

Policy for the Approval or Revision of Academic Programs and Organizational Units

INTRODUCTION

Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208 charges the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board or AHECB) with the responsibility to request, receive, evaluate, and approve proposals for all new units of instruction, research, and public service, consistent with established role and scope designations, and to approve academic programs and organizational units based on established policies. This policy addresses the approval or revision of:

- New curricula
- Majors leading to a new certificate or degree program
- Establishment of a department, division, college, school, center, or institute
- New extension service

The Coordinating Board is not required to consider reasonable and moderate extensions of existing curricular, research, and public service programs at the public institutions of higher education. Thus, the Coordinating Board has granted oversight authority to the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) to monitor these activities and notify the Board at its regular meetings. State general revenues cannot be expended for new programs or units that are not approved by the Coordinating Board.

This document sets forth the relevant criteria and compliance procedures for the staff of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education and administrators and faculty of Arkansas public colleges and universities. The program approval policy, previously titled *Criteria and Procedures for Preparing Proposals for New Certificate or Degree Programs and Organizational Units* was updated and clarified in 2025.

PART 1. CERTIFICATE AND DEGREE GRANTING AUTHORITY

Arkansas public colleges and universities must obtain and maintain institutional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission or comparable accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation. Arkansas colleges/universities also must obtain and maintain appropriate/required specialized program accreditation for professional practice programs.

Institutions may not award a certificate or degree to any student unless demonstrated mastery of knowledge and skills has been documented. A certificate or degree may not be granted to any student solely for prior/experiential learning or work experience.

PART 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

Institutional academic leaders are encouraged to consult with ADHE Academic Affairs staff for guidance and direction in determining the appropriate process and procedures for academic program change and approval. Timely and frequent communication is recommended to meet deadlines and ensure adherence to policy processes. ADHE staff may conduct an on-campus site visit for institutions offering new certificates or degree programs. Definitions of certificate and degree programs and organizational units are described in Appendix B.

Section 1. Academic Programs and Organizational Units Requiring Coordinating Board Approval

A Letter of Intent, submitted to ADHE, informs the Coordinating Board of an institution's intent to offer a new academic program or organizational unit which requires a Proposal and Coordinating Board approval. A Letter of Intent and Proposal cannot be presented to the Board at the same meeting. Letters of Intent must be presented to the Coordinating Board at least one meeting prior to the consideration of a Proposal. Institutions have one year from the Letter of Intent date to present a Proposal for approval.

The Proposal for a new program or organizational unit must be approved by the institutional Board of Trustees before consideration by the Coordinating Board. For any new program or unit to be considered, an institution first must notify all Arkansas public colleges and universities (via email) of the proposed program or unit. Institutions with comments or objections to a Letter of Intent must submit them in writing to ADHE and the submitting institution within 30 days of the email.

The ADHE Executive Staff will present a summary on new programs/units that require Coordinating Board approval at a regularly scheduled Coordinating Board meeting. Coordinating Board approval of the new program/unit is required prior to initiation. Institutions are also responsible for ensuring compliance with accreditor policy regarding new program/unit approval.

Procedures for modifying existing programs or organizational units, or the creation of new programs made primarily of existing coursework can be found in Part 2, Section 2.

The deadlines for submission of the Letter of Intent and Proposal are listed in Part 3, Section 4.

Letter of Intent and Proposal

A Letter of Intent and Proposal must be submitted to ADHE when proposing:

1. The creation of a new certificate or degree program, regardless of mode of instruction, where 25% or more of a degree program or 50% or more of a certificate program is new coursework. The program should follow an accepted higher education structure for the discipline and program level.

If the certificate or degree program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board initial review/approval must be submitted. ADHE staff may conduct an on-campus site visit for institutions offering new certificates or degree programs.

See Part 2, Section 2 if the new coursework totals less than 25% of a degree program or less than 50% of a certificate program.

2. The establishment of new organizational units that serve as a base for faculty appointments or offer degree programs.

Section 2. Academic Programs, Off-Site Locations, and Organizational Unit Changes Requiring ADHE Commissioner Approval

A Letter of Notification informs the Coordinating Board that an institution seeks to make programmatic and organizational changes that require ADHE Commissioner approval unless prior review is requested by the Coordinating Board. New and modified programs, and units that the Commissioner approves for implementation will be listed in the Letters of Notification consent agenda at the next scheduled Coordinating Board meeting. Consent agenda items are non-voting board items approved by the Commissioner of the Division.

If program and unit changes exceed the thresholds outlined in the section below, a Letter of Intent and Proposal may be required.

The deadlines for submission of the Letters of Notification are listed in Part 3, Section 4.

Letter of Notification

A Letter of Notification must be submitted to ADHE when requesting programmatic, organizational, or location changes that fall within the parameters defined in this section, or for any change that affects a published field on the Approved Programs List.

A Letter of Notification must be submitted to ADHE when requesting:

Programmatic Changes

1. Change in title or Classification of Instructional Programs Code (CIP) of an existing degree or certificate program, minor, or concentration.
2. Deletion of a degree or certificate program, minor, or concentration.

3. Placement of a degree or certificate program on inactive status. A program will remain inactive for no more than 5 years, unless deleted or reactivated by the institution, after which it will be moved to deleted status. The inactive status cannot be used for minors, concentrations, or organizational units.
4. The reactivation of any certificate or degree program formally on inactive status. Programs reactivated within five years must meet the Program Review and Viability standards in effect at the time of inactivation. To request a reset or extension of these standards, institutions may submit a full program proposal for review in lieu of a Letter of Notification.
5. Modification of the curriculum of an existing certificate or degree program. Notification is required when an institution makes a change of 25% or more of a degree program and a change of 50% or more of a certificate program. Curriculum modifications include changes to courses, clock/credit hours, learning objectives, competencies, or standards. It is each institution's responsibility to determine the percentage of cumulative change for a certificate or degree program. The current and proposed curricula, new course descriptions, and justification/need for modifying the program must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

Additionally, curriculum modifications affecting a published field on the Approved Programs List must be reported to ADHE.

6. To offer an existing certificate or degree program through distance education where at least 50% of the program will be offered via distance education. The institution offering the program must provide justification to offer the program through distance education. Assessment of distance programs must be consistent with institutional assessment practices on the campus and program outcomes must be the same for both traditional and distance delivery methods. Institutions are also responsible for ensuring compliance with accreditor policy regarding distance education.
7. The creation of an undergraduate certificate of proficiency program, consisting of 6-21 semester credit hours, where less than 50% of the curriculum is new coursework. The curriculum, new course descriptions, goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, projected annual enrollment, and justification/need for offering the new program must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

If the certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board initial review/approval also must be submitted.

8. The creation of an undergraduate technical certificate/endorsement program, consisting of 22-45 semester credit hours, where less than 50% of the curriculum is new coursework. The curriculum, new course descriptions, goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, projected annual enrollment, and justification/need for offering the new program must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

If the certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board initial review/approval also must be submitted.

9. The creation of a graduate certificate/endorsement program consisting of 12-21 semester credit hours where less than 50% of the curriculum is new graduate coursework. The curriculum, new course descriptions, goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, projected annual enrollment, justification/need for offering the new program, and professional licensure or certification criteria must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

If the certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board initial review/approval also must be submitted. Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education approval must be submitted for certificate programs for teacher licensure or endorsement.

10. The creation of a concentration of an existing approved certificate or degree program consisting of a minimum of 9 semester credit hours. The curriculum, new course descriptions, goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, and justification/need for offering the new concentration must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

A Letter of Intent and Proposal is required if the number of new courses in a concentration exceeds 25% of the total degree program credit hours or 50% of the total certificate credit hours.

Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education approval must be submitted for degree programs with concentrations for teacher licensure or endorsement.

11. The creation of minor consisting of a minimum of 15 semester credit hours. The curriculum, new course descriptions, goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, and justification/need for offering the new minor must be submitted with the Letter of Notification. Minors should not exceed 25% of degree program curricula.
12. The creation of an undergraduate or graduate degree program, primarily consisting of coursework in existing undergraduate or graduate degree programs. New courses must be less than 25% of the proposed program curriculum. The proposed curriculum, new course descriptions, goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, projected annual enrollment, and justification/need for the new program must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

If the new degree program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board initial review/approval also must be

submitted. Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education approval must be submitted for degree programs for teacher licensure or endorsement.

Organizational Unit and Location Changes

13. Establishment of an organizational unit (e.g., center, division, or institute) that does not serve as the basis for faculty appointments or degree programs. The mission and role of the organizational unit must be submitted with a Letter of Notification.
14. Establishment of a new off-campus location where instruction may be delivered on-site, through distance technology, correspondence, or concurrent enrollment. Institutions must first notify all Arkansas public colleges and universities (via email) of the proposed location. Comments or objections must be submitted in writing to ADHE and the submitting institution within 30 days to be considered by the Commissioner.
15. Establishment of a new instruction, research, or service institute/center fully supported by sources other than state funds that will terminate when nonstate funding ceases. A synopsis of the mission and role of the institute or center, the projected annual budget, and the sources of funding must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.
16. Change to the title or structure (reorganization) of existing organizational unit(s). The Letter of Notification must include the existing and proposed organizational structures along with justification for the reorganization.
17. To offer an existing certificate or degree program at an existing off-campus location where at least 50% of the total program will be offered at the off-campus location. Institutions are also responsible for ensuring compliance with accreditor policy regarding off-campus instruction.

PART 3. GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS FOR NEW PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

Section 1. Guidelines for Proposals – New Programs

New programs that require Coordinating Board approval are listed in Part 2, Section 1. Proposals for new programs must be submitted to ADHE on appropriate forms and include the following information:

- Proposed program title
- Program initiation date
- Proposed CIP code
- General description of the program
- Documentation of need for the program: letters of support, employer partnerships, and student demand/interest
- Program goals, objectives and student learning outcomes

- Program curriculum including new course descriptions
- Program faculty information
- Description of program resources (library, instructional equipment and facilities, technology support)
- Program budget (funding and expenditures)
- Program duplication (similar programs in Arkansas)
- Enrollment and graduation projections
- Institutional and Board of Trustees approval of proposed program.

Section 2. Guidelines for Proposals and New Organizational Units

New organizational units that require Coordinating Board approval are listed in Part 2, Section 1. Proposals for new units must be submitted to ADHE on appropriate forms and include the following information:

- Description of proposed organizational unit
- Unit initiation date
- Justification for establishment of new unit
- Current and proposed organizational chart
- Unit budget (new administrative costs and funding sources)
- Institutional and Board of Trustees approval of proposed unit.

Section 3. Guidelines for Preparation of New Program/Unit Budgets

In order for ADHE staff to assess the adequacy of resources to support the proposed program/unit, a detailed list of resource requirements and planned funding sources for the first three years must be presented. Institutions must provide evidence of the source of adequate funding.

Funding for new programs/units will either be supplied from new or existing sources. If funds are to be redistributed to the proposed program/unit, the source of funding must be identified and an analysis of the impact that the redistribution of funds will have on existing programs or organizational units must be stated. If the redistribution is from the deletion of an existing program/unit, documentation of sufficient savings to the state to offset new program/unit costs must be provided.

New funding from student tuition and fees generated by new student semester credit hours (SSCH), grants/contracts, or other sources must be identified. Calculations and/or formulas that were used to project new revenue should be included in the budget section (e.g., number of new students projected in proposed program multiplied by tuition and fees).

Section 4. Deadlines For Submission of Letter of Intent, Proposals, and Letter Of Notification

Letter of Intent Deadlines

Letters of Intent are due on the first business day of the month of the scheduled AHECB meeting. Letters of Intent to create a new program must be presented at least one AHECB meeting prior to the presentation of the proposal. Comments or objections to a Letter of Intent must be submitted in writing to ADHE and submitting institution within 30 days of the email to all Arkansas public institutions.

AHECB Meeting	Deadline
January	January 1
April	April 1
July	July 1
October	October 1

Program Proposal Deadlines

Proposals are due on the first business day of the month, two months prior to the scheduled AHECB meeting. Program proposal summaries are available on the ADHE website.

AHECB Meeting	Deadline
January	November 1
April	February 1
July	May 1
October	August 1

Letter of Notification Deadlines

Letters of Notification are due on the first business day of the month, two months prior to the scheduled AHECB meeting.

AHECB Meeting	Deadline
January	November 1
April	February 1
July	May 1
October	August 1

Note: Per the Office of Educator Effectiveness/Licensure of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, the deadline for submission of notification and proposal documents for Educator Preparation programs is February 1 for Fall program implementation, and July 1 for Spring program implementation.

PART 4. PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

Section 1. Program Request and Proposal Submission

A Letter of Intent must be submitted to the Arkansas Division of Higher Education by the established deadline for the proposal to be considered by the Coordinating Board at a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting. All proposals for new programs and

organizational units must be prepared according to published criteria and submitted electronically to ADHE on the appropriate forms by the established deadlines.

The deadlines for submission of the Letter of Intent and the proposal are listed in Part 3, Section 4. The Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board will not consider proposals for new programs or organizational units that have not been formally approved by the President or Chancellor and Board of Trustees of the proposing institution.

Prior to submission of a proposal to ADHE, it is recommended that the Academic Affairs Officer discuss the proposed program with the Academic Officers that offer similar programs in the state and with Academic Officers at institutions in the surrounding area. Institutions that plan to offer programs off-campus or plan to establish off-campus instruction centers but cannot reach agreement either informally or with a written Memorandum of Understanding with other Arkansas institutions may appeal to the ADHE Commissioner as outlined in the Off-Campus Instruction Policy.

Section 2. Proposal Review by Academic Affairs Officers

A summary of the proposals for new programs or organizational units will be posted on the ADHE website and will be sent to members of the Coordinating Board. Any comments, questions, or requests for additional information from an Academic Affairs Officer concerning a proposal shall be submitted in writing to the ADHE Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs no later than 30 days prior to the Coordinating Board meeting.

Institutions proposing programs/units must provide a written response to ADHE within 10 days of receipt of the requests for clarification or additional information. The Academic Affairs Officers of the institutions proposing the programs/units also may decide to withdraw the proposals at this time in lieu of a response. The ADHE Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs will coordinate and mediate all responses between the institutions. All comments and responses will be kept in the program proposal file at ADHE.

Section 3. Proposal Review by ADHE Staff

The ADHE Academic Affairs staff will review new program proposals before contacting the Academic Affairs Officer and program faculty for additional information. All institutional comments and responses received during the comment period will be considered. ADHE staff also may conduct a conference with the Academic Affairs Officer and program faculty before recommendations are made and reported to the Presidents' Council (see Part 4, Section 5). If a proposal must be deferred based on the review by the ADHE staff, the ADHE Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs will notify the Academic Affairs Officer no later than 10 days before the Coordinating Board meeting.

Section 4. Consultant Review of Proposals

ADHE staff may engage a maximum of three in-state or out-of-state experts in selected fields of study to assist with the review of proposals for undergraduate and graduate programs. The review team will submit a written report to ADHE that evaluates the proposed programs in terms of the need for graduates, student demand and interest, appropriateness of the curricula, and adequacy of institutional resources. Typically, a campus visit is required. The review team will not make a recommendation on program initiation. While institutions submitting proposals for review will be responsible for all expenses associated with the external reviews, ADHE staff will select the team in consultation with the institutions. In all instances, members of the review team will not have a relationship beyond professional acquaintance with the institutions and programs under review.

Section 5. Proposal Review by Presidents' Council

ADHE staff will present a synopsis of all new proposals to the Presidents' Council for their review before the proposals are included on the agenda for the Coordinating Board meeting. The ADHE Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs will notify the Academic Affairs Officers of the disposition of the proposed programs, including any concerns raised during the review process. If a proposal must be deferred based on the review by the Presidents' Council, the ADHE Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs will notify the Academic Affairs Officers immediately following the Presidents' Council meeting.

Section 6. Proposals Recommended to the Coordinating Board

Proposals will be presented to the Coordinating Board for vote. Institutional program representatives must attend the Coordinating Board meeting to respond to questions about the proposals. State general revenues cannot be expended for new programs/units that are not approved by the Coordinating Board.

The ADHE Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs, or a Board member may determine that the proposal should be moved to the consent agenda. Consideration to move a proposal to the consent agenda will be based on economic impact, funding and resources, and similarity to the institution's existing programs. The ADHE Commissioner or a Board member may also request the proposal be returned to the agenda and presented to the Coordinating Board for the purpose of discussion and a separate vote.

Section 7. Limitations on Coordinating Board Approval

Following favorable action on the proposals by the Coordinating Board, institutions are expected to initiate programs/units on the dates specified in the Board agenda items. Coordinating Board approval will terminate for programs/units not initiated within two years of Board approval through the program viability process. A new proposal must be submitted for Coordinating Board consideration if the institutional administration still wishes to initiate the proposed program/unit.

Section 8. Follow-up Reviews of Approved Programs

All approved programs will be held to ADHE policy regarding program viability and program review standards. ADHE staff will conduct follow-up reviews of approved programs to determine if the enrollment, number of graduates, and overall program quality are sufficient to justify continuation of the program.

APPENDIX A – PROGRAM RESOURCES AND ASSESSMENT

Section 1. Faculty Resources and Credentials

Institutions must employ a faculty of sufficient size and range for the number of programs offered and the students enrolled. Faculty member credentials must be appropriate to their assigned duties and disciplines, including the levels at which they teach. In addition to the guidance below, institutions should always adhere to accreditor faculty qualification standards and requirements.

- Faculty must hold degrees, certifications and licenses from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation such as the Higher Learning Commission or from agencies with comparable status, certification or recognition in other countries.
- Faculty members teaching general education courses must typically hold a master's degree or higher in the discipline or subfield in which the instructor is teaching. Supervised graduate teaching assistants may serve as instructors for general education and core courses in the disciplines in which they are studying.
- Typically, faculty members teaching remedial/developmental education courses hold a master's degree but must hold at least a bachelor's degree in the teaching field.
- Faculty members teaching in occupational skill areas must hold at least an associate degree or appropriate industry-related licensure/certification.
- A majority of the faculty members teaching in graduate-level degree programs must hold the appropriate terminal degree and have demonstrated competency in teaching or research at the appropriate graduate level. If doctoral programs are offered, a sufficient number of graduate faculty must have dissertation committee experience.

Section 2. Library Resources

Library print and electronic resources (volumes, monographs, periodicals, indexed and full-text databases, digital collections and exhibits, journals, e-books, etc.) specifically related to proposed certificate and degree programs must be available or planned to meet the needs of faculty and students.

Section 3. Instructional Support and Technology

Instructional support and technology (e.g., laboratories, technology applications and infrastructure, instructional equipment, clinical practice sites) should be determined by the program objectives and must be sufficient to meet program needs.

Section 4. Assessment and Evaluation

An assessment plan must be in place to evaluate faculty performance and student achievement.

Section 5. Programs Requiring Accreditation, Licensure or Certification

Certificate and degree programs designed to prepare students for professional licensure or certification must meet all standards and requirements of the accrediting or approval agencies.

Section 6. Traditional Instruction (In-Class)

College and university terms vary in length, with the most typical semester being 15 to 17 weeks. Time spent must be an appropriate mixture of lecture, laboratory, self-paced learning, team activities, and field work. Regardless of modality and semester format, all enrolled students must adhere to the same required levels of competence, knowledge, and performance.

Institutions may have terms of instruction other than semester length, but the number of credit hours awarded is based on the amount of time in class and must be adjusted in proportion to the length of term. There may be exceptions regarding length of terms and the number of credit hours awarded for specific circumstances, such as workshops, seminars, and summer terms. In these instances, instructional content and activities should be designed appropriately.

The following minimum standards apply to traditional instruction.

- A formal lecture course with extensive assigned reading or other out-of-class preparation is awarded one semester credit for a minimum of 750 minutes or 12.5 hours of classroom instruction;
- A laboratory class with moderate out-of-class preparation is awarded one semester credit for a minimum of 1500 minutes or 25 hours of laboratory instruction; and
- Clinical, practicum, internship, shop instruction or other self-paced learning activities involving work-related experience with little or no out-of-class preparation are awarded one semester credit for a minimum of 2250 minutes or 37.5 hours of work-related instruction.

Section 7. Non-Traditional Instruction (Self-Paced, Distance Technology)

Standards for academic quality, admission, retention, and assessment must be the same in all courses and degree programs regardless of the mode of delivery.

1. Self-Paced Instruction – When proposing new programs with self-paced components outside of traditional semester and credit hour designations, institutions must indicate the minimum and maximum length allowed for completion of the components as well as intended student learning outcomes. Time-in-class is not a factor in self-paced learning.

2. Distance Education – Instruction delivered through distance technology is an approach to learning in which the majority of instruction occurs with a separation of place or time between the instructor and the students and with interaction occurring through electronic media. Internet courses are conducted via web-based instruction and collaboration. Courses may require proctored examinations, and may include opportunities for face-to-face orientations, but there are no face-to-face class attendance requirements. Institutions are expected to ensure regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors in their distance education and competency-based education offerings.

When proposing new programs delivered through distance technology, the institution must demonstrate its commitment to distance technology instruction and the adequacy of technical support for faculty and students.

3. Hybrid/Hyflex/Mixed-Mode Instruction – Includes required attendance, either in-person or synchronously online, and asynchronous online instruction. Classes have substantial content delivered over the Internet which will substitute for some classroom meetings.

Section 8. Experiential/Prior Learning Credits

Institutions may award a maximum of 50% of the total credit hours in a certificate or degree program for documented learning or work experiences. Requests for exceptions to this maximum threshold can be submitted to the Assistant Commissioner for Academic Affairs for consideration.

At a minimum, credits awarded for prior learning must be assessed and documented by faculty with appropriate subject-area knowledge to determine if the student's prior learning experiences relate to the content of a particular course listed in the college catalog and if college credit should be awarded for a specific course. Institutions must have written policies, procedures, and criteria for assessing prior learning that are aligned with recognized assessment service organizations such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

APPENDIX B – DEFINITIONS

CERTIFICATES

Certificate of Proficiency

The Certificate of Proficiency is an award where students are required to demonstrate mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The range of credit hours is 6-21 undergraduate semester hours. The program of study may be a stand-alone program or part of a technical certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's curriculum. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill certificate requirements.

Technical Certificate

The Technical Certificate is a focused program of coursework and hands-on training, offered at the college level, that validates student achievement of industry-relevant skills in a specific career field. The range of credit hours is 22-45 undergraduate semester hours. This program can be completed independently or integrated into an associate or bachelor's degree. The curriculum emphasizes the development of essential communication (both written and verbal) and mathematical skills, along with mastery of technical knowledge and practical abilities aligned with established industry standards. Basic skills courses (such as remedial math or writing) can only be used for placement purposes and does not count towards the certificate requirements.

Certificate of General Studies

The Certificate of General Studies is a specific set of general education core courses that will document a student's mastery of skills and competencies needed to be successful in the workforce and today's world. The range of credit hours is 31-32 semester hours. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill certificate requirements. The courses required for the award are as follows:

Certificate of General Studies	Credit Hours
English Composition	6
Lab Science	4
College Algebra, Quantitative Literacy, or Statistics	3
U.S. History	3
American Government	3
Social Science Elective	3
Fine Arts or Humanities Elective	3
<i>Choose two of the following:</i>	6-7
Oral Communication or Speech (3 credit hours)	
Social Science Elective (3 credit hours)	
Fine Arts or Humanities Elective (3 credit hours)	
Lab Science (4 credit hours)	
Total Credit Hours:	31-32

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Advanced Certificate/Endorsement

The Advanced Certificate or Endorsement is an award in which a student must demonstrate a mastery of skills and knowledge against a set of specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The range of hours is 21-45 undergraduate semester credit hours. Admission to the program requires an associate degree or higher, national certification in a technical specialty, or other specifically defined postsecondary education requirements.

Program completion could lead to certification/licensure and recognition will be noted on the student transcript. If the advanced certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board approval must be submitted to ADHE. Teacher education certificates/endorsements must be designed to meet certification/licensure requirements in designated specialty areas and the program of study must be approved by the Arkansas Department of Education prior to submission to ADHE for consideration.

Graduate Certificate/Post-Baccalaureate Certificate

The Graduate Certificate is a formal credential awarded for graduate-level study in a specific area of knowledge or skill. The range of hours is 12-21 semester credit hours. The coursework must be part of the graduate curriculum of a university, with graduate degree programs as part of its role and scope and must be taught by faculty with graduate faculty status.

Graduate Certificates designed as Teacher Education Endorsements must meet certification/licensure requirements in designated specialty areas and be approved by the Arkansas Department of Education prior to submission to ADHE for consideration.

Admission and completion requirements must be based upon the policies of the Graduate School. Program completion could lead to professional certification/licensure and recognition of the award will be noted on the student transcript. If the certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board approval must be submitted.

Post-Master's/Post-Graduate Certificate (PMC)

A Post-Master/Post-Graduate Certificate is a graduate-level program designed to allow students to develop expertise in a specific area, enhancing their professional qualifications. Admission to the program requires the student to hold a master's degree or higher in a relevant field related to the program of study. The range of hours is 12-36 semester credit hours. Program completion could lead to professional certification/licensure and recognition of the award will be noted on the student transcript. If the certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board approval must be submitted.

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Associate of Arts

The Associate of Arts degree will be awarded to students who successfully complete a program of collegiate-level work that is fully transferable toward a bachelor's degree. The field of study is not specified in the degree title. The Associate of Arts degree is a 60 credit-hour award that must include the 35-hour state minimum General Education core requiring courses in English/Writing, Fine Arts/Humanities, History and Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural/Physical Lab Sciences. The remaining semester hours consist of 15-25 credit hours of direct electives from the six General Education core categories and up to 10 credit hours of institutional requirements or advisor-approved electives. Competency in communications (oral and written) and mathematics, and a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in specific areas or disciplines must be demonstrated. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Associate of Arts graduates may be required to complete additional lower-division courses to meet the specified pre-requisite course requirements and program course requirements for bachelor's degree programs upon transfer to any Arkansas public university. This may require an AA graduate to complete credit hours beyond the stated minimum credits for bachelor's degrees. College advisors must document that AA students have been informed of the possible requirement for additional courses/credits for bachelor's degree completion.

Associate of Arts Degree Core Curriculum* 60 semester credit hours, Effective Fall 2013	
General Education Core	35 Credit Hours
English Composition	6
Communication	0-3
College Math	3
Lab Science	8
Fine Arts/Humanities	6-9
U.S. History/Government	3
Social Sciences [†]	6-9
Directed Electives	15-25 Credit Hours
Electives from Gen Ed Core Categories Only	15-25
Institutional Requirements/Advisor Approved Electives	0-10 Credit Hours
Electives can be from any discipline area including career and technical fields	0-10
Total Credit Hours	60

*AA curriculum will be updated Fall 2027 to comply with the Requisite Core. See Appendix C.

[†]An introductory course in Criminal Justice and Micro/Macro Economics courses can be included in the Social Sciences category.

Associate of Science

The Associate of Science degree is an award with an occupational objective where the courses are transferable toward a specified bachelor's degree at a college/university. The field of study must be specified in the degree title. The range of hours is 60-66 semester credit hours and must include the 35-hour state minimum General Education core requiring courses in English/Writing, Fine Arts/Humanities, History and Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural/Physical Lab Sciences. The curriculum must require a demonstration of competency in communications (oral and written) and mathematics, and a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in specific areas or disciplines.

Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements. Exceptions to the 60-66 credit hour range may be allowed for documented transfer and bachelor's degree completion purposes. College advisors must document that students have been informed of the universities accepting this associate degree for full transfer to specified bachelor's degrees.

Associate of Science in Liberal Arts and Sciences

The Associate of Science in Liberal Arts & Sciences is an award with a curriculum that is transferable toward a specified bachelor's degree. The field of study is typically not included in the title. The range of hours is 60-66 semester credit hours and must include the 35-hour state minimum General Education core requiring courses in English/Writing, Fine Arts/Humanities, History and Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural/Physical Lab Sciences. The curriculum must require a demonstration of competency in communications (oral and written) and mathematics, and a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in specific areas or disciplines. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Two-year college advisors must document that students have been informed of the universities accepting this associate degree for full transfer to specified bachelor's degrees.

Associate of Applied Science

The Associate of Applied Science is an award comprised of college-level coursework designed primarily for direct employment. The occupational field should be specified in the title of the degree. The range of hours is 60-66 semester credit hours and must include a minimum of 15 credit hours of General Education courses in English/writing, Mathematics, Social Science, and Computer Applications/Fundamentals. A minimum of 30-36 credit hours must be in a technical area and should include support courses from other related technical disciplines. Selected programs may exceed the credit hour range in order to meet accreditation requirements - justification and documentation will be required. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. Remedial/

developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Institutions should inform students of the limited transferability of this degree and which universities accept this associate degree for transfer into a specified bachelor's degrees.

Associate of General Studies/Professional Studies/Liberal Arts/Fine Arts

The Associate of General Studies, Associate of Professional Studies, Associate of Liberal Arts, or Associate of Fine Arts are intended to serve as a flexible program of study for students whose needs cannot be met by other programs. The program of study must be developed cooperatively with the student. The range of hours is 60-66 semester credit hours and must include a minimum of 15 credit hours of General Education courses and occupational, liberal arts, and/or fine arts courses. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in at least one specific area or discipline. Individual courses may fulfill requirements for transfer towards a bachelor's degree, direct employment, or educational enrichment. Remedial/ developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Associate of Occupational Studies

The Associate of Occupational Studies is an award intended to serve as a flexible program option for students whose needs cannot be met by other programs. The field of study is typically not specified in the degree title. The range of hours is 60-72 and must include a minimum of 15 semester credit hours of General Education coursework. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in at least one specific area or discipline and must be developed cooperatively by the student and the institution. Individual courses may fulfill requirements for transfer toward a baccalaureate degree, direct employment or educational enrichment. Remedial/ developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Associate of Applied Science in General Technology

The Associate of Applied in General Technology is an individualized program of study to fulfill a unique career goal that cannot be met through the completion of a single program offered by the institution. Typically, the field of study is not specified in the degree title. The range of hours is 60-66 semester credit hours and must include 15 semester credit hours of General Education courses in English/writing, Mathematics, Computer Application/Fundamentals, and Social Sciences. Additionally, there must be 24-30 credit hours in a major technical area and 15-21 credit hours of support courses from other related technical disciplines. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline.

Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT)

The Associate of Arts in Teaching is a statewide transfer degree where the courses are transferable toward a specified bachelor's degree in teacher education. The range of hours is 60-66 semester credit hours and must include the 35-hours state minimum General Education core requiring courses in English/Writing, Fine Arts/Humanities, History and Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural/Physical Lab Sciences. Course substitutions must be approved by the intended receiving institution.

Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

All institutions participating in the AAT-Bachelor's Degree Completion Program must have a signed agreement on file at ADHE.

Associate of Arts in Teaching 60 semester credit hours, Effective Fall 2013	
General Education Core	35 Credit Hours
English Composition I	3
English Composition II	3
Introduction to Oral Communication	3
College Algebra or Quantitative Literacy	3
Biological Science with Lab	4
Physical Science with Lab	4
Visual Arts or Musical Arts or Theatre Arts	3
World Literature I or World Literature II	3
U.S. Government	3
World Civilization I or World Civilization II	3
American History I or American History II	3
Teaching Core Requirements	15 Credit Hours
Introduction to Education	3
Education Technology Elective	3
Child Growth and Development	3
Math I	3
Math II	3
Teaching Directed Electives	10-16 Credit Hours
Arkansas History	3
Social Science Elective	3
Physical Education	1-2
Directed Elective	3-4
Directed Elective	0-4
Total Credit Hours	60-66

Associate of Science in Business

The Associate of Science in Business (ASB) degree will be awarded to students who successfully complete a planned program that is transferable toward a specified bachelor's degree in business. The number of hours is 62 semester credit hours and

must include the 35-hours state minimum General Education core requiring courses in English/Writing, Fine Arts/Humanities, History and Social Science, Mathematics, and Natural/Physical Lab Sciences. Course substitutions or modifications must be approved by ADHE and the intended receiving institution. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements. All institutions participating in the ASB-Bachelor's Degree Completion Program must have a signed agreement on file at ADHE.

Associate of Science in Business* 62 credit hours, DC 0308, Effective Fall 2010	
English Composition I	3
English Composition II	3
Oral Communications	3
College Algebra	3
Biological Science & Lab	4
Physical Science & Lab	4
Fine Arts Visual <u>or</u> Theatre <u>or</u> Music	3
Literature I <u>or</u> Literature II	3
American History to 1876 <u>or</u> American History since 1876 <u>or</u> American Government	3
Western Civilization to 1660 <u>or</u> Western Civilization since 1660	3
Sociology	3
Accounting Principles I	3
Accounting Principles II	3
Microeconomics	3
Macroeconomics	3
Microcomputer Business Application	3
Business Statistics	3
Business Calculus	3
Legal Environment of Business	3
Directed Elective (3 credit hours)	3
Total Credit Hours	62

**Curriculum will be updated Fall 2027 to comply with the Requisite Core. See Appendix C.*

Bachelor's Degree

The Bachelor's degree is an undergraduate, academic credential awarded to students upon successful completion of a curriculum consisting of the 35-semester hour state minimum General Education core, a minimum of 40 semester hours of upper-level courses, and a minimum of 30 semester hours (including 20 semester hours of upper-level courses) in the major field of study. The range of hours is 120-130 semester credit hours. Selected programs may exceed the credit hour range in order to meet accreditation requirements - justification and documentation will be required. Bachelor's degrees can be awarded in two main categories: general areas of study, like those recognized by the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees, and specialized professional and technical fields, such as the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA),

Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), and Bachelor of Music (BM). The curriculum must require a demonstration of competency in communications (oral and written) and mathematics, and a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Bachelor of Applied Science

The Bachelor of Applied Science is an undergraduate academic credential that allows students holding an Associate of Applied Science degree to apply the entire associate degree toward the requirements of a bachelor's degree. The range of hours is 120-130 semester credit hours and must include a minimum of 35 semester hours of General Education courses, and a minimum of 40 semester hours of upper-level courses in selected fields of study. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in at least one specific area or discipline. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

Bachelor of Professional Studies

The Bachelor of Professional Studies is an undergraduate academic credential designed as a flexible program option for students with earned college credit (including technical and occupational courses). The program of study can be developed cooperatively by the student and the institution to meet a variety of professional development and career enhancement needs. The range of hours is 120–130 semester credit hours and must include a minimum of 35 semester hours of General Education courses and 40 semester hours of upper-level courses in selected fields of study. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in at least one specific area or discipline. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill degree requirements.

GRADUATE DEGREES

Master's Degree

The master's degree is a graduate academic credential awarded to students who demonstrate a high level of expertise in a specialized field of study or professional practice beyond a bachelor's degree. A minimum of 30 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree is required with at least 50% of graduate-level courses that demonstrate a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. Master's degrees can be awarded in two main categories: research master's degrees, such as Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Science (MS) degrees, and professional practice master's degrees, such as Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), Master of Public Health (MPH), and Master of Education (MEd).

Specialist Degree

The specialist degree is a graduate academic credential beyond the master's degree designed for students seeking to enhance skills and knowledge without pursuing a doctoral degree. A minimum of 30 graduate-only semester credit hours is required and must demonstrate a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The specialist degree does not meet the academic requirements of a doctoral degree.

Doctoral Degree – Research/Scholarship

The doctoral degree is the highest academic, graduate credential awarded for research and scholarship such as Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Music Arts (DMA), or Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). A minimum of 72 graduate semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree is required or 42 graduate semester credit hours beyond the master's degree with at least 50% of graduate-level courses that demonstrate a mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against rigorous performance standards in a particular area or discipline signifying research and scholarship in a specific field. Program requirements must balance credit hours for required coursework, research, and dissertation preparation.

Doctoral Degree – Professional Practice

The doctoral degree is a doctorate-level credential awarded to students in areas for professional practice such as Juris Doctor (JD), Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), Doctor of Medicine (MD), or health-related professions. A minimum of 60 semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework is required before entering the program and a minimum of 72 graduate-only semester credit hours is required beyond the 60-semester credit hour entrance requirement. Program graduates must satisfy all academic requirements to begin practice in the profession. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline.

ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

Department

A basic organizational unit consisting of all faculty members or teaching personnel in a given subject-matter field, academic discipline, or in a group of related disciplines or fields. The academic department is the fundamental unit of the institution which focuses on teaching, research, and service.

Division

A grouping of two or more organizational units within an institution.

College/School

(1) A major instructional unit of an institution that includes related departments, divisions, or programs; (2) a major subdivision of a university offering a curriculum which leads to a professional or graduate degree.

Center

(1) An academic organizational unit that conducts research, teaching, service activities, or a combination of these functions in specified fields. (2) An off-campus instructional location. An institution can establish a Degree/University Center to offer courses for degree completion on another Arkansas institution campus with legislative or AHECB approval. At least one permanent staff/faculty member must be assigned to the center for administrative purposes.

Institute

(1) A separate, specialized organization, within or independent of a university, designed for teaching, research, or affiliation; (2) a short course or workshop consisting of lecture and discussion topics on a specific theme.

Academy

A separate organizational unit within or independent of a college or university in which special subjects or skills are taught.

APPENDIX C – MINIMUM GENERAL EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL CORES

Section 1. State Minimum General Education Core

State Minimum General Education Core	Credit Hours
English/Composition	
English Composition	6
Speech Communication	0 – 3
Mathematics*	
College Algebra, Quantitative Literacy/Mathematical Reasoning, Statistics, or higher-level mathematics course	3
Science[†]	
Science courses must include laboratories	8
Fine Arts/Humanities[‡]	
Must be broad survey courses	6 – 9
Social Sciences[‡]	
U.S. History or Government	3
Other Social Sciences	6 – 9
Total Credit Hours	35

Act 566 of 2025 established a mandatory 15 credit hour Requisite Core that must be included in all associate and bachelor's degrees. Effective Fall 2027, the following revised version of the General Education Core will replace the version above.

Revised State Minimum General Education Core	Credit Hours
English Composition	6
Speech Communication	0 – 3
Mathematics* A comprehensive mathematics course such as College Algebra, Statistics, Quantitative Literacy/Mathematical Reasoning or any higher-level mathematics course.	3
Science [†] Courses must include laboratories.	8
Fine Arts/Humanities [‡] Must be broad survey courses.	6 – 9
American Government	3
United States History	3
Social Sciences [‡]	3 – 6
Total Credit Hours:	35

**Institutions may require students majoring in mathematics, engineering, science, and business to take a higher-level mathematics course as part of the state minimum core.*

[†]Institutions may require students majoring in mathematics, engineering, science, education, and health professions to take higher-level or specific science courses.

‡Institutions may require students majoring in engineering to take either 6 hours of humanities and social sciences at the junior/senior level or substitute an additional 6 hours of higher-level mathematics and/or additional science courses.

Section 2. General Education Core for Associate-Level Occupational and General Studies Programs

General Education Core for Associate-Level Occupational and General Studies Programs	Credit Hours
English/Writing	6
English Composition and/or Technical/Professional Writing	
Mathematics	3
Applied Technical Mathematics or higher-level math course	
Social Sciences	3
An introductory course appropriate for the field of study, e.g., psychology, sociology, economics	
Computer Applications/Technology	3
A general or program-related technology course or integrated technology course	
Total Credit Hours	15

Act 566 of 2025 established a mandatory 15 credit-hour Requisite Core that must be included in all associate and bachelor's degrees. Effective Fall 2027, the following Requisite Core will replace the Occupational Core above.

Requisite Core	Credit Hours
English/Communication Oral or written communication designed to develop the ability to organize ideas and to communicate, with clarity, precision, and syntactical maturity.	6
Mathematics or Science Cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and logical reasoning skills.	3-4
United States History* Must include instruction in the essentials of the United States Constitution and the study of American institutions and ideals.	3
American Government* Must include instruction in the essentials of the United States Constitution and the study of American institutions and ideals.	3
Total Credit Hours:	15-16

**required; may not be substituted*

Policy Revised: April 16, 1993, Agenda Item No. 13
July 25, 1997, Agenda Item No.21
October 23, 1998, Agenda Item No. 21
October 20, 2000, Agenda Item No.13
October 22, 2004, Agenda Item No. 16
January 30, 2015, Agenda Item No. 8
October 24, 2025, Agenda Item No. 22
April 24, 2026, Agenda Item Nos. 14 and 15