281—21.4(260C) Curriculum and evaluation.

21.4(1) *General education.* General education is intended to provide breadth of learning to the community college experience. General education imparts common knowledge, promotes intellectual inquiry, and stimulates the examination of different perspectives, thus enabling people to function effectively in a complex and changing world. General education courses are not intended to be developmental in nature. Each community college is responsible for local implementation, publication, and assessment of student learning of its general education courses while ensuring ongoing compliance with the statewide lower division general education framework.

a. Uniform framework. Effective July 1, 2027, all community colleges will implement the statewide lower division general education framework for associate of arts (AA) and associate of science (AS) awards pursuant to Iowa Code section 256.139 as enacted by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.

b. Core disciplinary categories. The statewide lower division general education framework shall be established by the department and consist of the following four core disciplinary categories: communications, humanities, social science, and mathematics and science. To ensure seamless systemwide transferability, the department will collaborate with community colleges and consult with the liaison advisory committee on transfer students and the board of regents on the administration of the framework. The department has final administrative authority over the inclusion and modification of these categories within the statewide lower division general education framework.

c. Credit allocation guidelines. The specific credit allocation and credit distribution rules in the core disciplinary categories identified in paragraph 21.4(1)*"b"* will be broadly aligned with the transfer standards developed pursuant to the statutory articulation pathways authorized by Iowa Code section 262.9(31). The department shall coordinate with the community colleges and the board of regents to integrate these standards into the statewide lower division general education framework. The department-issued Iowa General Education Lower Division Framework Operational Guide will establish the administrative workflows necessary to submit, audit, and add courses, as well as the collaborative processes for updating credit allocations.

d. Statewide common course numbering integration. All courses approved to fulfill a distribution category requirement within the statewide lower division general education framework will follow the structural elements of paragraph 21.4(7)*"a."*

21.4(2) *College parallel or transfer.*

a. This program shall offer courses that are the equivalent of the first two years of a baccalaureate program and may also include such courses as may be necessary to develop skills that are prerequisite to other courses and objectives, specialized courses required to provide career options within the college parallel or transfer program, and approved transfer major programs meeting the requirements of rule 281—21.3(260C). College parallel or transfer programs are associate of arts and associate of science degree programs. General education courses in college parallel or transfer programs are required to be college transfer courses. Data will be collected and analyzed to determine how well students have succeeded and which adjustments in the curriculum, if any, need to be made.

b. Courses of a developmental or remedial nature or prefreshman level will not bear college transfer credit and will be clearly identified in the college catalog. Developmental courses on the transcript will be identifiable through the adoption of the community college common course numbering system.

21.4(3) *Career and technical education.* Instruction will be offered in career and technical education programs in no fewer than five different occupational fields as defined by the department. College parallel or transfer courses may be offered as needed in career and technical education programs. Career and technical education programs must meet program approval requirements set by the state board of education. The director's approval of new career and technical education programs is necessary. Instruction will be offered in career and technical education programs, ensuring that they are competency-based, contain all minimum competencies required by the department, articulate with local school districts' career and technical education programs, and comply with any applicable requirements in Iowa Code chapter 258. The occupational fields in which instruction is offered will be determined by merged area and geographical area needs as identified by surveys in these areas. Occupational advisory committees may be used to assist in developing and maintaining instructional content, including leadership development.

21.4(4) *Developmental education.* Students who enter community colleges underprepared for postsecondary coursework are provided opportunities to improve their cognitive and noncognitive skills via developmental education academic and student support services. In an effort to enhance these opportunities, while respecting the local authority of Iowa's community colleges, each college will adopt proven developmental education strategies to identify and address the needs of students, shorten the time to completion, prepare students for academic success, and reduce the financial burden for students underprepared for postsecondary coursework. Such proven strategies include multiple measures of placement; accelerated and integrated strategies, such as co-requisite models; and support services that address students' cognitive and noncognitive needs. These reform efforts require collaboration among community colleges, school corporations, and education stakeholders to systemically expand proven strategies to prepare students for postsecondary success.

21.4(5) *Adult and continuing education.* Adult education shall be offered and may include adult basic education, adult continuing and general education, college parallel or transfer, high school completion, supplementary and preparatory career education programs, and other programs and experiences as may be required to meet the needs of people in the merged area.

21.4(6) *Continuing education.* The community colleges shall provide a program of community services designed to meet the needs of persons residing in the merged area. The purpose of the continuing education program is to foster agricultural, business, cultural, industrial, recreational and social development in the area.

21.4(7) *Statewide common course numbering system.* To ensure statewide transfer and alignment, all credit-bearing community college courses shall comply with requirements of the statewide common course numbering system pursuant to Iowa Code section 256.139 as enacted by 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2610.

a. Structural elements. A common course entry within the centralized statewide common course numbering directory consists of the following standardized elements:

(1) Course prefix.
(2) Course number.
(3) Course name.
(4) Course credit hours.
(5) Course description.
(6) Course learning outcomes.

b. Central registry and system maintenance. The department will maintain a centralized statewide common course numbering directory. Procedural guidance, submission timelines and administrative workflows will be established within the Iowa Common Course Numbering Operational Guide.

c. Equivalent course identification. The department will maintain a centralized statewide common course numbering directory. New courses will be submitted by institutions for department approval prior to adoption by a community college.

d. Statewide integration. Standardized course identifiers from the statewide common course numbering system will be utilized universally across all community college course catalogs, registration systems, and official student transcripts.

e. Rule of construction. Individual community colleges retain the autonomy to include additional learning outcomes to fulfill unique regional or transfer needs, provided the course includes all common course outcomes.

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