

## **REVISION OF CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING NEW CERTIFICATE AND DEGREE PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS**

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Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208 charges the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) with the responsibility to evaluate proposals for all new units of instruction, research, and public service, consistent with established role and scope designations, and to approve programs and organizational units based on established policies. ADHE staff began working with a committee of two- and four-year chief academic officers (CAOs) in spring 2004 to revise academic policies related to new program proposals. These revisions were undertaken for the following reasons:

- ❑ Some sections of the existing document needed clarification.
- ❑ Staff requirements for new program proposal submissions needed further explanation.
- ❑ Definitions needed to be updated.
- ❑ Distance technology instruction needed to be addressed.
- ❑ The process for new program approval needed to be streamlined.

The policy revision committee and staff presented drafts of the proposed changes at three CAO meetings and at various stages in the process via e-mail. As presented, the goal of the revision process was to create a policy statement that ensured the integrity of institutional and staff review and AHECB consideration of new programs.

The following resolution is presented for Coordinating Board consideration.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts the Criteria and Procedures for Establishing New Certificate and Degree Programs and New Organizational Units as presented in this agenda item.

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to notify the presidents, chancellors, and chief academic officers of public colleges and universities of this policy.

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Board repeals the Criteria and Procedures for Preparing Proposals for New Programs adopted on October 20, 2000.

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# **CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR PREPARING PROPOSALS FOR NEW CERTIFICATE AND DEGREE PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208 charges the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board) with the responsibility to evaluate proposals for all new units of instruction, research, and public service, consistent with established role and scope designations, and to approve programs and organizational units based on established policies. A new unit of instruction, research or public service includes:

- New curricula
- Majors leading to a new certificate or degree program
- Establishment of a department, division, college, school, center, and institute
- New extension service
- Organizational unit not presently established at the institution.

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. The Coordinating Board has granted oversight authority to the Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to monitor these activities and notify the Board at its regular meetings. State general revenues cannot be expended for new programs that are not approved by the Coordinating Board.

This document sets forth the relevant criteria and compliance procedures for the staff of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and administrators and faculty members of the public colleges and universities. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education staff prepared this revised edition of the criteria and procedures in consultation with the chief academic and chief executive officers of Arkansas public higher education institutions.

## **PART 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS**

A Letter of Intent must be submitted to ADHE for a new program or organizational unit that requires Coordinating Board approval. The proposal for a new program/unit must be approved by the institutional Board of Trustees before consideration by the Coordinating Board. Programmatic and organizational changes that require ADHE Director approval must be submitted to ADHE in a Letter of Notification, and must be included on the Coordinating Board meeting agenda prior to initiation. The deadlines for submission of the Letter of Intent, Letter of Notification, and proposal are listed in Part 2, Section 4.

### **Section 1. New Programs and Organizational Units Requiring Coordinating Board Approval (Submit Letter of Intent and Proposal)**

1. A new program of instruction, regardless of mode of delivery, that results in a certificate or degree. The program should complement and build upon existing programs and follow 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 approval must be submitted. ADHE staff will conduct an on-campus visit if the institution is offering its first certificate or degree program by distance technology. Definitions of certificate and degree programs are described in Appendix B.

(Coordinating Board approval is not required for a new certificate of proficiency or new certificates, options and degrees developed from existing courses and degrees. See Sections 2.8 – 2.11.)

2. Any change in academic organization to establish new administrative units, if such units are to serve as a base for faculty appointments or are to offer degree programs. Definitions of academic administrative units are described in Appendix B.
3. New off-campus instruction centers where students can receive a minimum of 50 percent of the credits in a major field of study that are required for an existing certificate or degree from the institution. Instruction may be delivered on-site, through distance technology or correspondence. The Letter of Intent must be submitted prior to the signing of any agreement to establish off-campus instructional facilities.
4. Reactivation of any certificate or degree program formally on inactive status for five years.

**Section 2. Program and Unit Changes Requiring ADHE Director Approval Unless Approval Requested by Coordinating Board** (Submit Letter of Notification)

1. Changes in name only of an existing degree, certificate, major, option or organizational unit where the curriculum or emphasis will not be modified.
2. Establishment of a center, division, institute or similar major administrative unit not offering primary faculty appointments or degree programs. The mission and role of the administrative unit must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.
3. The addition of a specialized course of study (option, concentration, emphasis) as a component of an approved degree program if the number of new theory courses added to the curriculum does not exceed 18 semester credit hours (excluding a maximum of 6 semester credit hours of new clinical, practicum or internship courses). The new option must consist of a minimum of 9 semester credit hours. A list of the required courses in the option, the new course descriptions, the goals, objectives and student learning outcomes, and justification for offering the new option must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

(A proposal must be submitted for an option requiring more than 18 semester credit hours of new theory courses.)

4. Establishment of a new instruction, research or service institute/center fully supported by sources other than state funds that will definitely terminate when non-state 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.
5. Deletion of certificates, options, degree programs and organizational units. Program deletions will be reported annually to the Coordinating Board.
6. Placement of a certificate or degree program on inactive status.
7. A change in structure to reorganize existing organizational units. The existing and proposed organizational structure and the justification for the change in structure must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.
8. An undergraduate certificate program consisting of 7-18 semester credit hours. The curriculum, list of required courses, new course descriptions, the goals, objectives and student learning outcomes, and justification 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 approval also must be submitted.
9. An undergraduate certificate program (24-42 semester credit hours) developed from an approved associate or bachelor's degree program provided that 75 percent

of the coursework in the new certificate is included in the existing degree program. The curriculum, list of required courses, new course descriptions, the goals, objectives and student learning outcomes, and justification 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 approval also must be submitted.

10. A graduate certificate program consisting of 12-18 semester credit hours of existing graduate courses that reflects a coherent academic accomplishment or meets requirements for professional licensure or certification. The curriculum, new course descriptions, the goals, objectives and student learning outcomes, justification 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 approval also must be submitted. Arkansas Department of Education approval must be submitted for certificate programs for teacher licensure, endorsement or certification.
11. Reconfiguration of existing undergraduate or graduate degree programs to create a new degree. The existing and proposed curricula, list of required core courses, new course descriptions, the goals, objectives and student learning outcomes, and justification for the new program must be submitted with the Letter of Notification.

Consolidation of Existing Degrees - The new combined degree program must require 12-18 semester credit hours of core courses with a minimum of two courses taken from each of the existing degree majors. Modification of Existing Degree to Create New Degrees - An existing degree major must include required courses in at least two disciplines for the degree to be separated into two or more new degree programs.

12. An existing certificate or degree program in which at least 50 percent of the total credits will be offered at an off-campus location. The institution proposing the program must submit the Letter of Notification and indicate why the institution plans to offer the program off-campus. If the program will be offered at an off-campus location in Arkansas, documentation of the discussions with the chief academic and chief executive officers at the institutions in the surrounding area of the proposed off-campus location also must be submitted with the Letter of Notification. Should there be a dispute between the institutions, the Off-Campus Instruction Policy (AHECB 5.17) should be followed.
13. An existing certificate or degree program in which at least 50 percent of the total credits will be offered through distance technology. The Letter of Notification must indicate why the institution plans to offer the program through distance technology. If the institution is planning to offer its first degree by distance technology, a new program proposal must be submitted to ADHE by the established deadline. The institution also must submit a copy of its responses to the Higher Learning Commission--NCA document that outlines institutional best practices for

electronically offered programs. ADHE staff will conduct an on-campus visit prior to Coordinating Board consideration of the new distance technology program. Assessment of distance programs must be consistent with institutional assessment practices on campus and program outcomes must be the same for both traditional and distance delivery methods. ADHE staff review of programs offered through distance technology will be conducted on a 3-year cycle.

## **PART 2. 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 1, 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
- General description of the program
- Documentation of need for the program and student demand/interest
- Program goals, objectives and student learning outcomes
- Program curriculum and new course descriptions
- List of program faculty (names and credentials)
- Description of program resources (library, instructional equipment and facilities, technology support)
- Program budget (new funds required and funding sources)
- Program duplication (similar programs in Arkansas)
- Institutional program productivity
- Institutional and Board of Trustees approval of proposed program.

### **Section 2. Guidelines for Proposals – New Organizational Units**

New organizational units that require Coordinating Board approval are listed in Part 1, 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 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, fees, and state general revenue 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; state general revenue dollars per FTE multiplied by projected number of FTEs to enroll in the new program).

<b><u>Resource Requirements</u></b>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Year</u> (in dollars)	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Year</u> (in dollars)	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Year</u> (in dollars)
Staffing (Number)			
Administrative/Professional			
Full-time Faculty			
Part-time Faculty			
Graduate Assistants			
Clerical			
Equipment & Instructional Materials			
Library			
Other Support Services			
Supplies/Printing			
Travel			
Distance Technology			
Other Services (specify)			
<b>TOTAL</b>			
<hr/>			
<b><u>Planned Funding Sources</u></b>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Year</u> (in dollars)	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Year</u> (in dollars)	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Year</u> (in dollars)
New Student Tuition and Fees			
New State General Revenue			
Redistribution of State General Revenue			
External Grants/Contracts			
Other Funding Sources (specify)			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

**Section 4. Deadlines For Submission Of Letter Of Intent, Proposals, And Letter Of Notification**

**Letter of Intent**

A Letter of Intent informs the Coordinating Board that an institution seeks to offer a new program or organizational unit that requires a proposal and Coordinating Board approval.

<u>Letter of Intent</u>	<u>Proposals Due</u>	<u>*Institutional Comment Period Ends</u>	<u>Coordinating Board Meeting</u>
January 2	February 1	March 1	April
April 1	May 15	June 15	July
July 1	August 1	September 1	October
October 1	November 15	December 15	February

\*Chief academic and chief executive officers may comment on the proposed programs and organizational units before ADHE staff review of the proposals.

**Letter of Notification**

A Letter of Notification informs the Coordinating Board that an institution seeks to offer a program/unit or make a change in the program/organizational structure that requires ADHE Director approval unless approval is requested by the Coordinating Board.

<u>Letter of Notification</u>	<u>Coordinating Board Meeting</u>
January 2	February
April 1	April
July 1	July
October 1	October

## **PART 3. PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS**

### **Section 1. Program Request and Proposal Submission**

A Letter of Intent must be submitted to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education by the established deadline for the proposal to be considered by the Coordinating Board at its regularly scheduled meeting in February, April, July or October. 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 2, 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 and Board of Trustees of the proposing institution.

Prior to submission of a proposal to ADHE, it is recommended that the chief academic officer (CAO) discuss the proposed program with CAOs that offer similar programs in the state and with CAOs 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 Associate Director of Academic Affairs as outlined in the Off-Campus Instruction Policy (AHECB Policy 5.17).

### **Section 2. Proposal Review by Chief Academic Officers**

All proposals for new programs or organizational units will be posted on the ADHE web page within 7 days of the deadline for submission. An electronic notice will be sent to all chief academic officers when proposals have been posted, and a synopsis of the proposals will be sent to members of the Coordinating Board. The chief academic officers will have 15 working days after the web posting to comment, question or request additional information on the proposals. All such comments, questions or requests must be in writing and directed to the contact person listed on the ADHE web page as well as the ADHE Associate Director of Academic Affairs by the established deadline.

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 chief academic officers of the institutions proposing the programs/units also may decide to withdraw the proposals at this time in lieu of a response. All comments and responses will be kept in the program proposal files at ADHE.

### **Section 3. Proposal Review by ADHE Staff**

The ADHE Academic Affairs staff will review new program proposals before contacting the chief academic 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 chief academic officer and program faculty before recommendations are made and reported to the Executive Council. If a proposal must be deferred based on the review by the ADHE staff, the ADHE Associate

Director of Academic Affairs will notify the chief academic officer no later than 20 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 Executive Council**

ADHE staff will present a synopsis of all new proposals to the Executive Council for their review before the proposals are included on the agenda for the Coordinating Board meeting. The ADHE Associate Director of Academic Affairs will notify the chief academic 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 Executive Council, the ADHE Associate Director of Academic Affairs will notify the chief academic officers immediately following the Executive Council meeting.

#### **Section 6. Proposals Recommended to the Coordinating Board**

Proposals that are not challenged during the review process will be placed on the consent agenda for the Coordinating Board meeting unless the ADHE Associate Director of Academic Affairs determines that the proposal should be presented to the Academic Committee of the Coordinating Board for information and discussion purposes. Also, any Board member may request that the proposal be presented to the Coordinating Board for the purpose of discussion and a separate vote. Institutional program representatives must attend the Coordinating Board meeting to respond to questions about the proposals. The Coordinating Board will vote on consent agenda items as a group with limited or no discussion. State general revenues cannot be expended for new programs that are not recommended by the Coordinating Board.

## **Section 7. Limitations on Coordinating Board Approval**

Following a 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, and a new proposal must be submitted for Coordinating Board consideration if the institutional administration still wishes to initiate the proposed program.

## **Section 8. Follow-up Reviews of Approved Programs**

ADHE staff may conduct follow-up reviews of approved programs to determine if the enrollment, general program strength, and number of graduates are sufficient to justify continuation of the program. Because the use of distance technology is a new mode of program delivery and the Coordinating Board has expressed concerns about the quality of these programs, an ADHE staff review of programs offered through distance technology will be conducted on a 3-year cycle. The ADHE Associate Director of Academic Affairs will contact chief academic officers to schedule the reviews and status reports will be presented to the Coordinating Board.

## **Section 9. Letter of Notification – Coordinating Board Approval Not Required Unless Requested**

A Letter of Notification is required for programmatic and organizational changes that do not require Coordinating Board approval unless requested. The Letter of Notification with supporting documentation must be submitted to ADHE by the established deadlines listed in Part 2, Section 4. All changes in existing programs/units or requests for new programs/units must be included on the Coordinating Board meeting agenda prior to initiation.

## **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. There must be a sufficient number of full-time faculty members who hold the appropriate terminal degree in each program. A minimum of one full-time faculty member with appropriate credentials is required for each degree program.

Typically, at least 50 percent of the faculty members in each bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree program must hold the appropriate terminal degree. Faculty member credentials must be appropriate to their assigned duties and disciplines, including the levels at which they teach. Faculty degrees, professional accomplishments in research and creative activity, and experience should be commensurate to their duties. New program proposals should indicate ways in which they are in keeping with best practices in higher education, accreditation standards of their professional organizations, and faculty members in comparable program areas at peer institutions.

- Faculty must hold degrees, certifications and licenses from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education such as the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools or from institutions with comparable status, certification or recognition in other countries.
- Faculty members teaching general education core courses are expected to hold at least a master's degree with 18 graduate hours in the teaching field. (A limited number of faculty may hold equivalent documented experience to meet educational qualifications.) 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 resources (volumes, monographs, periodicals, indexed and full-text databases) 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) 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 being semester, quarter or trimester. Some institutions use a pattern of two 8-week terms per semester instead of a 15-17 week semester. Whatever the term length, time spent in the appropriate mixture of lecture, laboratory, self-paced learning, team activities, and field work must bring enrolled students to the same required levels of competence, knowledge and performance. Typically, classes have met for 750 minutes or 12.5 clock hours in a term for each semester credit hour awarded in lecture classes with proportionately more time for laboratory classes.

The minimum semester length is 15 weeks of actual class time and examinations. A minimum of fifteen (15) fifty-minute class sessions, excluding laboratories, is required to award one semester hour of credit. Institutions may have terms of other than semester length, but the amounts of credit awarded must be adjusted in proportion to the length of term. There may be exceptions regarding length of terms and amount of credit awarded for specific circumstances such as workshops, seminars, and summer terms in instances where the instructional content and activities are selected appropriately.

The amount of credit awarded for a course is based on the amount of time in class, the amount of outside preparation required, and the intensity of the educational experience.

- A formal lecture course with extensive assigned reading or other out-of-class preparation is awarded one semester credit for 750 minutes or 12.5 hours of classroom instruction;
- A laboratory class with moderate out-of-class preparation is awarded one semester credit for 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 is awarded one semester credit for 2250 minutes or 37.5 hours of work-related instruction.

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

An exception to the standard length of terms and student semester credit hour guidelines can occur if an institution offers instruction through self-paced methods that allow students to achieve predetermined goals and objectives while working independently or in a group without an instructor. When proposing new programs with self-directed 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.

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. At least 50 percent of the course content in a distance technology course must be delivered electronically. 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 class attendance requirements.

Mixed-Mode courses include both required classroom attendance and online or 2-way interactive instruction. These classes have substantial content delivered over the Internet which will substitute for some classroom meetings. A correspondence course does not have any significant site attendance, but less than 50 percent of the course is delivered electronically. Standards for academic quality, admission, retention and assessment must be same in all courses and degree programs regardless of the mode of delivery.

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. Courses and degree programs offered through distance technology must be developed in accordance with the Best Practices

for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs endorsed by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The web link to the Higher Learning Commission is listed below:

[http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/electronic\\_degrees/Best\\_Pract\\_DEd.pdf](http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/electronic_degrees/Best_Pract_DEd.pdf)

Institutions proposing to offer 50 percent of an existing certificate or degree program through distance technology must submit a Letter of Notification with supporting documentation to ADHE by the established deadlines. All requests to offer existing programs through distance technology must be listed on the Coordinating Board meeting agenda prior to initiation. ADHE staff review of programs offered through distance technology will be conducted on a 3-year cycle.

A Letter of Intent must be submitted to ADHE before a proposal for a new program offered through distance technology can be submitted to ADHE. If the institution is offering its first certificate or degree program via distance technology, ADHE staff will conduct an on-campus visit before making a recommendation on program approval to the Coordinating Board.

### **Section 8. Experiential Learning Credits**

Institutions may award a maximum of 30 semester credit hours in a certificate or degree program for documented learning or work experiences.

### **Section 9. Certificate and Degree Granting Authority**

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

## **APPENDIX B – DEFINITIONS (Certificates, Degrees, and Organizational Units)**

### **CERTIFICATES**

#### **Certificate of Proficiency**

The Certificate of Proficiency will be awarded to students who have demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The award is granted for programs requiring 7-18 undergraduate semester credit hours. The program of study may be a stand-alone program or part of a technical certificate or associate degree 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 planned and coherent program of classroom and laboratory/shop work at the collegiate level that recognizes the completion of a specified level of competency in an occupational field. The program of study may be a stand-alone program or a part of an associate degree curriculum.

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 certificate requirements. The range of credit hours is 24-42 undergraduate semester hours. Exceptions to this range will be allowed when required by accrediting or approval agencies.

#### **Advanced Certificate**

The Advanced Certificate is a planned program of study in a technical specialty. Admission to the program requires an associate degree or higher, national certification in the technical specialty or other specifically defined postsecondary education requirements. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The range of hours is 24-42 undergraduate semester credit hours. Program completion could lead to certification/licensure and recognition 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. Teacher education certificates must be designed to meet certification/licensure requirements in designated specialty areas and must be approved by the Arkansas Department of Education prior to submission to ADHE for consideration.

## **Graduate Certificate**

The Graduate Certificate is a 12-18 semester hour program that includes a focused collection of courses which when completed affords the student a record of coherent academic accomplishment in a given discipline or set of related disciplines. Program completion could lead to professional certification/licensure and recognition of the award will be noted on the student transcript.

The required courses must be part of the graduate curriculum of a university with graduate degree programs as part of its role and scope and be taught by faculty with graduate faculty status. Admission and completion requirements must be based upon the policies of the Graduate School. If the certificate program is designed for professional certification or licensure, documentation of appropriate agency/board approval must be submitted. Teacher education certificates must be designed to meet certification/licensure requirements in designated specialty areas and must be approved by the Arkansas Department of Education prior to submission to ADHE for consideration.

## **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 transferable toward a baccalaureate degree. The degree must include the 35-hour state minimum general education core (Appendix C) that requires courses in English/writing, the humanities and fine arts, history and the social sciences, mathematics, and the natural 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. Typically, the field of study is not specified in the degree title. The range of hours is 60-64 semester credit hours.

### **Associate of Science**

The Associate of Science degree will be awarded to students who successfully complete a program of collegiate level work with an occupational objective of which the majority of occupational courses and all general education courses are transferable toward a baccalaureate degree. The degree must include the 35-hour state minimum general education core (Appendix C) that requires courses in English/writing, the humanities and fine arts, history and the social sciences, mathematics, and the natural 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. Typically, the field of study is not

specified in the degree title. The range of hours is 60-72 semester credit hours. Exceptions to this range will be allowed when required by accrediting or approval agencies.

### **Associate of Applied Science**

The Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree will be awarded to students who successfully complete a program of collegiate level work which is primarily designed for direct employment. The program must include a minimum of 15 semester credit hours of general education courses in English/writing, mathematics, social sciences, and computer applications/fundamentals (Appendix C). A minimum of 30-36 semester hours must be in a technical area. An additional component of the program of study should be a technical core 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. (A course in Intermediate Algebra may be used to fulfill the mathematics requirement in the A.A.S. degree.) The occupational field may be specified in the title of the degree (e.g., Associate of Applied Science in Electronics Technology). The range of hours is 60-72 semester credit hours. Selected health-related programs may exceed 72 semester hours, but should not exceed 80 semester hours unless required by accrediting or approval agencies.

### **Associate of General Studies/Liberal Arts**

The Associate of General Studies/Liberal Arts degree will be awarded to students who successfully complete a planned program of collegiate level work that includes a minimum of 15 semester hours of general education courses (Appendix C) and occupational or liberal arts courses. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in at least one specific area or discipline. The program of study must be developed cooperatively by the student and the institution. The degree is intended to serve as a flexible program option for students whose needs cannot be met by other programs. 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. The range of hours is 60-64 semester credit hours.

### **Associate of Applied Science in General Technology**

The Associate of Applied Science in General Technology program will be awarded to students who successfully complete 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. The program must include 15 semester credit hours of general education courses: English/writing, mathematics, computer application/fundamentals, and social sciences (Appendix C). There must be 24-30 semester hours in a major technical area, and 15-21 semester hours in a technical core of support courses from other

related technical disciplines. A maximum of 30 semester hours may be awarded for experiential learning or work experience. 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. Typically, the field of study is not specified in the degree title. The range of hours is 60-64 semester credit hours.

### **Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT)**

The Associate of Arts in Teaching degree will be awarded to students who successfully complete a planned program of collegiate level work that is transferable toward a baccalaureate degree in teacher education. This two-year transfer degree is designed to introduce students to the profession of teaching, to increase the number of teacher candidates, to ease transfer from two- to four-year institutions, and to maximize the credit hours taken at the two-year institution. The degree must include the state minimum general education core (35 semester credit hours) that requires courses in English/writing, the humanities and fine arts, history and the social sciences, mathematics, and the natural sciences (Appendix C). The Associate of Arts in Teaching is designed to align with state licensure requirements and consists of 60-72 semester credit hours. In order to receive the AAT, students must have a final grade point average of 2.65 and pass the Praxis I exam, an assessment of reading, writing, and mathematical skills.

### **Bachelor's Degree**

The bachelor's degree will be awarded to students upon successful completion of a program that requires a minimum of 120 undergraduate semester credit hours, including the 35-semester hour state minimum general education core (Appendix C), 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 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. The range of the bachelor's degree is 120-136 semester hours. Selected programs (e.g., education, music, engineering) may exceed 136 semester hours, but cannot exceed 150 semester hours unless required by accrediting or approval agencies.

### **Bachelor of Applied Science**

The Bachelor of Applied Science is a degree completion program 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 bachelor's degree curriculum must include a minimum of 35 semester hours of general education courses (Appendix C) 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. The range of hours is 120–136 semester credit hours.

### **Bachelor of Professional Studies**

The Bachelor of Professional Studies is designed as a flexible program option for students with earned college credit (including technical and occupational courses). The bachelor's degree curriculum must include a minimum of 35 semester hours of general education courses (Appendix C) and 40 semester hours of upper-level courses in selected fields of study. 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 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. The range of hours is 120–136 semester credit hours.

## **GRADUATE DEGREES**

### **Master's Degree**

The master's degree will be awarded to students who complete a minimum of 30 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree that includes 50 percent graduate-only semester hours in the field of study. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. Exceptions to the total credit hours will be allowed when required by accrediting or approval agencies.

### **Specialist Degree**

The specialist degree will be awarded to students who complete a minimum of 30 graduate-only semester credit hours beyond the master's degree. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. The degree does not meet the academic requirements of a doctoral degree. Exceptions to the total credit hours will be allowed when required by accrediting or approval agencies.

### **Doctoral Degree**

The doctoral degree will be awarded to students who complete a minimum of 72 graduate semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree. The program of study includes 42 graduate-only semester hours beyond the master's degree. The curriculum must require demonstrated mastery of skills and knowledge against specified performance standards in a specific area or discipline. Program requirements must

balance credit hours for required coursework, research, and dissertation preparation. Exceptions to the total credit hours will be allowed when required by accrediting or approval agencies.

## **FIRST-PROFESSIONAL DEGREES**

The first-professional degree (law, pharmacy, medicine, health-related professions) will be awarded to students upon successful completion of a program that meets all of these criteria: at least 60 semester credit hours of undergraduate coursework before entering the program, a minimum of 72 semester credit hours beyond the 60-semester hour entrance requirement, and completion of 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. Exceptions to the total credit hours will be allowed when required by accrediting or approval agencies.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL/ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS**

**Department** - A basic organizational unit consisting of all faculty members or teaching personnel in a given subject-matter field or academic discipline or in a group of related disciplines or fields. The academic department is the fundamental unit in the institution because it is the focus of the basic functions of the institution: teaching, research, and service.

**Division** - A grouping for administrative purposes of two or more departments within a college or university.

**College** - A major instructional division of a university that includes related departments.

**School** - (1) A major instructional division of a university; (2) a major subdivision of a university offering a curriculum which leads to a professional or graduate degree.

**Center** - An academic organizational unit that conducts research, teaching or public service activities, or a combination of these functions in specified fields. The term also applies to an off-campus instructional location that has at least one permanent staff/faculty member assigned for administrative purposes.

**Institute** - (1) A separate institution, within or independent of a university, designed for teaching, research, or both, in a particular field of study; (2) a short course or workshop consisting of lecture and discussion topics on a specific theme.

**Academy** – A separate organizational entity 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 (35 semester credit hours)**

#### English/Communication (6-9 semester credit hours)

English Composition      6 credit hours  
Speech Communication    0-3 credit hours

#### Mathematics (3 semester credit hours)

College Algebra or a course as sophisticated as college algebra or any higher-level mathematics course. Institutions may require students majoring in mathematics, engineering, science, and business to take higher mathematics as part of the state minimum core.

#### Science (8 semester credit hours)

Science courses must include laboratories. Institutions may require students majoring in mathematics, engineering, science, education, and health professions to take higher-level or specific science courses.

#### Fine Arts/Humanities (6-9 semester credit hours)

Must be broad survey 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.

#### Social Sciences (9-12 semester credit hours)

U.S. History or Government    3 hours  
Other Social Sciences          6-9 hours

Institutions may require students majoring in engineering to take either 6 hours or 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 (15 semester credit hours)**

English/Writing (6 semester credit hours)

English Composition and/or technical writing

Mathematics (3 semester credit hours)

Intermediate Algebra or higher-level course

Social Sciences (3 semester credit hours)

An introductory course appropriate for the field of study, e.g., psychology, sociology, economics

Computer Applications/Fundamentals (3 semester credit hours)

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