

CHAPTER 25  
PATHWAYS FOR ACADEMIC CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM;  
GAP TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DIVISION I  
GENERAL PROVISIONS

**281—25.1(260H,260I) Scope.** The rules in this chapter implement the pathways for academic career and employment (PACE) program under Iowa Code chapter 260H and the gap tuition assistance program under Iowa Code chapter 260I.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12; ARC 6380C, IAB 6/29/22, effective 8/3/22]

**281—25.2(260H,260I) Definitions.**

“*Department*” means the Iowa department of education.

“*Director*” means the director of the Iowa department of education.

“*Dislocated worker*” means an individual eligible for services and benefits under the federal Trade Adjustment Act of 2002, P.L. 107-210. An individual must meet both criteria 1 and 2, plus any one of criteria 3 through 8:

1. The individual is registered for the selective service, if applicable; and  
2. The individual is a citizen or national of the United States, a lawfully admitted permanent resident alien, a lawfully admitted refugee or parolee or an individual authorized by the Attorney General to work in the United States.

3. The individual:

- Has been laid off or terminated, and
- Is eligible for or has exhausted entitlement to unemployment compensation, and
- Is unlikely to return to the individual’s previous industry or occupation; or

4. The individual:

- Is in receipt of a notice of layoff or termination from employment, and
- Will be entitled to unemployment compensation at the time of layoff or termination, and
- Is unlikely to return to the individual’s previous industry or occupation; or

5. The individual:

- Has been laid off or terminated, or has received a termination notice, and
- Has been employed for a duration of time to sufficiently demonstrate attachment to the workforce, and

- Is not eligible for unemployment compensation due to insufficient earnings, or has performed services for an employer not covered under the unemployment compensation law, and
- Is unlikely to return to the individual’s previous industry or occupation; or

6. The individual has been laid off or terminated, or has received notice of layoff or termination, as a result of a permanent closure of or any substantial layoff at a plant, facility or enterprise; or

7. The individual was formerly self-employed and is unemployed from the individual’s business;  
or

8. The individual:

- Is a displaced homemaker who has been providing unpaid services to family members in the home, and

- Has been dependent on the income of another family member, and is no longer supported by that income, and

- Is unemployed or underemployed, and

- Is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

“*Federal poverty level*” means the most recently revised poverty income guidelines published by the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

“*IWD*” means the Iowa workforce development department.

“*Low skilled*” means an adult individual who is basic skills deficient, has lower level digital literacy skills, has an education below a high school diploma, or has a low level of educational attainment

that inhibits the individual's ability to compete for skilled occupations that provide opportunity for a self-sufficient wage.

*"State board"* means the Iowa state board of education.

*"Underemployed"* means an adult individual who is working less than 30 hours per week, or who is employed any number of hours per week in a job that is substantially below the individual's skill level and that does not lead to self-sufficiency.

*"Unemployed"* means an adult individual who is involuntarily unemployed and is actively engaged in seeking employment.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12]

**281—25.3 to 25.10** Reserved.

DIVISION II  
PATHWAYS FOR ACADEMIC CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT (PACE) PROGRAM

**281—25.11(260H) Purpose.** The pathways for academic career and employment program (hereinafter referred to as PACE) is established to provide funding to community colleges for the development of projects that will lead to gainful, quality, in-state employment for members of target populations by providing them with both effective academic and employment training to ensure gainful employment and customized support services.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12; ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.12(260H) Target populations.** Individuals included in target populations are those individuals who meet one or more of the following:

1. Are deemed by definition to be low skilled.
2. Earn incomes at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level.
3. Are unemployed.
4. Are underemployed.
5. Are dislocated workers.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12; ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.13(260H) Eligibility criteria for projects.** Projects eligible for funding for PACE shall be projects that further the ability of members of target populations to secure gainful, quality employment; that further partnerships linking community colleges to industry and nonprofit organizations; and that further the following program outcomes:

**25.13(1)** Enabling members of the target populations to:

- a. Acquire and demonstrate competency in basic skills.
- b. Acquire and demonstrate competency in a specified technical field.
- c. Complete a specified level of postsecondary education.
- d. Earn a national career readiness certificate.
- e. Obtain employer-validated credentials.
- f. Secure gainful employment in high-quality, local jobs.

**25.13(2)** Meeting economic and employment goals including but not limited to:

a. Economic and workforce development requirements in each region served by the community colleges as defined by regional advisory boards established pursuant to Iowa Code section 84A.4.

b. Needs of industry partners in areas including but not limited to the fields of information technology, health care, advanced manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and any other industry designated as in-demand by a regional advisory board established pursuant to Iowa Code section 84A.4.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12]

**281—25.14(260H) Program component requirements.** Program components for a PACE project implemented at a community college shall:

**25.14(1)** Include measurable and effective recruitment, assessment, and referral activities designed for the target populations.

**25.14(2)** Integrate basic skills and work-readiness training with occupational skills training.

**25.14(3)** Combine customized supportive and case management services with training services to help participants overcome barriers to employment.

**25.14(4)** Provide training services at times, locations, and through multiple, flexible modalities that are easily understood and readily accessible to the target populations. Such modalities shall support open entry, individualized learning, and flexible scheduling, and may include online remediation, learning lab and cohort learning communities, tutoring, and modularization.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12]

**281—25.15(260H) Pipeline program.** Each community college receiving funding for PACE shall develop a pipeline program in order to better serve the academic, training, and employment needs of the target populations. A pipeline program shall have the following goals:

**25.15(1)** To strengthen partnerships with community-based organizations and industry representatives.

**25.15(2)** To improve and simplify the identification, recruitment, and assessment of qualified participants.

**25.15(3)** To conduct and manage an outreach, recruitment, and intake process, along with accompanying support services, reflecting sensitivity to the time and financial constraints and remediation needs of the target populations.

**25.15(4)** To conduct orientations for qualified participants to describe regional labor market opportunities, employer partners, and program requirements and expectations.

**25.15(5)** To describe the concepts of the project implemented with funds from PACE and the embedded educational and support resources available through such project.

**25.15(6)** To outline the basic skills participants will learn and describe the credentials participants will earn.

**25.15(7)** To describe success milestones and ways in which temporal and instructional barriers have been minimized or eliminated.

**25.15(8)** To review how individualized and customized service strategies for participants will be developed and provided.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12]

**281—25.16(260H) Career pathways and bridge curriculum development program.** Each community college receiving funding for PACE shall develop a career pathway and bridge curriculum development program in order to better serve the academic, training, and employment needs of the target populations. A career pathways and bridge curriculum development program shall have the following goals:

**25.16(1)** The articulation of courses and modules, the mapping of programs within career pathways, and the establishment of bridges between credit and noncredit programs.

**25.16(2)** The integration and contextualization of basic skills education and skills training. This process shall provide for seamless progressions between adult basic education and general education development programs and continuing education and credit certificate, diploma, and degree programs.

**25.16(3)** The development of career pathways that support the attainment of industry-recognized credentials, diplomas, and degrees.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12; ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.17(260H) Pathway navigators.**

**25.17(1)** A community college may use moneys for the PACE program to employ pathway navigators to assist students applying for or enrolled in eligible pathways for academic career and employment projects.

**25.17(2)** Pathway navigators shall provide services and support to aid students in selecting PACE projects that will result in gainful, quality, in-state employment and to ensure students are successful once enrolled in PACE projects. Services the pathway navigators may provide include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Interviewing and selecting students for enrollment in PACE projects.
- b. Assessing students' skills, interests, and previous academic and work experience for purposes of placement in PACE projects.
- c. Working with students to develop academic and career plans and to adjust such plans as needed.
- d. Assisting students in applying for and receiving resources for financial aid and other forms of tuition assistance.
- e. Assisting students with the admissions process, remedial education, academic credit transfer, meeting assessment requirements, course registration, and other procedures necessary for successful completion of PACE projects.
- f. Assisting in identifying and resolving obstacles to students' successful completion of PACE projects.
- g. Connecting students with useful college resources or outside support services such as access to child care, transportation, and tutoring assistance, as needed.
- h. Maintaining ongoing contact with students enrolled in PACE projects and ensuring students are making satisfactory progress toward the successful completion of projects.
- i. Providing support to students transitioning from remedial education, short-term training, and classroom experience to employment.
- j. Coordinating activities with community-based organizations that serve as key recruiters for PACE projects and assisting students throughout the recruitment process.
- k. Coordinating adult basic education services.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.18(260H) Regional industry sector partnerships.**

**25.18(1)** A community college may use moneys for the PACE program to provide staff and support for the development and implementation of regional industry sector partnerships within the region served by the community college.

**25.18(2)** Regional industry sector partnerships may include but are not limited to the following activities:

- a. Bringing together representatives from industry sectors, government, education, local workforce boards, community-based organizations, labor, economic development organizations, and other stakeholders within the regional labor market to determine how PACE projects should address workforce skills gaps, occupational shortages, and wage gaps.
- b. Integrating PACE projects and other existing supply-side strategies with workforce needs within the region served by the community college.
- c. Developing PACE projects that focus on the workforce skills, from entry-level to advanced, required by industry sectors within the region served by the community college.
- d. Structuring pathways so that instruction and learning of workforce skills are aligned with industry-recognized standards where such standards exist.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.19** Reserved.

DIVISION III  
GAP TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**281—25.20(260I) Purpose.** A gap tuition assistance program is established to provide funding to community colleges for need-based tuition assistance to enable applicants to complete continuing education certificate training programs for in-demand occupations.

[ARC 0102C, IAB 4/18/12, effective 5/23/12]

**281—25.21(260I) Applicants for tuition assistance.**

**25.21(1) Eligibility criteria.** Eligibility for tuition assistance shall be based on financial need. Applicants may be found eligible for partial or total tuition assistance. Tuition assistance shall not be approved when the community college receiving the application determines that funding for an

applicant's participation in an eligible certificate program is available from any other public or private funding source.

*a.* Criteria to determine financial need shall include but not be limited to:

(1) The applicant's family income for the three months prior to the date of application, or documentation of a life-changing event.

(2) The applicant's family size.

(3) The applicant's county of residence.

*b.* An applicant for tuition assistance under this chapter must have a demonstrated capacity to achieve the following outcomes:

(1) The ability to complete an eligible certificate program.

(2) The ability to enter a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree program for credit.

(3) The ability to gain full-time employment.

(4) The ability to maintain full-time employment over a period of time.

*c.* The community college receiving the application shall, after considering factors including but not limited to the following, approve an applicant for tuition assistance under this chapter only if the community college determines that applicant is likely to succeed in achieving the outcomes described in 25.16(2):

(1) Barriers that may prevent an applicant from completing the certificate program.

(2) Barriers that may prevent an applicant from gaining employment in an in-demand occupation.

**25.21(2) Additional provisions.**

*a.* An applicant for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter shall provide to the gap tuition assistance coordinator at the community college receiving the application documentation of all sources of income.

*b.* Only an applicant eligible to work in the United States shall be approved for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter.

*c.* An application shall be valid for six months from the date of signature on the application.

*d.* At the discretion of the community college, an applicant may be approved for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter for more than one eligible certificate program.

*e.* Eligibility for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter shall not be construed to guarantee enrollment in any community college certificate program.

*f.* Eligibility for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter shall be limited to persons earning incomes at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level as defined by the most recently revised poverty guidelines published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

*g.* Applicants earning incomes between 150 percent and 250 percent, both percentages inclusive, of the federal poverty level as defined by the most recently revised poverty income guidelines published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shall be given first priority for tuition assistance under this chapter. Persons earning incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level shall be given secondary priority for tuition assistance under this chapter.

*h.* An applicant who is eligible for financial assistance pursuant to the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-220, or the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Pub. L. No. 113-128, shall be ineligible for tuition assistance under this chapter unless such funds budgeted for training assistance for adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs have been fully expended by a workforce region.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15; ARC 2309C, IAB 12/9/15, effective 1/13/16; ARC 4700C, IAB 10/9/19, effective 11/13/19]

**281—25.22(2601) Eligible costs.** Costs of a certificate program eligible for coverage by gap tuition assistance shall include but are not limited to the following:

1. Tuition.

2. Direct training costs.

3. Required books and equipment.

4. Fees, including but not limited to fees for industry testing services and background checks.

5. Costs of providing direct staff support services, including but not limited to marketing, outreach, application, interview, and assessment processes. Eligible costs for this purpose shall be limited to 20 percent of any allocation of moneys to the two smallest community colleges, 10 percent of any allocation of moneys to the two largest community colleges, and 15 percent of any allocation of moneys to the remaining 11 community colleges. Community college size shall be determined based on the most recent three-year rolling average full-time equivalent enrollment.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.23(260I) Eligible certificate programs.** For the purposes of this chapter, “eligible certificate program” means a program meeting all of the following criteria:

**25.23(1)** The program is not offered for credit but is aligned with a certificate, diploma, or degree for credit, and does at least one of the following:

- a. Offers a nationally, state-, or locally recognized certificate.
- b. Offers preparation for a professional examination or licensure.
- c. Provides endorsement for an existing credential or license.
- d. Represents recognized skill standards defined by an industrial sector.
- e. Offers a similar PACE credential or training.

**25.23(2)** The program offers training or a credential in an in-demand occupation. For the purposes of this chapter, “in-demand occupation” includes occupations in information technology, health care, advanced manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and any other industry designated as in demand by a regional advisory board established pursuant to Iowa Code section 84A.4.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.24(260I) Initial assessment.** An eligible applicant for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter shall complete an initial assessment administered by the community college receiving the application to determine the applicant’s readiness to complete an eligible certificate program. The assessment shall include the areas of reading and mathematics. In assessing an applicant under this division, a community college shall use the national career readiness certificate; an assessment eligible under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73, and approved by the department for use in an adult education and literacy program; or an established process utilizing valid measures for determining preparedness for the eligible certificate program, which may include processes for measuring academic preparedness used by the community college for placement of students into credit coursework. An applicant shall complete any additional assessments and occupation research required by the gap tuition assistance program or an eligible certificate program, or both.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15; ARC 4700C, IAB 10/9/19, effective 11/13/19; ARC 6380C, IAB 6/29/22, effective 8/3/22]

**281—25.25(260I) Program interview.** An eligible applicant for tuition assistance under Division III of this chapter shall meet with the gap tuition assistance coordinator for an eligible certificate program offered by the community college receiving the application. The gap tuition assistance coordinator shall discuss the relevant industry, any applicable occupation research, and any applicable training relating to the eligible certificate program. The discussion shall include an evaluation of the applicant’s capabilities, needs, family situation, work history, education background, attitude and motivation, employment dates, support needs, and other requirements for an eligible certificate program.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15; ARC 4700C, IAB 10/9/19, effective 11/13/19]

**281—25.26(260I) Participation requirements.**

**25.26(1)** A participant in an eligible certificate program who receives tuition assistance pursuant to Division III of this chapter shall do all of the following:

- a. Maintain regular contact with staff members for the certificate program to document the applicant’s progress in the program.
- b. Sign a release form to provide relevant information to community college faculty or case managers.

c. Discuss with staff members for the certificate program any issues that may impact the participant's ability to complete the certificate program, obtain employment, and maintain employment over a period of time.

d. Attend all required courses regularly.

e. Meet with staff members for the certificate program to develop a job search plan.

**25.26(2)** A community college may terminate tuition assistance for a participant who fails to meet the requirements of this rule. The participant may utilize the community college's local appeal process to contest termination from the program. The process to appeal a termination will be provided to a participant through the gap tuition assistance coordinator.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15; ARC 4700C, IAB 10/9/19, effective 11/13/19]

**281—25.27(260I) Oversight.** Statewide oversight, evaluation, and reporting efforts for the gap tuition assistance program are coordinated by the department.

**25.27(1)** A steering committee consisting of the Iowa department of education, the Iowa workforce development department, and community college continuing education deans and directors is established to determine if the performance measures of the gap tuition assistance program are being met and to correct any deficiencies. The steering committee shall meet at least quarterly to evaluate and monitor the performance of the gap tuition assistance program.

**25.27(2)** A common intake tracking system is established and shall be implemented consistently by each participating community college. The community colleges will work cooperatively in establishing the system, and the Iowa department of education will assist in gathering required reporting data elements.

**25.27(3)** The steering committee will develop the required program criteria for PACE and gap tuition assistance-certified programs to be eligible for tuition assistance and program funding. These criteria will be developed based on best practices in the development and delivery of career pathway programs that provide a clear sequence of education coursework and credentials aligned with regional workforce skill needs; clearly articulate from one level of instruction to the next; combine occupational skills and remedial adult education; lead to the attainment of a credential or degree; assist with job placement; and provide wraparound social and socioeconomic support services with the goal of increasing the individual's skills attainment and employment potential.

[ARC 1875C, IAB 2/18/15, effective 3/25/15]

**281—25.28(260I) Redistribution of funds.** To ensure efficient delivery of services, the department, in consultation with the community colleges, may redistribute funds available to the community colleges for purposes of this division.

[ARC 4700C, IAB 10/9/19, effective 11/13/19]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapters 260H and 260I.

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