



# Academic Program Approval

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## Definitions Related to Academic Programming

Unit/Department: Academic Affairs

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# Definitions Related to Academic Programming

## Academic Programs

An **academic program** refers to a combination of courses and related activities organized for the attainment of broad educational objectives that lead to a certificate or diploma or an associate's, bachelor's, master's, specialist, or doctoral degree.

**Academic program modifications** are of two types:

1. **Minor academic program modifications** refer to program name changes and changes in degree designation that do not involve significant changes in a program's purpose and curriculum.
2. **Major academic program modifications** refer to significant changes in the program's purpose and curriculum such that a different CIP code more accurately describes the revised program. Separation of an academic program into two programs and the combination of two existing programs into one program constitute major academic program modifications.

A Classification of Instructional Programs code, or **CIP code**, is a six-digit code in the form of xx.xxxx that identifies instructional program disciplines. The CIP code supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity as required for federal reporting.

A **major** is a primary area of study defined by a set of course and/or credit hour requirements within a specified discipline or with a clearly defined multi-disciplinary focus.

A **minor** is a secondary area of study that is separate from the major and is defined by a set of course and/or credit hour requirements within a specified discipline or with a clearly defined multi-disciplinary focus.

A **core** is a set of courses required by all students within a major or area. It also refers to the set of courses required by all students within a track, concentration, or specialization.

A **new academic program** is a program not previously offered at an institution or one that was previously offered but has been suspended for five or more years or has been closed.

An **area** is a primary field of study, typically consisting of more credit hours than a major that does not require a minor and can be completed in lieu of a major-minor combination.

A **track** is a set of courses designed to develop expertise within a major or area at the undergraduate level.

A **concentration** is a set of courses designed to develop expertise within a major or area at the master's level.

A **specialization** is a set of courses designed to develop expertise within a major at the doctoral level.

A program of **vocational-technical and occupational nature** refers to undergraduate certificate, diploma, technical, or associate degree programs designed to prepare students to enter the workforce immediately after graduation. The programs fall into categories/career pathways of: (1) Health Science; (2) Business Administration and Management; (3) Manufacturing; (4) Architecture and Construction; (5) Agriculture (Food and Natural Resources); (6) Hospitality and Tourism; (7) Human Resources; (8) Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications; (9) Information Technology; (10) Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security; (11) Education and Training; (12) Government and Public Administration; (13) Marketing; (14) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); (15) Finance; and (16) Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

A **suspended program** is an academic program that no longer accepts new students as of a specified date but allows current or previously accepted students to complete the program. The program can be reopened within five years without going through the new academic program approval process. After five years, if the program has not been reopened, it is considered a closed program.

A **closed program** is an academic program that is no longer offered by an institution and has been removed from the institution's catalog and the *Registry of Degree Programs*.

### **Academic Program Delivery Methods**

An **accelerated course** refers to a course that can be completed in less than a traditional semester.

An **accelerated program** refers to the use of accelerated courses, credit for prior learning, and/or other methods to allow students to complete the program in less than the usual amount of time.

A **collaborative program** is an academic program under the sponsorship of more than one institution or organization and contains elements of resource sharing agreed upon

by the partners. None of the participating institutions delivers the entire program alone, and the partnering institutions/organizations share responsibility for the program's delivery and quality. The credential awarded may indicate the collaborative nature of the program.

- If only one institution (primary) offers the degree or credential but other institutions or organizations (secondary) provide some resources, the program at the secondary institution(s) is registered on the Council's *Registry of Degree Programs* in an **"enrollment-only"** reporting category.
- If the degree or credential is offered by all institutions participating in the resource-sharing arrangement but only one institution is listed on a graduate's diploma, the program is registered on the Council's *Registry of Degree Programs* in an **enrollment- and degree-granting category for each participating institution.**

A **cooperative (work study) program** is an academic program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government.

**Credit for prior learning** refers to college credit for the college-level knowledge and skills gained from non-college instructional programs or life experiences, including but not limited to employment, military experience, civic activities, and volunteer service. Credit is evaluated through nationally standardized exams in specific disciplines, challenge exams for specific courses at individual institutions, evaluations of non-college training programs, and individualized assessments.

A **distance learning program** is an academic program in which the majority of the instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

A **100% distance learning program** is an academic program in which all of the required courses in a program occur when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

A **distance learning course** is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

A **correspondence course** is a form of distance learning that is self-paced and involves the exchange of instructional materials and exams, by mail or electronic transmission, to students who are geographically remote from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.

A **dual degree program** is a formalized path of study that allows a student to pursue two different degrees at the same time, either at the same institution or at different institutions, and possibly complete them in less time than it would take to earn them

separately. The two degrees could be in the same subject or in two different subjects; they could be at the same level (for example, two bachelor's degrees) or at two different levels (for example, bachelor's and master's degrees). Students must meet the admission requirements for both degree programs.

An **embedded program** consists of required courses of a lower-level degree or credential that are part of a higher-level degree or credential. Such programs usually do not admit students directly, and therefore, students may not be enrolled in these programs. Students are awarded a lower-level degree or credential as these programs serve as an exit option for students who do not complete the requirements for the higher-level degree or credential.

An **extended-campus program** is an academic program offered at any center, branch, campus, or other site at which postsecondary degree or nondegree work is offered, in addition to the parent campus. It refers to locations both within and outside an institution's area of geographic responsibility.

A **joint program** is an academic program that is sponsored by two or more institutions leading to a single credential or degree, which is conferred by all participating institutions. None of the participating institutions delivers the entire program alone, and all participating institutions and organizations share responsibility for all aspects of the program's delivery and quality.

- The program is registered on the Council's *Registry of Degree Programs* in an enrollment and degree-granting category for each institution participating in the joint program.

A **module** is a standalone segment/component of a parent course for which content (description, requisites, outline, competencies, and activities/experiments) has been determined and credit assigned. The sum of constituent segments is equal to the credit of the parent course. Credit is awarded upon successful completion of all modules comprising the parent course.

A **modularized program** is an academic program that can lead to interim credentials after completion of a specified number of courses.

## **Degrees and Credentials**

A **degree** is an award conferred by a postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of an academic program.

An **associate's degree** is an award that normally requires at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent.

A **bachelor's degree** is an award that normally requires at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent. This includes all bachelor's degrees conferred in a five-year

cooperative (work-study) program and degrees in which the normal four years of work are completed in three years.

A **master's degree** is an award that requires the successful completion of an academic program of at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level.

- A **professional science master's degree** program consists of two years of non-thesis academic training in science, mathematics, or technology and contains a professional component that may include internships and cross-training in business, management, regulatory affairs, computer applications, and communications. The program is designed with the input of one or more employers.

A **specialist degree** is an award that normally requires 60 semester hours of concentrated and approved graduate coursework beyond the bachelor's degree. It is generally offered in the field of education to acknowledge completion of advanced graduate study designed to help individuals meet licensure requirements or develop additional knowledge and skill beyond the master's degree but not at the doctoral level.

A **doctoral degree** is the highest award a student can earn for graduate study. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System recognizes three types of doctorates.

- A **doctor's degree—professional practice** is awarded upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as “first-professional.”
- A **doctor's degree—research/scholarship** requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement.
- A **doctor's degree—other** is a doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree-research/scholarship or a doctor's degree-professional practice.

An **advanced practice doctorate**, also known as a **professional doctorate**, is a program of study beyond the master's degree designed to meet the workforce and applied research needs of a profession. It requires close cooperation between institutions and employers to ascertain employers' needs. The degree may or may not be necessary for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. In most cases, it is a clinical program designed to meet the needs of allied health professions. It can be classified as either *doctor's degree—professional practice* or *doctor's degree—other* for IPEDS reporting.

**Undergraduate (pre-baccalaureate) certificate** is a subbaccalaureate credential granted upon satisfactory completion of a series of courses related to a specific topic or skill. It has the primary purpose of providing marketable, entry-level skills. These certificates qualify students to take external licensure, vendor-based, or skill standards examinations in the field. If standardized external exams are not available in the field of study, certificates prepare students at skill levels expected of employees in an occupation found in the local economy.

- **Postsecondary certificate (less than one academic year)** requires completion of an academic program below the baccalaureate degree in less than one academic year, or designed for completion in less than 30 semester or trimester credit hours, or in less than 45 quarter credit hours, or in less than 900 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.
- **Postsecondary certificate (at least one but fewer than two academic years)** requires completion of an academic program below the baccalaureate degree in at least one but fewer than two full-time equivalent academic years, or is designed for completion in at least 30 but fewer than 60 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 45 but less than 90 quarter credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.
- **Postsecondary certificate (at least two but fewer than four academic years)** requires completion of an academic program below the baccalaureate degree in at least two but fewer than four full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 90 but less than 180 quarter credit hours, or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.

**Graduate certificate** is a post-baccalaureate credential granted upon satisfactory completion of a set of related courses within a discipline or a set of related disciplines. It has the primary purpose of supplementing or enhancing skills for degree-seeking students who wish to demonstrate competency in a high-demand or emerging area that will increase their marketability in local, national, and global markets.

- A **post-baccalaureate certificate** requires completion of an academic program equivalent to 18 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree but does not meet the requirements of a master's degree.
- A **post-master's certificate** requires completion of an academic program equivalent to 24 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level.
- A **first professional certificate** provides advanced training and enhances knowledge in important areas of clinical or research specialization and specialty practice for individuals who hold a professional degree (e.g., J.D., D.M.D., or M.D.).

A **diploma program** is designed to prepare students for technical employment within a one to two-year period. A prescribed program of technical and general education courses is designed to prepare students for a specific job title, credit toward an associate degree, and continued training opportunities for certificate program graduates.

A **diploma** is a formal document certifying the successful completion of a prescribed pre-baccalaureate program of studies, either requiring less than one year or up to at least two but fewer than four years of work beyond grade 12.

- **Postsecondary diploma (less than one academic year)** requires completion of an academic program below the baccalaureate degree in less than one academic year or designed for completion in less than 30 semester or trimester credit hours, or in less than 45 quarter credit hours, or in less than 900 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.
- **Postsecondary diploma (at least one but fewer than two academic years)** requires completion of an academic program below the baccalaureate degree in at least one but fewer than two full-time equivalent academic years, or is designed for completion in at least 30 but fewer than 60 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 45 but less than 90 quarter credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.
- **Postsecondary diploma (at least two but fewer than four academic years)** requires completion of an academic program below the baccalaureate degree in at least two but fewer than four full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 90 but less than 180 quarter credit hours, or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.

### **Miscellaneous**

A **credit hour**, as defined in regulation by the United States Department of Education, is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than: (1) one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in (1) for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

**Academic program implementation** occurs when the first student matriculates into a program and enrolls in any course specified in the program of study.