject to standards under this subrule (281—IAC 24.5(1)).

### Career and Technical Education (CTE)

CTE instructors must be registered, certified or licensed in the occupational area in which the state requires registration, certification or licensure, and must hold the appropriate registration, certification or licenses for the occupational area in which the instructor is teaching. In addition, CTE instructors must meet at least one of the following qualifications.

1. Possess a baccalaureate or graduate degree in the area or related area of study or occupational area in which the instructor teaches classes, or possesses a baccalaureate degree in any area of study if at least 18 credit hours completed were in the CTE field of instruction in which the instructor teaches classes, OR
2. Possess an associate degree in the CTE field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching, if such degree is considered terminal for that field of instruction; and have at least 3000 hours of recent and relevant work experience in the area taught.

3. Have special training and at least 6,000 hours of relevant tested work experience in the occupational area (or related area) in which the instructor teaches classes. If the instructor is a licensed practitioner who holds a career and technical endorsement under Iowa Code chapter 272, relevant work experience in the occupational area includes, but is not limited to, classroom instruction in a CTE subject area offered by a school district or accredited nonpublic school.

### Exempt Instructors

Minimum faculty standards do not apply to instructors of noncredit courses nor to developmental education and adult education instructors teaching only courses not intended to transfer or to complete a degree. Developmental education instructors may or may not meet minimum standards depending on their teaching assignments and the relevancy of standards to and the transferability of the courses they teach. If these instructors also teach credit courses, then they must meet the minimum faculty standards to teach those courses.

### Concurrent Enrollment Instructors

Concurrent enrollment instructors must meet the same requirements as adjunct instructors within the academic area employed by the college. Therefore, regardless of where college courses are taught, the instructors must meet state minimum faculty standards, as well as college hiring requirements for adjunct faculty in their field of instruction.

## Faculty Load

The teaching loads of full-time instructors must not exceed the faculty load limits set forth in Iowa law, as follows:

### Career and Technical Education (CTE) Instructors

The full-time teaching load of an instructor in career education programs shall not exceed an aggregate of 30 instructional contact hours per week or the equivalent. An instructor may also teach the equivalent of an additional three credit hours, provided the instructor consents to this additional assignment. When the teaching assignment includes classroom subjects (non-laboratory), consideration shall be given to establishing the teaching load more in conformity with that of college parallel instructors.

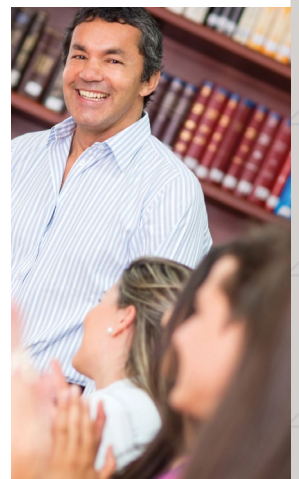
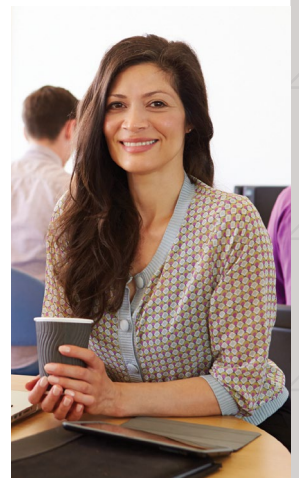
### College Parallel (Arts and Sciences) Instructors

The full-time teaching load of an instructor in arts and sciences courses shall be 15 credit hours per semester or the equivalent and the maximum academic workload shall be 16 credit hours per semester or the equivalent. An instructor may also have an additional teaching assignment, provided the instructor and the administration mutually consent to this additional assignment and that the total teaching load does not exceed 22 credit hours per semester or the equivalent.

### Special Needs and Protected Classes

Community colleges shall provide students with special needs, and those protected by state and federal civil rights regulation, with equal access to their full range of program offerings and services including, but not limited to, in recruitment, enrollment and placement activities. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of course program offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations.

The primary requirement associated with this standard is that the college publish an annual and a continuous notice of nondiscrimination. This Office for Civil Rights requirement is a component of both the state accreditation and the equity review process to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, etc. are provided to all college students and staff. A separate guide to these nondiscrimination statements is provided by the Department.





## CTE Program Evaluation

There are a variety of state requirements related to the offering of CTE programs. The standards are included in [Iowa Code Chapter 258](#), [281–IAC 46.7\(4\)](#), and [281–IAC 24.5\(4\)](#).

Standards for CTE programs relate to program and award length, program content, labor market demand, articulation, advisory committees and more. All CTE programs must be approved by the Department. The Department maintains a database of approved programs for this purpose. Standards for CTE programs are included in the Department’s [Program Approval: Guidelines for Iowa Community Colleges](#).

Additionally, community colleges are required to review at least 20 percent of their CTE programs annually. The Department reviews and approves institutional CTE program review processes through the state accreditation process.

## Physical Plant and Facilities

Each community college shall present evidence of adequate planning, including a board-approved facilities plan ([281–IAC24.5\(5\)](#)). Planning includes tentative program approval, a master campus plan, written educational specifications, site plot showing the location of proposed and existing facilities, elevations and floor plans.

All new or remodeled facilities (buildings, programs and services offered in such facilities) shall be made functional and usable for persons with special needs, and shall

comply with [Iowa Code Chapter 104A](#) and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act ([42 U.S.C. § 12101](#)), and address issues of campus safety and security as required by Iowa Code Chapter 260C and the federal Clery Act ([20 U.S.C. § 1092\(f\)](#)). All parking areas and roads shall comply with all state and federal rules and regulations dealing with roads, parking ramps and accessibility requirements.

All administrative facilities, classrooms, laboratories and related facilities shall be educationally adequate for the purpose for which they are designed.

A library or resource center shall be planned as part of the master campus plan and space made for library or learning resource center services within the initial construction. Additionally, a student center or area where students may gather informally and where food is available shall be provided.

## Strategic Planning

Community colleges are required to maintain a board-approved five-year strategic plan to guide the college and its decision-making. Consideration must be given to the five-year statewide strategic plan as required by [Iowa Code section 256.31\(4\)\(a\)](#) in the development of the institutional plan. [Administrative Rule 281-IAC 24.5 \(6\)](#) outlines the requirement for colleges to prepare a plan at least once every five years.

## Quality Faculty Plans (QFP)

Iowa law establishes the process for community colleges to plan for the hiring and professional development of faculty. Community college institutional QFPs must meet the standards outlined in Iowa Code section [281-IAC 24.5\(7\)](#).

### Quality Faculty Plan Committee

Each community college in Iowa must establish a QFP committee consisting of instructors and administrators to develop and maintain a plan for hiring and developing quality faculty. The committee must have equal representation from arts and sciences and career and technical faculty with no more than a simple majority of members of the same gender. Faculty shall be appointed by the college's faculty-certified employee organization. In the case where no such organization representing faculty exists, the faculty shall then be appointed by the administration pursuant to [Iowa Code section 260C.48\(4\)](#).

### Plan Requirements

The institutional QFP is applicable to all community college-employed faculty teaching credit courses, counselors, and media specialists. Counselors and media specialists are those who are classified as such in the college's collective bargaining agreement or written policy. Institutional QFP requirements may be differentiated for each type of employee. The board-approved QFP shall, at a minimum, include the following nine components:

1. **Plan maintenance.** The QFP committee shall submit proposed plan modifications

to the board of directors for consideration and approval. It is recommended that the plan be updated at least annually.

2. **Faculty and staff.** A determination of the faculty and staff to be included in the plan including, but not limited to, all instructors teaching college credit courses, counselors and media specialists.

3. **Orientation for new faculty.** It is recommended that new faculty orientation be initiated within six months from the hiring date. Orientation of new faculty should be flexible to meet current and future needs and provide options other than structured college courses for faculty to improve teaching strategies, curriculum development and evaluation strategies. It is recommended that the college consider developing a faculty mentoring program.

4. **Professional development for faculty.** The plan should clearly specify required components, including time frame for continuing professional development for all instructional staff, counselors and media specialists and may include reciprocity features that facilitate movement from one college to another. The plan should include the number of hours, courses, workshops, professional and academic conferences or other experiences such as industry internships, cooperatives and exchange programs, that faculty may use for continuing professional development. It is recommended that the plan include prescribed and elective topics, such as discipline-specific content and educational trends and research. Examples of topics

that may be considered include dealing with the complexities of learners, skills in teaching adults, curriculum development, assessment, evaluation, enhancing students' retention and success, reaching nontraditional and minority students, improving skills in implementing technology and applied learning, leadership development and issues unique to a particular college.

**5. Procedures for plan monitoring.** It is recommended that the plan identify the college officials or administrators responsible for the administration, record keeping and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the plan. Evidence collected and records maintained demonstrating plan implementation should be comprehensive in scope. It is recommended that the plan includes documentation to verify each faculty member appropriately possesses, attains, or progresses toward attaining minimum competencies.

**6. Consortium arrangements.** It is recommended that the plan provide an outline of existing and potential consortium arrangements including a description of the benefits, cost-effectiveness and method of evaluating consortium services.

**7. Instructional competencies.** It is recommended that the plan identify minimum competencies for faculty and explain the method or methods of determining and assessing competencies.

The plan should include procedures for reporting faculty progress and policies.

**8. Minimum competencies.** It is recommended that the plan specify data collection procedures that demonstrate how each full-time faculty member has attained or has documented progress toward attaining minimum competencies. It is recommended that the plan incorporate the current Department of Education MIS data submission requirements by which each college submits complete human resources data files electronically as a part of the college's year-end reporting.

**9. Compliance with faculty accreditation standards.** The plan should demonstrate the college's compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) faculty accreditation standards, as well as with faculty standards required under specific programs offered by the community college that are accredited by other accrediting agencies. It is recommended that the plan provide for uniform reports with substantiating data currently required for HLC accreditation.

Additional information may be found on the [quality faculty section](#) of the Department's website.

## Senior Year Plus Programs

There are a variety of requirements for Senior Year Plus programs offered to high school students jointly enrolled in community college. These requirements are included in [Iowa Code Chapter 261E](#), as described in [281–IAC 24.5\(8\)](#).

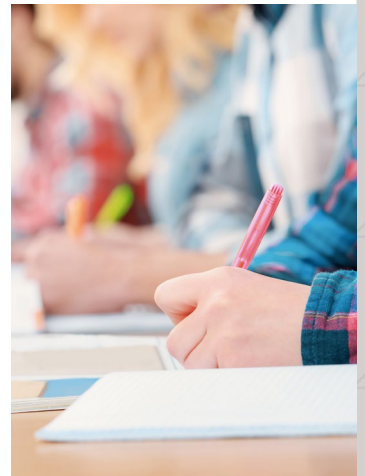
Currently, the Department utilizes the National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnership’s (NACEP) accreditation process to ensure compliance with many statutory requirements. Compliance with state standards is also monitored through the state community college accreditation process.

The Department website contains the [Senior Year Plus Guide for Educators and Educational Administrators](#) and additional [Department guidance](#) regarding program requirements.

## Other Requirements

Through the state accreditation process, the Department may review compliance with other requirements in state and federal law; however, any issues identified will not impact the college’s accreditation status provided they do not impact the college’s fulfillment of state and HLC accreditation standards.

Other requirements that will be reviewed include, but are not limited to, equity requirements, data reporting requirements and financial standards. Recommendations related to nonaccreditation state or federal requirements may or may not be included in the accreditation report presented to the State Board of Education.



# Equity Review

## *Alignment and Integration*

In response to concerns with the timing and communication of the current equity review process, the Accreditation Advisory Committee approved the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation to develop a plan to align the equity review process with the state accreditation process.

To that end, the Division convened a team of CTE and community college consultants to review and streamline the community college equity review process in order to redesign and align it with the accreditation process. The Division conducted a pilot of the proposed equity review process during a scheduled community college accreditation review in the spring of 2016. This interim accreditation visit was extended to three days to incorporate additional components of the proposed equity review process.

Under the current state accreditation process, each community college undergoes

a comprehensive review in year 10 and an interim visit in year five of each cycle. The proposed model to align the equity review process with the established accreditation process will involve coordinating an equity review with the selected college’s scheduled accreditation review. This alignment would result in each community college undergoing an equity review at least once every 15 years. The proposed schedule represents a shift from the current process, in which the frequency of visits has been inconsistent, at best, with some colleges reviewed more often than others due to student demographic changes. With no scheduling structure, some colleges have gone over 20 years without a review.

Under this proposal, equity reviews will align with existing state accreditation visits based on the schedule displayed in the table below. One of three colleges per year will receive an equity review simultaneously with its state accreditation review.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION CYCLE, EQUITY REVIEW COHORTS

| FY 2022 | FY 2023 | FY 2024 | FY 2025 | FY 2026 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| DMACC   | SWCC    | IVCCD   | KCC     | NIACC   |
| ICCC    | IHCC    | NICC    | HCC     | SCC     |
| IWCC    | WITCC   | ILCC    | EICC    | NWCC    |



The three colleges in a given year will be based on an objective assessment of enrollment data outlined in the sidebar to the right. Each of these criteria are weighted in a targeting plan that has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). In the case of a tie, the tied colleges will both receive an equity review.

Since the community college state accreditation review includes some components of the OCR equity review, the Division will clearly identify these equity-related components so that the colleges not selected for an equity review in any given year will still receive feedback and guidance on equity components. This will provide the colleges with an alert to potential OCR compliance issues and guidance regarding new regulations trends that affect the programs and services provided to students and staff. Any compliance issues identified on these equity-related accreditation components will appear in the state accreditation report.

The proposed equity review schedule may be preempted if the need to investigate a particular college arises from reports of serious equity concerns, or when the college has significant changes in its racial/ethnic makeup. In these cases, an equity review of that college will be scheduled in addition to the regularly scheduled colleges.

Equity reviews are conducted by a team of five to seven individuals consisting of Division staff and two external reviewers; however, these external reviewers will only join the team on on-site equity visits that coincide with a college's comprehensive accreditation review.

The equity review process consists of a desk review, on-site visit and reporting process. The desk review process originates with the Division requesting evidential documentation from the community college undergoing its accreditation and equity review. Following the data analysis and desk review process,

## EQUITY REVIEW TARGETING CRITERIA

The Division considers the following criteria when selecting a college for a focused equity review visit.

### ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY SEX

The percent of CTE programs that have 80 percent or more students of one sex enrolled.

The variance of the percent of students enrolled in CTE programs by sex compared to the percent of students enrolled at the college by sex.

### ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The variance of the percent of minority students enrolled in CTE programs compared to the percent of minority students enrolled at the college.

### ENROLLMENT PATTERNS BY DISABILITY

The variance of the percent of students with disabilities enrolled in CTE programs compared to the percent of students with disabilities enrolled at the college.

### COLLEGE DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics of students enrolled at the college.

### CHANGE IN MINORITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT

The change in the percent of minority students enrolled over the past five years.

### EQUITY-RELATED COMPLAINTS

Equity-related complaints received through the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation's complaint process.

### TIME ELAPSED SINCE PREVIOUS ON-SITE EQUITY REVIEW

Due to the cyclical nature of the Division's accreditation/equity review cycle, the time-elapsed criterion is more heavily weighted than the others.



equity review team members will schedule and conduct an on-site visit.

The on-site visit will involve interviews with select community college stakeholder groups, which, to the greatest extent possible, will coincide with accreditation interviews to limit the overall number of interviews required; however, since not all OCR equity components correspond with state accreditation standards, a few additional equity-specific interviews will be required.

The reporting process for equity reviews will mirror the current state accreditation process in that the Division will complete and submit a draft report to the college within one to four months of the on-site visit. The college will have a set amount of time to provide feedback on the content of the report, which may result in a revision of the report. Once the report is finalized, it will be sent to the college president

or chancellor who will submit a Voluntary Compliance Plan (VCP) that briefly describes actions designed to correct any compliance issues detailed in the report. The Department will then submit the report and the VCP to the OCR.

The Division will create concise documentation for the team's use during equity reviews, including a list of evidential documents to be requested from the college, worksheets for desk review and on-site interview notes, lists of interview questions for various stakeholder groups and an equity report template to guide the final on-site meeting with college officials and to create consistent reports.

The Division has created guidance documentation for the colleges regarding the new process that details Division responsibilities and college expectations before, during and after equity reviews; establishes communication processes through a college liaison; provides a detailed timeline and procedures for the submission of college evidential documentation and outlines the schedule of events surrounding the on-site equity visit, including a list of interview groups and a process for a facility review.



# Special Topics

## *for Continuous Improvement*

### Special Topic Review

In addition to the assurance component, which determines compliance with state standards, the comprehensive state evaluation includes a continuous improvement component entailing a review of a special topic(s).

The special topic component provides the college the opportunity to receive input from one or more peer experts on a particular issue. The topic(s) is usually selected by the college, but an additional topic(s) may be included at the direction of the director of the Iowa Department of Education or the State Board of Education. The special topic is purposefully separate from the assurance/compliance component of the evaluation and no sanctions may arise based on the team's findings or recommendations. Inclusion of a summary of the special topic(s) in the final accreditation report is at the college's discretion.

While similar to the continuous improvement components of HLC reviews (i.e., the Quality Initiative Project in Open Pathway or special projects in the Standard Pathway), the special topic need not be duplicative. The college may choose to include a special topic(s) for review to gain peer feedback about an institutional weakness or to get advice from an expert with a particularly strong or innovative program. The college may also utilize the special topic

to delve further into its quality initiative for HLC or into a strategic priority of the college.

Some examples of special topic areas include, but are not limited to:

- » Title IX/SaVE Act process improvement
- » Review of mission, vision and values
- » Program review and evaluation
- » Non-academic program assessment
- » Competency-based instruction
- » Work-based learning
- » Guided pathways

Special topics are addressed through a dialogue between college personnel and review team members with expertise in the subject area(s) and a review of relevant documents. The reviewers will offer consultative advice on germane aspects of the topic(s). The technical assistance provided is intended to be valuable in the continuous improvement process.

Recommendations are reported verbally during the evaluation team's exit interview. The recommendations or a brief summary of the review may be included in the final report at the college's discretion.

The special topic component is not included in interim evaluations nor focused evaluations.

# Accreditation Report

The state review team prepares a final accreditation report based on the outcome of its evaluation of the college. The report is presented to the director of the Iowa Department of Education and the State Board of Education with a recommendation regarding continued accredited status. The report's structure varies depending on whether the evaluation was comprehensive or interim in nature.

## Comprehensive Evaluation

The components of the comprehensive evaluation accreditation report include an institutional overview, an assurance summary outlining compliance with state standards, a continuous improvement summary and recommendation for or against accreditation.

### Institutional Overview

The institutional overview portion of the accreditation report includes the following sections:

- » A brief history of the college
- » An institutional profile

### Assurance Summary

The assurance component of the state evaluation consists of a review of compliance with state standards and HLC criteria.

This section of the accreditation report includes the following:

- » Compliance with HLC criteria
- » Compliance with additional state standards
- » Adequacy of progress in addressing deficiencies, if any, identified during prior state evaluations

The report will clearly identify findings that must be addressed and provide the timeline required to remedy any identified deficiencies.

### Continuous Improvement Summary

The accreditation report may contain other items, including a summary of findings from the continuous improvement component, or recommendations from the review team regarding other state or federal requirements.

These components may include the following:

- » A summary of key practices implemented within or as a result of the college's strategic plan that have advanced the vision, mission, and strategic priorities set forth by the college.
- » A summary of the special topic (if desired by the college).
- » Recommendations in regard to compliance with non-accreditation state or federal requirements.

The accreditation report submitted to the State Board of Education will not include findings or recommendations regarding special topics identified by the college (or the director), unless requested by the college.

### Evaluation Team Recommendations

The report includes the evaluation team recommendations regarding the college's continued accredited status.

### Interim Evaluation

The accreditation report created following interim evaluations is condensed due to the shortened review and narrower scope of the evaluation. The interim evaluation includes only the assurance summary and evaluation team recommendations.

### Focus Evaluations

Focus evaluations do not result in an accreditation report unless one is requested by the director of the Iowa Department of Education or the State Board of Education. When a focus evaluation is conducted and a report is requested, the report's scope is limited to the identified issue(s) and the evaluation team recommendations.

### State Board of Education Presentation

When the college's accreditation report is finalized by the Department, it is sent to both the Community College Council and the State Board of Education. Currently, the college does not make a presentation to the Council, but after review of the report and Department staff visit explanation, the Council makes a recommendation of re-accreditation for the college that will go to the Board. At the Board, the college will have about 20-25 minutes on the agenda for both the Department to present the report and for the college to give their presentation. The Department staff and college will also take questions from the Board. These questions could be about the report or about any activities going on within the region. The expectations for the SBOE college presentation include any or all of the following:

- » Sharing the college's perspective on the accreditation visit and findings
- » Sharing the college's strategic plan for meeting the college's regional needs
- » College and community initiatives and/or news that would be of interest to the Board

If the college plans to present via a document or handouts, those items should be shared to the Department about 7-10 days prior to the meeting so that board members can review the materials before the meeting.



# Accredited Status

## *and Addressing Deficiencies*

Based on the state review team’s recommendation included in the final accreditation report, the State Board of Education may grant the college accredited status, conditional accreditation or deny accreditation.

### Accreditation Granted

Colleges that are granted a continuation of accreditation are accredited for a 10-year term unless the State Board of Education determines that a lesser term is warranted. If a deficiency is identified, the deficiency is included in the accreditation report presented to the director of the Iowa Department of Education. The report includes a recommendation as to whether the community college shall remain accredited.

The Department may set a timeline for the deficiency to be remedied (often 60-90 days). The Department may request the college provide documentation demonstrating the deficiency has been remedied or it may review the issue during the next scheduled accreditation visit. If the deficiency is remedied within the timeline provided, no additional report or action by the State Board is required. If the deficiency is not remedied, the Department will discuss the issue with the college, and the director may recommend a focus evaluation.

### Conditional Accreditation

If the board denies accreditation or grants conditional accredited status, the director of the Iowa Department of Education, in cooperation with the board of directors of the community college, shall establish a plan that addresses how to correct deficiencies and meet the established

### FULL ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is granted for five years unless the State Board of Education determines a lesser term is warranted. If a deficiency is identified, but can be remedied in a short amount of time, the board may grant accredited status. The Iowa Department of Education may set a timeline for the deficiency to be remedied (often 60 to 90 days).

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### CONDITIONAL ACCREDITATION

Accreditation granted on a conditional basis requires the college to submit a plan prescribing the actions it plans to take and a timeline for addressing the deficiencies to the director of the Iowa Department of Education within 45 days following the notice. During the time specified in the plan for implementation, the college remains accredited.

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### DENIAL OF ACCREDITATION\*

If a college fails to meet accreditation standards, it is given at least one year’s notice prior to removal of its accredited status. If, during the year, the college remedies the deficiency and demonstrates its ability to comply with accreditation standards going forward, the director of the Iowa Department of Education shall continue accreditation.

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\* *The action of the director to remove accreditation from a community college may be appealed to the State Board of Education, as provided in [Iowa Code 260C.47\(7\)](#).*

standards and criteria. A deadline to enact the plan should also be included. The plan shall be submitted to the director within 45 days following the notice of accreditation denial or conditional accreditation and should include components which address correcting deficiencies, sharing or merger options, discontinuation of specific programs or courses of study and any other options proposed by the State Board of Education or the accreditation team to allow the college to meet the accreditation standards and criteria.

During the time specified in the plan for implementation, the college remains accredited. The review team shall revisit the college to evaluate whether deficiencies in the standards have been corrected. The team shall prepare a report with recommendations to the director and board. The State Board shall review the report, may request additional information and shall determine whether the deficiencies have been corrected.

### Denial of Accreditation

If a college fails to meet accreditation standards, as determined by the board, at least one year's notice shall be provided prior to removal of accredited status. The notice shall specify the reasons for removal of accreditation

and shall be sent by certified mail or restricted certified mail to the chief executive officer of the college, as well as to each member of the college's board of directors. If the deficiency is remedied within the year, and the director is satisfied that the college will comply with accreditation standards in the future, the director shall continue accreditation and transmit notice of the action to the college by certified mail or restricted certified mail.

If deficiencies are not corrected, the college board of directors shall take one of the following actions within 60 days of removal of accreditation:

1. Merge the deficient program or programs with a program or programs from another accredited community college.
2. Contract with another accredited postsecondary institution for purposes of program delivery at the community college.
3. Discontinue the program or programs which have been identified as deficient.

The action of the director to remove state accreditation from a community college may be appealed to the State Board of Education, as provided in [Iowa Code 260C.47\(7\)](#).



## **APPENDIX 1:**

### **The Accreditation Advisory Committee**

The Iowa Community College Accreditation Advisory Committee is charged with continuously reviewing the state accreditation process and making recommendations to the Department.

The committee includes representatives from each of the state's 15 community colleges representing functional areas that include presidents, chief academic officers, deans and directors, arts and sciences faculty, career and technical education faculty, economic developers, institutional researchers, student service administrators and human resource directors.

Committee member representation is recommended by the college and appointed by the director of the Iowa Department of Education and may serve for several years on the committee.

To ensure broad representation from a variety of functional areas, the Department will request new members drawn from selected groups based on the areas of expertise of members whose leave the committee. For example, the Department may request that the college nominate one individual from a faculty or administrative area.

In appointing members, the Department seeks to maintain gender balance and to include individuals with diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds or disabilities. The Department also strives to ensure cross membership with the faculty advisory committee.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2020-2021

| College        | Community College Member | Position  |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|
| Trudy Fritch   | Hawkeye                  | CTE and Learning Services Faculty   |
| Dan Kinney     | Iowa Western             | President   |
| Angie Redmond  | Iowa Valley              | Dean of Enrollment and Student Life   |
| Bob Leifeld    | Iowa Lakes               | VP of Administration  |
| Cheryl Welsch  | Eastern Iowa             | Dean of Curriculum and Accreditation  |
| Renee Romig    | Western Iowa Tech        | Arts & Science Faculty  |
| Jeff Magnuson  | Southwestern             | Collision Repair Instructor   |
| Shelly Schmit  | North Iowa Area          | VP Institutional Effectiveness and Org. Dev.                                |
| Stacy Mentzer  | Iowa Central             | Director, Institutional Effectiveness                                       |
| David Keller   | Kirkwood                 | Curriculum and Assessment Specialist  |
| Michelle Davis | Northeast Iowa           | Arts and Sciences Instructor<br>Chair of the Quality Faculty Plan Committee |
| Kristen Berg   | Northwest Iowa           | Institutional Instructional Effectiveness                                   |
| Matt Thompson  | Indian Hills             | President   |
| Michael Ash    | Southeastern             | President   |
| Carolyn Farlow | Des Moines Area          | Director of Institutional Effectiveness                                     |

## APPENDIX 2

# State Laws Governing Accreditation

Iowa's process for accrediting community colleges is mandated by state law. The following are the sections of Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Code pertaining to the state accreditation process and standards. Some state standards such as career and technical education program evaluation and Senior Year Plus programs are not detailed in these sections but reference other sections.

### Iowa Code 260C.47

#### Accreditation of community college programs.

1. The state board of education shall establish an accreditation process for community college programs. The process shall be jointly developed and agreed upon by the department of education and the community colleges. The state accreditation process shall be integrated with the accreditation process of the higher learning commission, including the evaluation cycle, the self-study process, and the criteria for evaluation, which shall incorporate the standards for community colleges developed under section 260C.48; and shall identify and make provision for the needs of the state that are not met by the commission's accreditation process. The department of education shall use a two-component process for the continued accreditation of community college programs.

a. The first component consists of submission of required data by the community colleges and annual monitoring by the department of education of all community colleges for compliance with state program evaluation requirements adopted by the state board.

b. The second component consists of the use of an accreditation team appointed by the director of the department of education, to conduct an evaluation, including an on-site visit of each community college, with a comprehensive evaluation occurring once every ten years, and an interim evaluation midway between comprehensive evaluations. The number and composition of the accreditation team shall be determined by the director, but the team shall include members of the department of education staff and community college staff members from community colleges other than the community college that conducts the programs being evaluated for accreditation. The accreditation team shall monitor the quality faculty plan implemented by each community college pursuant to section 260C.36.

c. Rules adopted by the state board shall include provisions for coordination of the accreditation process under this section with activities of accreditation associations, which are designed to avoid duplication in the accreditation process.

2. Prior to a visit to a community college, members of the accreditation team shall have access to the

program audit report filed with the department for that community college. After a visit to a community college, the accreditation team shall determine whether the accreditation standards for a program have been met and shall make a report to the director and the state board, together with a recommendation as to whether the program of the community college should remain accredited. The accreditation team shall report strengths and weaknesses, if any, for each program standard and shall advise the community college of available resources and technical assistance to further enhance strengths and improve areas of weakness. A community college may respond to the accreditation team's report.

3. The state board shall determine whether a program of a community college shall remain accredited. If the state board determines that a program of a community college does not meet accreditation standards, the director of the department of education, in cooperation with the board of directors of the community college, shall establish a plan prescribing the procedures that must be taken to correct deficiencies in meeting the program standards, and shall establish a deadline date for correction of the deficiencies. The deadline for correction of deficiencies under a plan shall be no later than June 30 of the year following the on-site visit of the accreditation team. The plan is subject to approval of the state board. Plans shall include components which address meeting program deficiencies, sharing or merger options, discontinuance of specific programs or courses of study, and any other options proposed by the state board or the accreditation team to allow the college to meet the program standards.

4. During the time specified in the plan for its implementation, the community college program remains accredited. The accreditation team shall revisit the community college and shall determine whether the deficiencies in the standards for the program have been corrected and shall make a report and recommendation to the director and the state board. The state board shall review the report and recommendation, may request additional information, and shall determine whether the deficiencies in the program have been corrected.

5. If the deficiencies have not been corrected in a program of a community college, the community college board shall take one of the following actions within sixty days from removal of accreditation:

a. Merge the deficient program or programs with a program or programs from another accredited community college.

b. Contract with another educational institution for purposes of program delivery at the community college.

c. Discontinue the program or programs which have been identified as deficient.

6. The director of the department of education shall give a community college which has a program which fails to meet accreditation standards at least one year's notice prior to removal of accreditation of the program. The notice shall be given by certified mail or restricted certified mail addressed to the superintendent of the community college and shall specify the reasons for removal of accreditation of the program. The notice shall also be sent by ordinary mail to each member of the board of directors of the community college. Any good faith error or failure to comply with the notice requirements shall not affect the validity of any action by the director. If, during the year, the community college remedies the reasons for removal of accreditation of the program and satisfies the director that the community college will comply with the accreditation standards for that program in the future, the director shall continue the accreditation of the program of the community college and shall transmit notice of the action to the community college by certified mail or restricted certified mail.

7. The action of the director to remove a community college's accreditation of the program may be appealed to the state board. At the hearing, the community college may be represented by counsel and may present evidence. The state board may provide for the hearing to be recorded or reported. If requested by the community college at least ten days before the hearing, the state board shall provide for the hearing to be recorded or reported at the expense of the community college, using any reasonable method specified by the community college. Within ten days after the hearing, the state board shall render a written decision, and shall affirm, modify, or vacate the action or proposed action to remove the college's accreditation of the program. Action by the state board is final agency action for purposes of chapter 17A.

## Iowa Code 260C.48

### Standards for Accrediting Community College Programs

1. The state board shall develop standards and rules for the accreditation of community college programs. Except as provided in this subsection and subsection 4, standards developed shall be general in nature so as to apply to more than one specific program of instruction. With regard to community college-employed instructors, the standards adopted shall at a minimum require that community college instructors who are under contract for at least half-time or more, and by July 1, 2011, all instructors, meet the following requirements:

a. Instructors in the subject area of career and technical education shall be registered, certified, or licensed in the occupational area in which the state requires registration, certification, or licensure, and shall hold the appropriate registration, certificate, or license for the occupational area in which the instructor is teaching, and shall meet either of the following qualifications:

(1) A baccalaureate or graduate degree in the area or a related area of study or occupational area in which the instructor is teaching classes.

(2) Special training and at least six thousand hours of recent and relevant work experience in the occupational area or related occupational area in which the instructor teaches classes if the instructor possesses less than a baccalaureate degree.

b. Instructors in the subject area of arts and sciences shall meet either of the following qualifications:

(1) Possess a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited graduate school in each field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes; or

(2) Possess a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited graduate school and have completed a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in a combination of the qualifying graduate fields identified as related to the field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes. These 18 graduate semester hours must include at least 6 credits in the specific course content being taught, with at least 12 credits required for courses that serve as prerequisites for junior-level courses at transfer institutions

(3) For courses identified as applied liberal arts and sciences, possess at least a bachelor's degree and a combination of formal training and professional tested experience equivalent to 6,000 hours. The instructor shall hold the appropriate registration, certification, or licensure in occupational areas in which such credential is necessary for practice.

The determination of what constitutes each field of instruction is based on accepted practices of regionally accredited two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

Note: Developmental education and noncredit instructors are not subject to standards under this subrule (281—IAC 24.5(1))

2. Standards developed shall include a provision that the full-time teaching load for an instructor in arts and sciences courses shall be fifteen credit hours per semester, or the equivalent, and the maximum academic workload shall be sixteen credit hours per semester, or the equivalent. An instructor may also have an additional teaching assignment if the instructor and the community college administration mutually consent to the additional assignment and the total teaching load does not exceed twenty-two hours of credit per semester, or the equivalent.

3. Standards developed shall include provisions requiring equal access in recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities for students with special education

needs. The provisions shall include a requirement that students with special education needs shall receive instruction in the least restrictive environment with access to the full range of program offerings at a college, through, but not limited to, adaptation of curriculum, instruction, equipment, facilities, career guidance, and counseling services.

4. Standards relating to quality assurance of faculty and ongoing quality professional development shall be the accreditation standards of the higher learning commission and the faculty standards required under specific programs offered by the community college that are accredited by other accrediting agencies.

## Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 24 (281—IAC 24 (260C))

### Community College Accreditation

**281—24.1(260C) Purpose.** As set forth in Iowa Code section 260C.1, the purpose of accreditation of Iowa's community colleges is to confirm that each college is offering, to the greatest extent possible, educational opportunities and services, when applicable, but not be limited to:

1. The first two years of college work including pre-professional education.
2. Career and technical training.
3. Programs for in-service training and retraining of workers.
4. Programs for high school completion for students of post-high school age.
5. Programs for all students of high school age, who may best serve themselves by enrolling for career and technical training, while also enrolled in a local high school, public or private.
6. Programs for students of high school age to provide advanced college placement courses not taught at a student's high school while the student is also enrolled in the high school.
7. Student personnel services.
8. Community services.
9. Career and technical education or persons who have academic, socioeconomic, or other disabilities which prevent succeeding in regular career and technical education programs.
10. Training, retraining, and all necessary preparation for productive employment of all citizens.
11. Career and technical training for persons who are not enrolled in a high school and who have not completed high school.
12. Developmental education for persons who are academically or personally underprepared to succeed in their program of study.

**281—24.2(260C) Scope.** Each community college is subject to accreditation by the state board of education, as provided in Iowa Code section 260C.47. The state board of education shall grant accreditation

if a community college meets the standards established in this chapter.

**281—24.3(260C) Definitions.** For purposes of interpreting rule 281—24.5(260C), the following definitions shall apply:

*“Applied liberal arts and sciences course.”* An applied liberal arts and sciences course is a course that is classified as arts and sciences in Iowa's common course numbering system and that primarily consists of hands-on or occupational skill development, including but not limited to accounting, ceramics, criminal investigation, dance, drama, music, photography, and physical education.

*“Department.”* Department refers to the Iowa department of education.

*“Director.”* Director refers to the director of the department.

*“Field of instruction.”* Field of instruction indicates the discipline or occupational area within which an instructor teaches, which aligns with the content of the course being taught as indicated by the course prefix, title, or description.

*“Full-time instructor.”* An instructor is considered to be full-time if the community college board of directors designates the instructor as full-time. Determination of full-time status shall be based on local board-approved contracts.

*“Higher Learning Commission.”* The Higher Learning Commission is the regional accrediting authority recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Iowa Code sections 260C.47 and 260C.48 require that the state accreditation process be integrated with that of the Higher Learning Commission.

*“Joint enrollment.”* Joint enrollment refers to any community college credit course offered to students enrolled in a secondary school. Courses offered for joint enrollment include courses delivered through contractual agreements between school districts and community colleges, courses delivered through the postsecondary enrollment options program, and college credit courses taken independently by tuition-paying secondary school students.

*“Minimum of 12 graduate hours.”* Full-time arts and sciences instructors must possess a master's degree and complete a minimum of 12 graduate hours in their field of instruction. The 12 graduate hours may be within the master's degree requirements or independent of the master's degree, but all hours must be in the instructor's field of instruction.

*“Qualifying graduate field or major.”* A qualifying graduate field or major represents an academic discipline in which an instructor must have earned credit in order to teach courses in specified fields of instruction.

*“Relevant tested experience.”* Relevant tested experience refers to the breadth, depth, and currency of work experience outside of the classroom in real-world situations relevant to the field of instruction.



**281—24.4(260C) Accreditation components and criteria—Higher Learning Commission.** In order to be accredited by the state board of education and maintain accreditation status, a community college must meet the accreditation criteria of the Higher Learning Commission and additional state standards. Documents and materials provided in accordance with the accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission shall also be provided to the department for the state accreditation process.

**281—24.5(260C) Accreditation components and criteria—additional state standards.** To be granted accreditation by the state board of education, an Iowa community college shall also meet additional standards pertaining to minimum or quality assurance standards for faculty (Iowa Code section 260C.48(1)); faculty load (Iowa Code section 260C.48(2)); special needs and protected classes (Iowa Code section 260C.48(3)); career and technical education program evaluation (Iowa Code section 258.4(7)); facilities, parking lots and roads; strategic planning; quality faculty plan (Iowa Code section 260C.36); and senior year plus programs (Iowa Code chapter 261E).

24.5(1) Faculty.

a. Community college-employed instructors who teach college credit courses shall meet minimum standards and institutional quality faculty plan requirements. Standards shall at a minimum require that all community college instructors meet the following requirements:

(1) Instructors teaching courses in the area of career and technical education shall be registered, certified, or licensed in the occupational area in which the state requires registration, certification, or licensure and shall meet at least one of the following qualifications:

1. Possess a baccalaureate or graduate degree in the area of study or occupational area in which the instructor teaches classes, or possesses a baccalaureate degree in any area of study if at least 18 of the credit hours completed were in the CTE field of instruction in which the instructor teaches classes.
2. Possess an associate degree in the CTE field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching, if such degree is considered terminal for that field of instruction, and have at least 3000 hours of recent and relevant work experience in the occupational area or related occupational area in which the instructor teaches classes.
3. Have special training and at least 6,000 hours of recent and relevant work experience in the occupational area or related occupational area in which the instructor teaches classes if the instructor possesses less than a baccalaureate degree

in the area or related area of study or occupational area in which the instructor is teaching classes and the instructor does not meet the requirements of subparagraph (2).

4. For purposes of subparagraph (b) and (c) if the instructor is a licensed practitioner who holds a career and technical endorsement under Iowa Code chapter 272, relevant work experience in the occupational area includes, but is not limited to, classroom instruction in a career and technical education subject area offered by a school district or accredited nonpublic school.

(2) Instructors in the area of arts and sciences shall meet one of the following qualifications:

1. Possess a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited graduate school in each field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes.
2. Possess a master's degree or higher from a regionally accredited graduate school and have completed a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in a combination of the qualifying graduate fields identified as related to the field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes.

These 18 graduate semester hours must include at least 6 credits in the specific course content being taught, with at least 12 credits required for courses that serve as prerequisites for junior- level courses at transfer institutions.

For the transition period ending September 1, 2017, an instructor deemed qualified to teach with a master's degree and 12 graduate semester hours within a field of instruction and who demonstrates adequate progress toward meeting the goals of the instructor's individual quality faculty plan shall remain qualified to teach until the date specified in the quality faculty plan or September 1, 2017, whichever comes first.

3. For courses identified as applied liberal arts and sciences, possess at least a bachelor's degree and a combination of formal training and professional tested experience equivalent to 6,000 hours. The instructor shall hold the appropriate registration, certification, or licensure in occupational areas in which such credential is necessary for practice.

b. Developmental education and noncredit instructors are not subject to standards under this subrule. Adult education instructors shall

meet minimum standards set forth in rule 281–23.6(260C).

**c.** A faculty standards council shall be convened by the department to review procedures for establishing and reviewing minimum instructor qualifications and definitions for “field of instruction,” “applied liberal arts and sciences courses,” “qualifying graduate field or major,” and “relevant tested experience.” Definitions shall be based on accepted practices of regionally accredited two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

**(1)** The council shall include faculty and academic administrators and meet at least annually. The council shall make recommendations to a committee consisting of the chief academic officers of Iowa’s 15 community colleges. The committee shall adopt definitions and minimum faculty qualification standards to be utilized for the state accreditation process. Each community college shall adhere to the adopted definitions and minimum faculty qualification standards.

**(2)** When utilizing relevant tested experience to qualify an instructor to teach classes within a specific field of instruction, each community college shall maintain well-defined policies, procedures, and documentation in alignment with the adopted definitions and minimum faculty qualification standards. This documentation shall demonstrate that the instructor possesses the experience and expertise necessary to teach in the specified field of instruction and is current in the instructor’s discipline. When tested experience is assessed, an hour of relevant work is equal to 60 minutes and one full-time year of relevant work is equal to 2,000 hours.

#### 24.5(2) Faculty load.

**a. Arts and sciences.** The full-time teaching load of an instructor in arts and sciences courses shall be 15 credit hours within a traditional semester or the equivalent and shall not exceed a maximum of 16 credit hours within a traditional semester or the equivalent. An instructor may also have an additional teaching assignment beyond the maximum academic workload, provided the instructor and the community college administration mutually consent to this additional assignment and the total workload does not exceed the equivalent of 22 credit hours within a traditional semester or the equivalent.

**b. Career and technical education.** The full-time teaching load of an instructor in career and technical education programs shall not exceed an aggregate of 30 hours per week or the equivalent. An instructor may also teach the equivalent of an additional 3 credit hours, provided the instructor consents to this additional assignment. When the teaching assignment includes classroom subjects (non-laboratory), consideration shall be given to

establishing the teaching load more in conformity with that of paragraph 24.5(2)“a.”

**24.5(3) Special needs and protected classes.** Community colleges shall provide equal access to the full range of program offerings and services including, but not limited to, recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities for students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulations. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of program offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations.

**24.5(4) Career and technical education evaluation.** The director of the department shall ensure that Iowa’s community colleges annually review at least 20 percent of approved career and technical education programs. The community college career and technical program review and evaluation system must ensure that the programs:

- a.** Are compatible with educational reform efforts.
- b.** Are capable of responding to technological change and innovation.
- c.** Meet educational needs of the students and employment community, including students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulations.
- d.** Enable students enrolled to perform the minimum competencies independently.
- e.** Are articulated/integrated with the total school curriculum.
- f.** Enable students with a secondary career and technical background to pursue other educational interests in a postsecondary setting, if desired. Ch 24, p.4 Education [281] IAC 2/15/17
- g.** Provide students with support services and eliminate access barriers to education and employment for students with special education needs or protected by state or federal civil rights regulations.

#### 24.5(5) Facilities, parking lots and roads.

**a. Facilities master planning.** Each community college shall present evidence of adequate planning, including a board-approved facilities plan. Planning includes tentative program approval, a master campus plan, written educational specifications, site plot showing location of proposed and existing facilities, elevations and floor plans.

**b. Accessibility and safety.** All new or remodeled facilities (buildings and programs offered in such facilities) and services in such facilities shall be made functional and usable for persons with special needs and shall comply with Iowa Code chapter 104A and the Americans With Disabilities Act, 42

**c.** U.S.C. § 12101, and address issues of campus safety and security as required by Iowa Code chapter 260C and by the federal Clery Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1092(f). All parking areas and roads shall comply with all state and federal rules and regulations dealing with roads, parking ramps, and accessibility requirements.

**d. Adequate facilities.** All administrative facilities, classrooms, laboratories, and related facilities shall be educationally adequate for the purpose for which they are designed.

**e. Library or learning resource center.** A library or learning resource center shall be planned as part of the master campus plan and space made for library or learning resource center services within the initial construction. The library or learning resource center shall be adequately staffed with qualified professionals and skilled nonprofessional personnel. The library or learning resource center materials collection of a community college shall be accessible and adequate in size and scope to serve effectively the number and variety of programs offered and the number of students enrolled, including students enrolled at distance and satellite sites. The library or learning resource center materials shall show evidence of having been selected by faculty as well as professional library or learning resource staff and shall be kept up-to-date. The budget of the library or learning resource center shall be appropriate for the programs and services offered by the community college.

**f. Student center.** An area of the college shall be provided where students may gather informally and where food is available.

24.5(6) *Strategic planning.* The community college shall prepare a strategic plan at least once every five years to guide the college and its decision making.

24.5(7) *Quality faculty plan.* The community college shall establish a quality faculty committee consisting of instructors and administrators to develop and maintain a plan for hiring and developing quality faculty. The committee shall have equal representatives of arts and sciences and career and technical faculty with no more than a simple majority of members of the same gender. Faculty shall be appointed by the certified employee organization representing faculty, if any, and administrators shall be appointed by the college's administration. If no faculty-certified employee organization representing faculty exists, the faculty shall be appointed by administration pursuant to Iowa Code section 260C.48(4). The committee shall submit the plan to the board of directors for consideration, approval and submittal to the department of education.

**a.** For purposes of this subrule, the following definitions shall apply.

**(1)** "Counselor" means those who are classified as counselors as defined in the college's collective bargaining agreement or written policy.

**(2)** "Media specialist" means those who are classified as media specialists as defined in the college's collective bargaining agreement or written policy.

**b.** The institutional quality faculty plan is applicable to all community college-employed faculty teaching college credit courses, counselors, and media specialists. The plan requirements

may be differentiated for each type of employee. The plan shall include, at a minimum, each of the following components:

**(1)** Plan maintenance. The quality faculty committee shall submit proposed plan modifications to the board of directors for consideration and approval. It is recommended that the plan be updated at least annually. IAC 2/15/17 Education [281] Ch 24, p.5

**(2)** A determination of the faculty and staff to be included in the plan including, but not limited to, all instructors teaching college credit courses, counselors, and media specialists.

**(3)** Orientation for new faculty. It is recommended that new faculty orientation be initiated within six months from the hiring date. It is recommended that the orientation of new faculty be flexible to meet current and future needs and provide options other than structured college courses for faculty to improve teaching strategies, curriculum development and evaluation strategies. It is recommended that the college consider developing a faculty mentoring program.

**(4)** Continuing professional development for faculty. It is recommended that the plan clearly specify required components including time frame for continuing professional development for faculty. It is recommended that the plan include the number of hours, courses, workshops, professional and academic conferences or other experiences such as industry internships, cooperatives and exchange programs that faculty may use for continuing professional development. It is recommended that the plan include prescribed and elective topics such as discipline-specific content and educational trends and research. Examples of topics that may be considered include dealing with the complexities of learners, skills in teaching adults, curriculum development, assessment, evaluation, enhancing students' retention and success, reaching nontraditional and minority students, improving skills in implementing technology and applied learning, leadership development, and issues unique to a particular college. The institutional quality faculty plan shall include professional development components for all instructional staff, counselors, and media specialists and may include reciprocity features that facilitate movement from one college to another.

**(5)** Procedures for accurate record keeping and documentation for plan monitoring. It is recommended that the plan identify the college officials or administrators responsible for the administration, record keeping and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the plan. It is recommended the plan monitoring, evidence collected, and records maintained showing



implementation of the plan be comprehensive in scope. It is recommended that the plan provide for the documentation that each faculty member appropriately possesses, attains or progresses toward attaining minimum competencies.

(6) Consortium arrangements where appropriate, cost-effective and mutually beneficial. It is recommended that the plan provide an outline of existing and potential consortium arrangements including a description of the benefits, cost-effectiveness, and method of evaluating consortium services.

(7) Specific activities that ensure that faculty attain and demonstrate instructional competencies and knowledge in their subject or technical areas. It is recommended that the plan identify faculty minimum competencies and explain the method or methods of determining and assessing competencies. It is recommended that the plan contain procedures for reporting faculty progress. It is recommended that faculty be notified at least once a year of their progress in attaining competencies.

(8) Procedures for collection and maintenance of records demonstrating that each faculty member has attained or documented progress toward attaining minimum competencies. It is recommended that the plan specify data collection procedures that demonstrate how each full-time faculty member has attained or has documented progress toward attaining minimum competencies. It is recommended that the plan incorporate the current department of education management information system data submission requirements by which each college submits complete human resources data files electronically as a part of the college's year-end reporting.

(9) Compliance with the faculty accreditation standards of the Higher Learning Commission and with faculty standards required under specific programs offered by the community college that are accredited by other accrediting agencies. It is recommended that the plan provide for the uniform reports with substantiating data currently required for Higher Learning Commission accreditation.

c. The department of education shall notify the community college when the department requires that a modified quality faculty plan be submitted. The department shall review the plan during the state accreditation evaluations to ensure each community college's compliance and progress in implementing a quality faculty plan as approved by the local board of directors. The department shall review the following:

(1) Documents submitted by the college that demonstrate that the plan includes each

component required by paragraph "b" of this subrule.

(2) Documentation submitted by the college that the board of directors approved the plan.

(3) Documentation submitted by the college that the college is implementing the approved plan, including, but not limited to, evidence of plan monitoring, evaluation and updating; evidence that the faculty has attained, or is progressing toward attaining, minimum competencies and standards contained in Iowa Code section 260C.48; evidence that faculty members have been notified of their progress toward attaining minimum competencies and standards; and evidence that the college meets the minimum accreditation requirements for faculty required by the Higher Learning Commission.

(4) Documentation that the college administration encourages the continued development of faculty potential as defined in Iowa Code Supplement section 260C.36 as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, House File 2679.

(5) Documentation of the human resources report submitted by the college through the department's community college management information system.

24.5(8) *Senior year plus*. The community college shall provide access to joint enrollment opportunities for high school age students. Each college shall comply with the appropriate standards defined in Iowa Code chapter 261E.

#### **281—24.6(260C) Accreditation process.**

24.6(1) **Components**. The community college accreditation process shall include the following components:

a. Each community college shall submit information on an annual basis to the department of education to comply with program evaluation requirements adopted by the state board of education.

b. The department of education shall conduct a comprehensive on-site accreditation evaluation of each community college on a ten-year interval. An interim evaluation midway **between comprehensive** evaluations shall also be conducted. The department shall prepare a staggered evaluation schedule which sets no more than three comprehensive or interim evaluations in any one year. No comprehensive or interim evaluation shall be required for continued accreditation prior to a community college's first evaluation under the schedule. The department shall have the authority to conduct focus evaluation visits as needed.

24.6(2) *Accreditation team*. The size and composition of the accreditation team shall be determined by the director of the department, but the team shall include members of the department of education staff and staff

members from community colleges other than the community college being evaluated for accreditation, and any other technical experts as needed.

**24.6(3) Accreditation team action.** After a visit to a community college, the accreditation team shall evaluate whether the accreditation standards have been met and shall make a report to the director of the department and the state board of education, together with a recommendation as to whether the community college shall remain accredited. The accreditation team shall report strengths and opportunities for improvement, if any, for each standard and criterion and shall advise the community college of available resources and technical assistance to further enhance strengths and address areas for improvement. A community college may respond to the accreditation team's report.

**24.6(4) State board of education consideration of accreditation.** The state board of education shall determine whether a community college shall remain accredited. Approval of accreditation for a community college by the state board of education shall be based upon the recommendation of the director of the department after study of the factual and evaluative evidence on record pursuant to the standards and criteria described in this chapter, and based upon the timely submission of information required by the department of education in a format provided by the department of education. With the approval of the director of the department, a focus visit may be conducted if the situation at a particular college warrants such a visit.

**a. Accreditation granted.** Continuation of accreditation, if granted, shall be for a ten-year term; however, approval for a lesser term may be granted by the state board of education if the board determines that conditions so warrant.

**b. Accreditation denied or conditional accreditation.** If the state board of education denies accreditation or grants conditional accreditation, the director of the department of education, in cooperation with the board of directors of the community college, shall establish a plan prescribing the procedures that must be taken to correct deficiencies in meeting the standards and criteria and shall establish a deadline for correction of the deficiencies. The plan shall be submitted to the director within 45 days following the notice of accreditation denial or conditional accreditation. The plan shall include components which address correcting deficiencies, sharing or merger options, discontinuance of specific programs or courses of study, and any other options proposed by the state board of education or the accreditation team to allow the college to meet the accreditation standards and criteria.

**c. Implementation of plan.** During the time specified in the plan for its implementation, the community college remains accredited. The accreditation team shall revisit the community college to evaluate whether the deficiencies in

the standards or criteria have been corrected and shall make a report and recommendation to the director and the state board of education. The state board of education shall review the report and recommendation, may request additional information, and shall determine whether the deficiencies have been corrected.

**d. Removal of accreditation.** The director shall give a community college which fails to meet accreditation standards, as determined by the state board of education, at least one year's notice prior to removal of accreditation. The notice shall be sent by certified mail or restricted certified mail addressed to the chief executive officer of the community college and shall specify the reasons for removal of accreditation. The notice shall also be sent to each member of the board of directors of the community college. If, during the year, the community college remedies the reasons for removal of accreditation and satisfies the director that the community college will comply with the accreditation standards and criteria in the future, the director shall continue the accreditation and shall transmit notice of the action to the community college by certified mail or restricted certified mail.

**e. Failure to correct deficiencies.** If the deficiencies have not been corrected in a program of a community college, the community college board of directors shall take one of the following actions within 60 days from removal of accreditation:

**(1)** Merge the deficient program or programs with a program or programs from another accredited community college.

**(2)** Contract with another accredited postsecondary educational institution for purposes of program delivery at the community college.

**(3)** Discontinue the program or programs which have been identified as deficient.

**f. Appeal process provided.** The action of the director to remove the state accreditation of a community college program may be appealed to the state board of education as provided in Iowa Code section 260C.47, subsection 7.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 258.4(7) and chapters 260C and 261E.





## **COMMUNITY COLLEGES & WORKFORCE PREPARATION**

*PROSPERITY THROUGH EDUCATION*

The Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation within the Iowa Department of Education administers a variety of diverse programs that enhance Iowa's educational system and help to prepare a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Divided between two bureaus — the Bureau of Community Colleges and the Bureau of Career and Technical Education — the Division is committed to providing and supporting opportunities for lifelong learning. In addition to working with Iowa's 15 public community colleges on state accreditation, program approval, equity review, and data reporting, guidance is also provided in the areas of career and technical education, workforce training and economic development, adult education and literacy, military education, the state mandated OWI education program, the GAP Tuition and PACE programs, Senior Year Plus and the Statewide Intermediary Network program.