

CHAPTER 24  
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 preprofessional education.
2. Vocational 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 vocational 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. Vocational education for persons who have academic, socioeconomic, or other disabilities which prevent succeeding in regular vocational education programs.
10. Training, retraining, and all necessary preparation for productive employment of all citizens.
11. Vocational 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:

*"Field of instruction."* The determination of what constitutes each field of instruction should be based on accepted practices of regionally accredited two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

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

*"Higher Learning Commission."* The Higher Learning Commission is the accrediting authority within the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Iowa Code sections 260C.47 and 260C.48 require that the state accreditation process be integrated with that of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

*"Instructors meeting minimum requirements."* A community college instructor meeting the minimum requirements of Iowa Code section 260C.48, subsection 1, is a full-time instructor teaching college credit courses. Credit courses shall meet requirements as specified in rule 281—21.2(260C), and meet program requirements for college parallel, career and technical education, and career-option programs as specified in rule 281—21.4(260C) and Iowa Code chapter 260C.

*"Minimum of 12 graduate hours."* 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.

*"Relevant work experience."* An hour of recent and relevant work experience is equal to 60 minutes. The community college will determine what constitutes recent and relevant work experience that relates to the instructor's occupational and teaching area. The college shall maintain documentation of the instructor's educational and work experience.

**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. The Higher Learning Commission accreditation criteria are as follows:

**24.4(1) *Mission and integrity.***

*a.* The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.

*b.* In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

*c.* Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.

*d.* The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.

*e.* The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

**24.4(2) *Preparing for the future.***

*a.* The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

*b.* The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening the program's quality in the future.

*c.* The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

*d.* All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to fulfill that mission.

**24.4(3) *Student learning and effective teaching.***

*a.* The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

*b.* The organization values and supports effective teaching.

*c.* The organization creates effective learning environments.

*d.* The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

**24.4(4) *Acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge.***

*a.* The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

*b.* The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

*c.* The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

*d.* The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

**24.4(5) *Engagement and service.***

*a.* The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

*b.* The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

*c.* The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on the organization for service.

*d.* Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

**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 must also meet four additional standards pertaining to minimum standards for faculty; faculty load; special needs; and vocational education evaluation.

**24.5(1) Faculty.** Community college-employed instructors teaching full-time in career and technical education and arts and sciences, in accordance with Iowa Code section 260C.48, subsection 1, shall meet, at a minimum, 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 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.

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

(1) Possess a master's degree from a regionally accredited graduate school, and have successfully completed a minimum of 12 credit hours of graduate level courses in each field of instruction in which the instructor is teaching classes.

(2) Have two or more years of successful experience in a professional field or area in which the instructor is teaching classes and in which postbaccalaureate recognition or professional licensure is necessary for practice, including but not limited to the fields or areas of accounting, engineering, law, law enforcement, and medicine.

*c.* Full-time developmental education and adult education instructors may or may not meet minimum requirements depending on their teaching assignments and the relevancy of standards to the courses they are teaching and the transferability of such courses. If instructors are teaching credit courses reported in arts and sciences or career and technical education, it is recommended that these instructors meet minimum standards set forth in 281—subrule 21.3(1), paragraph “a” or “b.”

**24.5(2) Faculty load.**

*a. College parallel.* The full-time teaching load of an instructor in college parallel programs shall not exceed a maximum of 16 credit hours per school term or the equivalent. An instructor may also have a teaching assignment outside of the normal school hours, provided the instructor consents to this additional assignment and the total workload does not exceed the equivalent of 18 credit hours within a traditional semester.

*b. Career and technical education.* The full-time teaching load of an instructor in career education programs shall not exceed 6 hours per day, and 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 (nonlaboratory), 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.** Community colleges shall provide equal access in recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities shall be given access to the full range of course offerings at a college through reasonable accommodations.

**24.5(4) Vocational education evaluation.** The community college vocational 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 disabilities, both male and female students, and students from diverse racial and ethnic groups.
- 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 vocational background to pursue other educational interests in a postsecondary setting, if desired.

g. Provide students with support services and eliminate access barriers to education and employment for both traditional and nontraditional students, men and women, persons from diverse racial and ethnic groups, and persons with disabilities.

**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 an on-site accreditation evaluation of each community college during the same year as the evaluation by the Higher Learning Commission.

**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 should remain accredited. The accreditation team shall report strengths and opportunities for improvement, if any, for each standard 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 a community college by the state board of education shall be based on the recommendation of the director of the department after study of the factual and evaluative evidence on record pursuant to the standards 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 term consistent with the term of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission; 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 shall establish a deadline for correction of the deficiencies. The plan is subject to approval of the state board of education. 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 standards.

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 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 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 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 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 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 accreditation of a community college 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 chapter 260C.

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