

ACCSCCT Alert!

Information for
our member schools

To: *ACCSCCT Accredited Institutions and Other Interested Parties*
From: *Elise Scanlon, Executive Director*
Date: *September 30, 2005*
Subject: *Amendments to the Standards of Accreditation*

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology has reviewed all written comments submitted by accredited institutions and other interested parties regarding the revisions to the Standards of Accreditation as proposed in the Commission's June 10, 2005 Call For Comment. The Commission has subsequently voted to adopt the additions and revisions to the Standards of Accreditation in the following area effective immediately:

➤ *Section II (B) – Degree Standards*

The Accreditation Alert can also be found on the Commission's website at: www.accsct.org. Go to "*Staying Accredited*" and then "*Accreditation Alert*."

In addition to the revised sections stated above, the Commission has made appropriate conforming changes and format changes to the Standards of Accreditation and its forms. The revisions and additions have been incorporated into the Standards of Accreditation, a revised copy of which can be found on the Commission's website by going to "*Staying Accredited*" and then "*Standards of Accreditation*." The revised Standards of Accreditation dated October 1, 2005 should be used to replace all previous versions.

Accredited institutions and interested parties maintaining complete, up-to-date copies of the Standards of Accreditation should add this notice to their current standards book under the Accreditation Alerts tab. For additional information related to these adopted revisions, please contact Michale S. McComis, Associate Executive Director, at (703) 247-4520.

Approved Revisions Degree Standards

On June 10, 2005 the Accrediting Commission issued a Call for Comment proposing several revisions to the Commission's degree standards as a means to provide a better framework for schools seeking to have a degree program approved. The Commission reviewed the comments submitted and voted to promulgate the proposed revisions with some modifications. The revisions to Section II (B) more precisely articulate the Commission's expectations for degree programs and more clearly demonstrate the alignment of the Commission's standards with other degree standards in the higher education and accreditation communities. Key areas of note include the following:

- an expectation that course content in degree programs is appropriate to the level and type of degree awarded;
- a requirement for schools to use a course numbering system;
- definitions of general education courses, applied general education courses, and technical courses in degree programs;
- a clarification that applied general education is a category that only applies to occupational associate degree programs;
- limitations on program length; and
- an expectation that all academic degree programs will include general education courses in written and oral communication and quantitative principles.

All degree applications submitted after the date of this alert will be required to demonstrate compliance with the revised standards and must be submitted using the most recent application document posted on the Commission's website. For currently approved degree programs, schools will have until January 1, 2007 to achieve compliance with the revised standards.

The Commission's new degree standards follow and can be found in the October 1, 2005 Standards of Accreditation on pages 28-30.

B. Degree Programs

Degree programs represent a significant, additional educational commitment by a school and must be consistent with the school's mission. Therefore, accredited institutions offering degree programs must meet the additional requirements set forth in this section to ensure that institutions offering degree programs have the ability to meet this educational commitment and award degrees which represent sufficient breadth and depth of study in the field and only to eligible students who, within the appropriate time-frame, successfully complete the program requirements and demonstrate the required proficiencies, competencies and skills. In addition, institutions offering degree programs must comply with all other applicable accrediting standards, including faculty, admissions, facilities, advertising, and student services standards.

1. General Requirements

- a. Schools must have each degree program reviewed and approved by the Commission before the program is offered.
- b. Degree programs are measured in semester credit hours or the equivalent quarter hours (refer to the Profile of Clock Hour to Credit Hour Conversion form), include the appropriate number of

lecture hours and, as applicable, the appropriate number of laboratory and/or externship hours necessary to achieve the program objectives. Degree programs must be comprised of courses whose content is appropriate to the level and type of degree awarded.

- c. Schools must use a course numbering system that differentiates between lower level courses required at the associate degree level (e.g., 100 and 200 level courses); upper level courses required at the baccalaureate degree level (e.g., 300 and 400 level courses); and graduate level courses at the master's degree level (e.g., 500 level courses and above). Remedial courses should be numbered below the 100 level and cannot be applied toward the credit hours required for the completion of a degree program.
- d. Students admitted to associate or baccalaureate degree programs must have earned at least a high school diploma or recognized equivalency certificate prior to starting class.
- e. At its discretion, a school may accept transfer credit for subjects or courses completed in other postsecondary institutions when comparable in scope and content to the school's own courses. The student record must document on what basis and from what school credit was accepted. At a minimum, 25 percent of the required curriculum must be completed at the school awarding the degree.
- f. Students enrolled in a non-degree program at the time at which a school receives approval to award a degree for that program may transfer appropriate and equivalent credit into the new degree program provided that all admissions criteria are met and that the student completes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent in the new degree program.
- g. General education courses, as distinguished from applied general education courses and technical and occupationally related courses, must place an emphasis on principles and theory not associated with a particular occupation or profession. General education courses are those in written and oral communication; quantitative principles; natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts which are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning. General education courses are expected to develop critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills; enable individuals to prepare for and advance in their professional lives; and contribute to lifelong learning.
- h. Applied general education courses, as distinguished from general education courses and technical and occupationally related courses, are for the sole purpose of occupational associate degrees and must place an emphasis on practical applications of principles and theory associated with a particular occupation or occupational cluster. Applied general education courses are directly applicable to a specific occupation or occupational cluster in related written and oral communication; quantitative principles; natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; technology; and humanities and fine arts which enhance the ability of an individual to apply occupational skills in the workplace.
- i. Technical and occupationally related courses, as distinguished from general education courses and applied general education courses, are directly related and applicable to a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Technical and occupationally related courses provide education and training in the areas associated with theoretical knowledge, technical skills, occupationally related skills, and associated competencies necessary for a student to achieve the program objectives.

2. Associate Degrees

- a. The Commission has two classifications of associate degree programs – occupational and academic. Associate degree programs must be designed and offered in a way that appropriately

balances distinct types of education and training and includes a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives.

- b. An associate degree program must be a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours and a minimum of two academic years. Associate degree programs may not exceed by more than 50% the minimum number of credit hours required to confer the degree by the appropriate regulatory agency in the State(s) in which the school operates. If such minimums have not been established, then generally accepted practices in higher education shall apply.
- c. Occupational Associate Degrees
 1. An occupational associate degree program must include a minimum of 9 semester hours or 13.5 quarter hours in general education courses or applied general education courses which support the program objectives.
 2. An occupational associate degree program must include a minimum of 45 semester hours or 67.5 quarter hours in technical and occupationally related courses that are directly associated with the field for which the degree is offered.
 3. The title of the degree program, the name of the degree, the credential issued, the program description in the school's catalog, and all advertising, promotional materials and literature make clear that the degree is occupational not academic.
- d. Academic Associate Degrees
 1. An academic associate degree program must include a minimum of 15 semester hours or 22.5 quarter hours in general education courses. An academic associate degree program must include general education courses in written and oral communication and quantitative principles. The remainder of the required general education courses must provide an appropriate balance of natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts which are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning (see also Section II (B)(1)(g)).
 2. An academic associate degree program must include a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in the technical field for which the degree is awarded.

3. Baccalaureate Degrees

- a. A baccalaureate degree program must be designed and offered in a way that appropriately balances distinct types of education and training (i.e., technical and occupationally related courses and general education courses) and distinct levels of education and training (i.e., lower level and upper level courses), and must include a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the program objectives.
- b. A baccalaureate degree program must be a minimum of 120 semester hours or 180 quarter hours and a minimum of four academic years. Baccalaureate degree programs may not exceed by more than 50% the minimum number of credit hours required to confer the degree by the appropriate regulatory agency in the State(s) in which the school operates. If such minimums have not been established, then generally accepted practices in higher education shall apply.
- c. A baccalaureate degree program shall include a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in general education courses. A baccalaureate degree program must include general education courses in written and oral communication and quantitative principles. The remainder of the required general education courses must provide an appropriate balance of natural and physical sciences; social and behavioral sciences; and humanities and fine arts which are

designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning (see also Section II (B)(1)(g)).

- d. A minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours must be in the technical field for which the degree is awarded.
- e. A school may offer a baccalaureate degree completion program where only upper level courses (i.e., 300 and 400 level) are required. A baccalaureate degree completion program must be comprised of a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of upper level coursework. In order to have a baccalaureate degree completion program approved, the school must require a student to have an earned associate, or higher level degree from an accredited postsecondary educational institution which is related to the educational program objectives of the baccalaureate degree completion program and which the school considers appropriate to prepare students for matriculation into the upper level courses. Additionally, the school must maintain compliance with the general education and technical education requirements under this Section of the Standards of Accreditation. Advertising of this type of degree program must make clear that it is a baccalaureate degree completion program.