

**TITLE 135
PROCEDURAL RULE
WEST VIRGINIA COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL
COLLEGE EDUCATION**

**SERIES 7
STANDARDS FOR DEGREE DESIGNATIONS AND GENERAL EDUCATION
REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE DEGREES**

§135-7-1. General.

1.1. Scope. -- This rule establishes standards for community and technical colleges to determine the appropriate degree designation for academic programs and the general education requirements for the respective degrees.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §18B-2B-6.

1.3. Filing Date. -- December 6, 2004.

1.4. Effective Date. -- January 10, 2005.

§135-7-2. Purpose.

2.1. Certificate and associate degree programs are central to the mission of the community and technical college. They are a means through which the institution develops and maintains integrity in its educational programs. Appropriately defined, these degrees become an integrating force for the institution, set academic standards and goals for achievement of students, and establishes the relationship between the college and other institutions at community college and baccalaureate college levels.

The associate degree program establishes the community college vision of what it means to be an educated person and affirms the college's commitment to program coherence, continuity, and student success. Awarding the associate degree is a way by which an institution indicates the student has completed a program of academic development and has achieved a level of performance reflected in student learning outcomes sufficient to progress to upper division collegiate work or to enter directly into specific occupations in the workplace. The associate

degree is recognized by baccalaureate degree-granting institutions and by employers as a critical indicator a student has demonstrated proficiencies at levels deemed appropriate to enter upper-division college programs or to enter a field of work.

Certificate and associate degree programs must consist of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, including an evaluation procedure that assesses the outcomes of the learning process. In addition, all certificate and associate degree programs must include a complement of general education requirements that define what constitutes an educated person.

Therefore, it is the purpose of this policy to adopt and require the use of nationally standardized nomenclature regarding certificate and associate degrees and the nationally promulgated standards for the general education components of the respective degrees. It is the goal of this policy to ensure a common understanding of the associate degrees awarded by West Virginia community and technical colleges; to promote the transferability and portability of degrees among the colleges and with baccalaureate degree granting institutions; and to foster recognition of the degrees as a respected credential for employment.

§135-7-3. Certificate and Associate Degree Definitions.

There are three nationally recognized associate degree designations adopted for use. Each has a specific purpose and declares the specific intent of those who framed the academic program requirements. The respective degree designations communicate clearly the primary, predetermined goal for the preparation of the student. All three associate degrees require a minimum of sixty-credit hours for completion of

the degree, and the certificate degree requires thirty-credit hours for completion.

3.1. The Associate in Arts (AA) degree

The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and similar areas. It is the goal of this degree to achieve successful transfer for completion of the bachelor's degree and acceptance at the junior level.

3.2. The Associate in Science (AS) degree

The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in the agriculture, engineering and technology, and the sciences with substantial undergraduate requirements in mathematics and the natural sciences. It is the goal of this degree to achieve successful transfer for completion of the bachelor's degree and acceptance at the junior level. While a student may enter directly into employment upon attainment of this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful transfer with junior status.

3.3. The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree

The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to enter directly into employment in a specific career. It gives emphasis to those majoring in occupational programs designed with and through employer advisory committees. It is the goal of this degree to achieve acceptance as an employment credential. While a student may be able to achieve successful transfer of some or all the courses within this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful employment.

3.4. The Certificate Degree [CP] program

The purpose and intent of the certificate degree program are to prepare the student to enter directly into employment in a specific

career and meet the documented workforce needs of local employers. Generally, certificate programs provide the foundation for the associate in applied science (AAS) degree for occupational programs. Like the AAS degree, the goal of certificates is to achieve acceptance as an employment credential.

§135-7-4. General Education Requirements.

4.1. The curriculum is the foundation of certificate and associate degree programs. For students to earn the degrees, the program must consist of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, including an evaluation procedure that assesses the outcomes of the learning process. The program must state the proficiency outcomes required for the students to transfer to baccalaureate institutions and/or achieve career goals.

4.2. Certificate and associate degree programs must include a full complement of general education requirements that define what constitutes an educated person, including essential communication and computation skills. In accordance with national standards, a strong foundation general education curriculum for associate degrees should include courses in the arts, the humanities, mathematics, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. Based on the respective purpose, intent and goal of certificate and associate degrees, the full complement of general education is established as follows.

4.2.1. The Associate in Arts degree: For successful transfer with program emphasis in arts, humanities, social sciences, and similar areas, a substantial component of this degree, at least 45 semester hours of coursework shall be in general education.

4.2.2. The Associate in Science degree: For successful transfer with program emphasis in agriculture, engineering and technology, and the sciences with a substantial undergraduate requirement in mathematics and the natural sciences, a large component of this degree, at least 30 semester hours of coursework shall be in general education.

4.2.3. The Associate in Applied Science degree: For successful entry directly into employment in a specific career and to provide a basic foundation for life-long learning and future career changes, at least 20 semester hours of coursework for this degree shall be in general education.

4.2.4. The Certificate Degree program: As the foundation of the Associate in Applied Science degree and for successful entry into employment in a specific career, at least 6 semester hours of coursework for the certificate shall be in general education.

§135-7-5. Accountability Process.

5.1. General Education Curriculum Policy

Each community and technical college shall file with the Council their institutional policy on general education as approved by the respective Board of Governors. Such institutional policy shall address the college's vision for the common core of learning outcomes that are essential to the definition of an educated person regardless of the field of study undertaken. Such institutional policy shall include the institutional minimum requirements for general education for each certificate and associate degree designation.

5.2. Program Review Component

During the established five-year program review cycle for certificate and associate degrees, each community and technical college shall demonstrate compliance with this Council policy regarding degree designation and general education requirements. Specifically, the institution shall document that the purpose, intent and goals of the program are consistent with the degree designation and the full complement of general education courses support the program learning outcomes.