

Updated 6/12/2024

## **Academic Affairs Policy 2.15**

### **Undergraduate Degrees, Undergraduate and Graduate Certificates, Workforce Training, and Validated Skills and Learning**

The following definitions for undergraduate degrees and undergraduate/graduate certificates are established to:

- provide for the uniform use of degree terminology;
- promote uniform curricular requirements for similar programs;
- effect the ready transfer of course credits earned throughout the higher education system;
- facilitate the development of appropriate articulation agreements between systems and campuses; and
- ensure statewide alignment with institutional role and mission.

## **Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates, and Certifications**

### **Workforce Training and Validated Skills and Learning**

The Board recognizes that all market-relevant credentials should be valued. An industry-recognized certification is considered a quality postsecondary credential of value if it meets the criteria outlined in the Quality Postsecondary Credential of Value Policy. All programs that lead to credentials of value must be reflected in the Board of Regents CRIN or NCRIN so that appropriate data can be gathered and analyzed.

To ensure economic mobility for learners with validated skills and learning through industry-recognized certifications and/or programs with certification(s) embedded, institutions are encouraged to utilize Policy 2.23 Prior Learning Assessment to award college credit in ways that ensure clarity and opportunities for all learners on the journeys to their educational and career goals.

Whilst all 2-year and 4-year institutions are encouraged to offer industry-recognized certifications as part of their certificate, degree, and diploma curricula, and as part of continuing education for those who hold credentials, stand-alone workforce training shall be offered only by 2-year institutions and agricultural extension services.

## **Workforce Certification of Validated Skills and Learning**

Certifications 1 and 2 are limited to two-year public institutions as standalone, first credentials. Four-year institutions may embed these credentials in their degree curricula and offer them as continuing education for those who hold credentials.

- 1. Certification of Competency (COC):** An institution-issued certification that validates a student has demonstrated a specified level of ability in a set of learning outcomes that will improve employability or job opportunities in accordance with the Quality Postsecondary Credential of Value Policy.
- 2. Industry-Based Certification (IBC):** An independent third-party credential that is industry-accepted and results from a process whereby an individual's knowledge and/or skill in a particular area is validated against a set of predetermined standards.

## **Undergraduate Certificates**

As a general guideline, the number of credit hours (SCH) required for a certificate should not exceed one-half of the SCHs required for the subsequent credential. All required general education coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements. All undergraduate and graduate certifications must be reflected on the Board of Regents Curriculum Inventory (CRIN) before implementation.

Certificates 1–6 are limited to two-year institutions.

- 1. Career and Technical Certificate (CTC) -** An applied skills program (6-18 SCH) that provides specific, meaningful technical skills relative to employment readiness. The CTC includes a demonstrated alignment with, and a process whereby a student's competencies are verified against, a set of pre-determined standards which lead to and/or prepare an individual to test for an industry-based certification (IBC), state licensure, or state-recognized certification awarded by an independent, third party that is recognized by business and industry and/or the State of Louisiana. At least half of the CTC requirements should be distinctive from other credentials. The CTC is not designed for transfer to an academic degree program. CTCs may be combined to form a Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS) and/or a Technical Diploma (TD).

Approval authority: The approval authority rests with the appropriate management board; however, the establishment of such programs must be immediately reported to the Board of Regents for review (e.g., name, CIP) and verification before being added to the CRIN for implementation. *Example: CTC in Emergency Medical Technician (EMT); CTC in Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA).*

- 2. Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS)** - An applied, technical program (16-33 SCH) to provide a student with a broad technical competency in a specific area or field. The CTS is not designed for transfer into an academic degree program.

Approval authority: the appropriate management board, immediately reported to the Board of Regents for review and verification before being added to the CRIN for implementation. *Example: CTS in Automotive Engine Technology*

- 3. Technical Diploma (TD)** - An applied, technical program (45-60 SCH) usually formed by combining multiple CTSs and/or CTCs. TD programs are not designed for transfer to an academic program.

Approval authority: the appropriate management board, immediately reported to the Board of Regents for review and verification before being added to the CRIN for implementation. *Example: TD in Automotive Technology (CTS in Automotive Engine Technology, plus CTCs in Automotive Body Repair, Automotive Detailing, etc.)*

- 4. Certificate of Applied Science (CAS)** - A more academically-oriented offering (usually 25-45 SCH) created by combining a CTS with a limited general education component (at least 9 SCH). At a minimum, the general education component should be fully transferrable into an undergraduate academic program.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: CAS in Medical Billing and Coding*

- 5. Certificate of General Studies (CGS)** - An academically-oriented offering designed to provide students with a broad foundation of fundamental academic skills, primarily for personal growth or as preparation for further collegiate study. The CGS framework allows students an opportunity to tailor their courses to meet admission or pre-requisite requirements of a transfer institution. The 30-hour curriculum consists of eight general education courses (24 SCH) and two elective courses. CGS programs are strictly limited to two-year institutions.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents.

- 6. Post-Associate Certificate (PAC)** – An academic or technical offering (12-33 SCH) that is earned after a student has already completed a recognized associate’s degree, usually for additional professional or technical certification.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: PAC in Radiation Therapy*

- 7. Undergraduate Certificate (UC)** – An undergraduate university offering of at least 18 SCH. At least half must be at the upper level. Prerequisites may be. The institution’s General Catalog must specify any general requirements for eligibility to declare a UC.
- a. A series of courses related to a specific topic or skill, particularly in technology or data fields in high market demand, listed on the CRIN by CIP and Subject Area.
  - b. A series of courses published in the institution’s General Catalog as a concentration or minor in a major or discipline. This UC will be listed on the CRIN as CIP 24.0199 *Concentration/Minor* but may be posted on the student transcript by title of the concentration/minor; it requires an annual report from the campus listing the certificate titles awarded in the previous academic year.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: UC in Software Development*

- 8. Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (PBC)** – An undergraduate, academic offering (12-33 SCH) that is earned after a student has already completed a recognized baccalaureate degree. Commonly used as a path for alternate teacher certification. Graduate school admission is usually not required for this undergraduate certificate.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: PBC in Elementary Education Grades 1-5*

## Associate Degrees<sup>1</sup>

The standard number of credits required for the Associate Degree will be 60, though in some circumstances (e.g., accreditation or certification requirements) they may exceed the 60-credit limit. Exceptions to the standard number of credits must be approved by the respective Management Board. The Board of Regents will periodically review both the number of credit hours required and approved exceptions to the 60-hour standard.

- 1. Associate of Applied Science (AAS)** - An applied degree program, with a limited general education core component, primarily designed to prepare students for immediate employment or career entry. AAS degrees can be formed by combining a TD with 15 SCH of required general education or can be a distinct curriculum. All general education coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements. If technical coursework required of the degree is intended for transfer to a university, this coursework must meet appropriate SACSCOC requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> *There are select circumstances when AAS, AA, AS, and non-designated associate programs may be considered appropriate for a particular four-year institution. In such cases, exceptions provided in the Board of Regents’ 1999 Moratorium on the Approval of New Associate-Level Programs at Four-Year Institutions will apply.*

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: AAS in Motor Vehicle Technology*

- 2. Associate of Arts (AA)** - An academic degree program with a significant general education core, designed primarily to serve as preparatory education for transfer to a related baccalaureate program. All coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: AA in Visual and Performing Arts*

- 3. Associate of Science (AS)** - An academic degree program with a significant general education core, designed primarily to serve as preparatory education for transfer to a related baccalaureate program. All coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: AS in Computer Science*

- 4. Associate (A)** - An academic degree program with a significant general education core, designed to prepare students for immediate employment or career entry, but which also may serve as preparatory education for transfer to a related baccalaureate program. The use of this degree designation should be limited to cases wherein other associate degree designations (AAS, AA, or AS) have been determined to be inappropriate. All coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: Associate of General Studies*

- 5. Louisiana Transfer Associate (AALT or ASLT)** – an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree that follows a prescribed curriculum (providing both structure and flexibility) and assures transfer of the 60 SCH in the degree plus credit for completion of the Board of Regents’ required general education block at any public university.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents.

## **Nexus Degrees**

A nexus degree is a degree program that combines specialized academic curricular content in a high demand career field with a significant work-based learning experience. A nexus degree is a stand-alone entry level credential for that high-demand field. A nexus degree may be earned in combination with a traditional bachelor’s degree to create a 21st century academic experience. A nexus degree may also be earned by a student who has already earned an undergraduate degree, but who wishes to return to higher education to either redirect their career path or add to their existing credential portfolio in their field.

The standard number of credits required for a nexus degree is 60. Institutions with compelling reasons (accreditation or certification requirements) for exceeding the 60 credit-hour standard may request an exception to this standard from the Management Board, according to their respective system's policy. The curriculum should be developed in partnership with the appropriate industry sector.

The nexus degree curriculum consists of 21 hours of specialized subject-based content including required specialized prerequisites plus 27 hours of BOR general education requirements. The remaining 12 hours consists of general electives. A student with a Bachelor's degree or associate degree who has completed the 27 hours of general education requirements may be awarded a nexus degree by completing only the 21-hour specialized content curriculum.

At least 15 of the 21 hours of the specialized subject-based content must be at the upper division level. At least 9 of the 21 hours of the specialized subject-based content must be work-based learning with at least 3 hours at the upper division level. Work-based learning experiences may include an apprenticeship, clinical placement, coop, industry-based certification, internship, or preceptorship.

Nexus degrees may be awarded at all Louisiana public post-secondary institutions. Two-year institutions approved to offer a nexus degree are permitted to teach only the upper division coursework contained in the approved degrees' curricula. Faculty who teach that upper division material must hold the appropriate qualifications to satisfy accreditation requirements.

1. **Nexus Degree (NX)** – An academic degree program with a significant general education core. The nexus contains a specialized curriculum that is focused on a high demand career field together with a required work-based learning experience.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: NX in Network Cybersecurity*

## **Baccalaureate**

The standard number of credits required for baccalaureate degrees is 120. Institutions with compelling reasons (e.g., the academic program is defined as a 5-year baccalaureate program; professional accreditation or certification requirements) for exceeding the 120 credit-hour standard may request an exception to this standard from the Management Board, according to their respective system's policy. The Board of Regents will periodically review both the number of credit hours required and approved exceptions to the 120-hour standard.

Baccalaureate degrees are limited to four-year institutions.

1. **Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS)** - An applied/academic degree program is designed to prepare students for technical employment and generally not intended as preparation for graduate study. The BAS routinely combines technical/general

education courses gained in an AAS program with additional university requirements. All coursework completed in the BAS program must meet SACSCOC requirements for transferability.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: BAS in Allied Health*

- 2. Bachelor of Arts (BA)** - An academic degree program with a significant general education core. The BA degree emphasizes breadth and depth of study in a recognized academic discipline, may serve as a career entry degree, and should prepare a student for further graduate study.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: BA in English*

- 3. Bachelor of Science (BS)** - An academic degree program with a significant general education core. The BS degree emphasizes breadth and depth of study in a recognized academic discipline, may serve as a career entry degree, and should prepare a student for further graduate study.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: BS in Mathematics*

- 4. Bachelor (B)** - An academic degree program with a significant general education core, designed primarily as a first professional degree, but which also may serve as preparatory education for transfer to a related graduate program. The use of this particular degree designation should be limited to cases wherein other baccalaureate degree designations (BAS, BA, or BS) have been determined to be inappropriate.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents. *Example: Bachelor of General Studies*

## Graduate Certificates

Graduate certificates provide a shortened, condensed and focused course of study that supplements an existing Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degree. They frequently lead to licensure or certification, provide needed job-related expertise, or are focused on a timely area of discussion in a discipline, and they usually are offered by or through the Graduate School.

Final approval authority: Board of Regents.

- 1. Graduate Certificate (GC)** – a graduate-level academic offering addressing a particular topical area. The number of required courses varies, but the typical range is 12-18 credits. *Example: GC in Communications Systems*
- 2. Post-Masters Certificate (PMC)** – an academic offering, usually related to additional licensure or certification that is earned after a student has already completed a recognized Master's degree. *Example: PMC in Family Nurse Practitioner*

3. **Post-Doctorate Certificate (PDC)** – an academic offering that is earned after a student has already completed a recognized Doctoral degree. *Example: PDC in Medical Physics*
4. **Post-Professional Certificate (PPC)** – an academic offering that is designed for additional training or certification after a student has already completed a recognized Professional degree. *Example: PPC in Endodontics*

Degree designation abbreviations for any graduate certificates would be only those specified above.

#### **A. Exceptions**

Exceptions to degree definitions and standard number of credit hours may be considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with System policy, for recommendation to and consideration by the Board of Regents.

#### **B. General Education Requirements**

Academic Affairs Policy 2.16 addresses statewide general education requirements for undergraduate degree and certificate programs.

#### **C. Proposals for New Degrees or Certificates**

Proposals for certificate and associate degree programs may be submitted at any time by a management board for consideration by the Board of Regents.

Proposals for any new academic programs should address the elements outlined in the Guidelines for the Proposal of a New Academic Program (in Academic Affairs Policy 2.04)