

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT[281]

Adopted and Filed

Rulemaking related to community colleges

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

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code section 260C.73.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code chapter 260C.

Purpose and Summary

This rulemaking modernizes language, removes unnecessary or duplicative language, and updates provisions related to work-based learning pursuant to 2024 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2411.

Public Comment and Changes to Rulemaking

Notice of Intended Action for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on January 8, 2025, as **ARC 8760C**. A public hearing was held on the following date(s):

- January 28, 2025

No one attended the public hearing. The Department of Education received written comments on behalf of community college presidents and community college student services directors.

Regarding Item 8, commenters proposed revising paragraph 21.62(6)“b” regarding outcomes-based planning. The Department agrees in part with the proposed revisions. The Department adopted the proposed language for clarity; however, the Department concluded that there is a clear link between outcomes-based planning and the institutional effectiveness goal-setting required by paragraph 21.62(6)“a.” The language in question was revised to include that express link.

Regarding Item 10, the commenters’ suggestions improved the clarity and readability of the proposed rules. To improve the flow of the subrule, paragraph 21.62(9)“f” was removed and its substance moved into the introductory paragraph. Paragraph 21.62(9)“b” was revised for clarity and to put explicit emphasis on college completion. In paragraph 21.62(9)“e,” the term “co-curricular” was removed since it is unnecessary and confusing.

Adoption of Rulemaking

This rulemaking was adopted by the State Board on March 20, 2025.

Fiscal Impact

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

Jobs Impact

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

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the State Board for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 281—Chapter 4.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

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

Effective Date

This rulemaking will become effective on May 21, 2025.

The following rulemaking action is adopted:

ITEM 1. Adopt the following **new** definition of "Full-time equivalent enrollment" in rule **281—21.1(260C)**:

"Full-time equivalent enrollment" or "FTEE" equals 24 credit hours for credit courses or 600 contact hours for noncredit courses generated by all eligible students enrolled in eligible courses.

ITEM 2. Amend paragraphs **21.2(9)“d”**, **21.2(9)“e”** and **21.2(9)“g”** as follows:

d. Associate of applied science (AAS). The degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is intended to prepare students for entry-level career and technical occupations. An associate of applied science degree consists of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours. The general education component of the associate of applied science degree program consists of a minimum of 15 semester (22.5 quarter) credit hours of general education and include at least one course from each of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities, and mathematics or science. A maximum of 3 semester (4.5 quarter) credit hours of the required 15 general education credits may be ~~documented through an integrated, embedded, and interdisciplinary model adopted by the chief academic officers of the 15 community colleges in consultation with the department~~ within an existing course in the technical core. The technical core of the associate of applied science degree will constitute a minimum of 50 percent of the course credits.

e. Associate of applied arts (AAA). The degree is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is primarily intended for career training in providing students with professional skills for employment in a specific field of work, such as arts, humanities, or graphic design. An associate of applied arts degree consists of a minimum of 60 semester (90 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 86 semester (129 quarter) credit hours. The general education component of the associate of applied arts degree program will consist of a minimum of 15 semester (22.5 quarter) credit hours of general education and include at least one course from each of the following: communications, social science or humanities, and mathematics or science. A maximum of 3 semester (4.5 quarter) credit hours of the required 15 general education credits may be ~~documented through an integrated, embedded, and interdisciplinary model adopted by the chief academic officers of the 15 community colleges in consultation with the department~~ within an existing course in the technical core. The technical core of the associate of applied arts degree will constitute a minimum of 50 percent of the course credits.

g. Diploma. The diploma is awarded upon completion of a state-approved program of study that is a coherent sequence of courses consisting of a minimum of 15 semester (22.5 quarter) credit hours and a maximum of 48 semester (72 quarter) credit hours including at least 3 semester (4.5 quarter) credit hours of general education. The general education component may be embedded within an existing course in the technical core and will be from any of the following areas: communications, social science or humanities, and mathematics or science. The technical core of the diploma will constitute a minimum of 70 percent of the course credits. A diploma may be a component of and apply toward subsequent completion of an associate of applied science or associate of applied arts degree.

ITEM 3. Amend rule 281—21.62(260C), introductory paragraph, as follows:

281—21.62(260C) Accreditation components and criteria—additional state standards. To be granted accreditation by the state board of education, an Iowa community college will 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 256.130(7)); facilities, parking lots and roads; ~~strategie planning;~~ institutional effectiveness and outcomes-based planning; quality faculty plan (Iowa Code section 260C.36); senior year plus programs (Iowa Code chapter 261E); and student services; as well as any other items referenced in this chapter.

ITEM 4. Amend paragraph **21.62(1)“c”** as follows:

c. ~~Developmental education and noncredit instructors are not subject to standards under this subrule will possess a minimum of a bachelor’s degree. Noncredit instructors are not subject to the standards in this subrule.~~

ITEM 5. Rescind paragraph **21.62(1)“f”**.

ITEM 6. Amend subrule 21.62(4) as follows:

21.62(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 meet requirements as specified in 281—Chapter 46.

ITEM 7. Amend subrule 21.62(5) as follows:

21.62(5) Facilities, parking lots and roads.

a. ~~Facilities Infrastructure and facilities master planning.~~ Each community college shall present evidence of adequate planning, including a board-approved facilities plan that includes facilities, technology, and campus safety. At a minimum, the plan will include scheduling periodic maintenance, planning for facilities and infrastructure expansions and renovations, major equipment upgrades, and processes for continuity of service and instruction. 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. Adequate facilities. The site, buildings and equipment of the community college will be well maintained and in good condition. The physical plant and technological infrastructure will be adequate in size and properly equipped for the program offered. All remodeling of existing facilities will comply with Iowa Code chapter 104A and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §12101 et seq.

~~b. c.~~ 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, comply with Iowa Code chapter 104A and the 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 by the federal Clery Act, 20 U.S.C. §1092(f). All parking areas and roads will comply with all state and federal rules and regulations dealing with roads, parking ramps, and accessibility requirements.

~~e. Adequate facilities.~~ All administrative facilities, classrooms, laboratories, and related facilities will be educationally adequate for the purpose for which they are designed.

d. Library or learning resource center. A library or learning resource center will be planned as part of the master campus plan and space made for library or learning resource center services within the initial construction.

(1) Facilities. Community college libraries or learning resource centers shall provide the facilities and resources needed to support the total educational program of the institution and shall show evidence that the facilities and the resources are being used effectively and efficiently. Adequate consideration shall be given to the seating, comfort, setting, and technology of the facility used to house the collection and learning resources.

(2) Staffing. The library or learning resource center will be adequately staffed with qualified professionals and skilled nonprofessional personnel.

(3) Collection. The library and 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 distance and satellite sites. The library and learning resource center materials collection will show evidence of having been selected by faculty as well as professional library or learning resource staff and shall be kept up to date through a planned program of acquisition and deletion. ~~The library and learning resource center materials collection will contain a range and number of print and nonprint materials and appropriate electronic information resources.~~

(4) No change.

e. and f. No change.

~~g. *Physical plant.* The site, buildings and equipment of the community college will be well maintained and in good condition. At a minimum, a five-year ongoing, systematic maintenance and facilities plan approved by the local community college board will be in evidence. The physical plant will be adequate in size and properly equipped for the program offered. All remodeling of existing facilities will comply with Iowa Code chapter 104A and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §12101 et seq.~~

ITEM 8. Rescind subrule 21.62(6) and adopt the following **new** subrule in lieu thereof:

21.62(6) *Institutional effectiveness and outcomes-based planning.*

a. Institutional effectiveness. The community college will prepare a high-quality, board-approved strategic plan that is regularly reviewed and revised, at least once every five years. The plan will guide the college and its decision-making. It will contain a list of goals, objectives and metrics and will be developed with input from internal and external stakeholders. The college should regularly track and communicate progress towards meeting plan goals.

b. Outcomes-based planning. The community college will review outcomes data regularly provided by the department and illustrate how the data informs institutional decision making in order to meet the plan goals identified in paragraph 21.62(6) "a."

ITEM 9. Rescind subrule 21.62(7) and adopt the following **new** subrule in lieu thereof:

21.62(7) *Quality faculty plan.* The community college will establish a quality faculty committee consisting of instructors and administrators to develop and maintain a plan for hiring and developing quality faculty. Each college will comply with the appropriate standards defined in Iowa Code section 260C.36.

ITEM 10. Rescind subrule 21.62(9) and adopt the following **new** subrule in lieu thereof:

21.62(9) *Student services.* A program of student services will be provided to meet the needs of students in the community college. Services will be reviewed periodically and incorporated into the college's planning for effectiveness. The program of student services, at a minimum, will include the following functional areas:

a. A systematic onboarding process that includes recruitment, evaluation and support of college readiness, orientation to college processes and policies, and initial program and course selection.

b. Programs and resources to help students understand how to finance college, including access to federal, state and local financial aid to facilitate community college enrollment and completion.

c. A student-centered advising program related to career and academic goals focused on persistence, retention, completion, and transition to further education or employment.

d. Campus safety and security as required by Iowa Code chapter 260C; the federal Clery Act, 20 U.S.C. §1092(f); and 34 CFR Section 668.46.

e. Opportunities for students to participate in experiences and programs that supplement classroom learning experiences and provide an optimal climate for social and academic development.

ITEM 11. Amend paragraph **21.63(1)“b”** as follows:

b. The department will conduct a comprehensive on-site accreditation evaluation of each community college on a ten-year interval. An interim evaluation midway between comprehensive evaluations will also be conducted. The format, length and scope of the interim evaluation will be determined by the department based on the results of the most recent comprehensive evaluation and an analysis of desk review materials and annual outcomes data prepared by the department. The department will prepare a staggered evaluation schedule that sets no more than three comprehensive or interim

evaluations in any one year. No comprehensive or interim evaluation will be required for continued accreditation prior to a community college's first evaluation under the schedule. The department has the authority to conduct focused evaluation visits as needed.

ITEM 12. Amend paragraph **21.63(4)“e”** as follows:

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 will take one of the following actions within 60 days from removal of accreditation:~~ the provisions of Iowa Code section 260C.47(5) apply.

(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 that have been identified as deficient.~~

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For replacement pages for IAC, see IAC Supplement 4/16/25.