

Associate Degree Standards

Associate degree programs are designed for one of two objectives, either to prepare for an occupation, or to provide a foundation for a baccalaureate degree program. Associate degrees should provide evidence of competencies in communications, social sciences, humanities and fine arts, analytical and inferential reasoning, and computational skills, as well as the ability to learn on one's own.

General Education

General education should be an integral part of all associate degree programs in order to develop characteristics that help define an educated person. Liberal arts and sciences (Communication, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, Humanities, and Social Science) are a fundamental component of collegiate degrees. Granting a degree implies that the student has achieved general education experiences in addition to technical preparation that may be part of a program. There are standards regarding the minimum number of general education credits required outside of technical portions of a program for each type of associate degree.

The general education portion of the associate degree program should be acceptable toward baccalaureate degrees.

Minimum Standards

All associate degrees should require the equivalent of at least two years of full-time study built around a defined body of knowledge. Because full-time enrollment is becoming less common, the minimum standards have been expressed here in terms of credits. Programs that do not measure academic progress by credits will need to demonstrate through equivalent measures that these standards are met.

In accordance with commonly held standards, the minimum requirement for an associate degree is 60 semester or 90 quarter credits. It is understood that institutions may use other terms (e.g., hours, courses) to express equivalent student accomplishment.

- A. *Associate in Arts (A.A.)* degree programs are primarily intended to provide a broad liberal arts and sciences background. A.A. degree programs should include at least 90 quarter or 60 semester credit hours of completed course work which is defined as college level and which is designed to constitute the foundation (the first two years) for a baccalaureate degree. They should include a minimum of 60 (qtr) or 40 (sem) credits distributed across at least the following four areas: Communication, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, Humanities, and Social Science. Included in the 60 (qtr) or 40 (sem) credits should be at least 8 (qtr) or 5 (sem) credits in Communications, and a minimum of 12 (qtr) or 8 (sem) credits in each of the categories of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences/Mathematics. The remaining general education credits should be chosen from one or more of these four categories. In a few cases, the remaining 30 (qtr) or 20 (sem) degree credits may be used to acquire limited technical expertise in a given area.
- B. *Associate in Science (A.S.)* degree programs are intended to provide a liberal arts and science background and to provide the foundation for baccalaureate programs with highly structured lower division requirements (such as engineering, agriculture, or the sciences with

heavy undergraduate requirements in mathematics and science). Credits earned in A.S. degree programs are designed for transfer toward particular baccalaureate programs. A.S. degree programs should include at least 90 quarter or 60 semester credits, with a minimum of 45 (qtr) or 30 (sem) credits distributed across at least the following four areas: Communication, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, Humanities, and Social Science. Included in the 45 (qtr) or 30 (sem) credits should be at least 6 (qtr) or 4 (sem) credits in each of the four categories. The remaining credits should be chosen from one or more of these four categories. A majority of liberal arts and sciences courses may be prerequisite to, or specifically supportive of, certain applied courses.

- C. *Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.)* degree programs are intended primarily to prepare people for employment -- a clear distinction between the A.A.S. and other associate degrees. Because graduates receive an associate degree, however, A.A.S. degree programs should include a minimum of 90 quarter or 60 semester credits with a minimum of 30 (qtr) or 20 (sem) credits distributed across at least the following four areas: Communication, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, Humanities, and Social Science. Included in the 30 (qtr) or 20 (sem) credits should be at least 3 (qtr) or 2 (sem) credits in each of the four categories. The remaining 18 (qtr) or 12 (sem) general education credits may be prescribed to provide theoretical support for an occupation. At least 45 (qtr) or 30 (sem) credits should be program-related occupational or technical courses. Because A.A.S. degree programs are not intended as pre-baccalaureate preparation, students should be aware that four-year institutions may accept only the general education course work and a limited portion of the other course work as applying toward the requirements of a baccalaureate degree.

Relationship of Baccalaureate Degrees to Associate Degrees

- A. An Associate in Arts degree should be equivalent to a minimum of 90 quarter or 60 semester credit hours towards a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- B. An Associate in Science degree should be equivalent to a minimum of 90 quarter or 60 semester credit hours towards particular Bachelor of Science degrees.
- C. Only the general education portion of the A.A.S. degree should be considered transferable.

Equivalent Measures

If an institution does not use a quarter or semester system, it must define and describe how the terms that are used are equivalent to quarter or semester credit hours.

Associate Degree Standards in Credit Equivalencies

ISSUE	TYPE OF DEGREE		
	A.A.	A.S.	A.A.S.
Total Credits - minimum	90 quarter/ 60 semester	90 quarter/ 60 semester	90 quarter/ 60 semester
Curriculum Components			
<i>General Education:</i>			
Minimum credits	60 quarter/ 40 semester	45 quarter/ 30 semester	30 quarter/ 20 semester
Core areas (in quarter credits):			
Communication	8 (qtr)/5 (sem)	6 (qtr)/4 (sem)	3 (qtr)/2 (sem)
Social Science	12 (qtr)/8 (sem)	6 (qtr)/4 (sem)	3 (qtr)/2 (sem)
Humanities	12 (qtr)/8 (sem)	6 (qtr)/4 (sem)	3 (qtr)/2 (sem)
Natural Sciences/Mathematics	12 (qtr)/8 (sem)	6 (qtr)/4 (sem)	3 (qtr)/2 (sem)
Additional (quarter) credits from core areas	16 (qtr)/11 (sem)	21 (qtr)/14 (sem)	18 (qtr)/12 (sem)
<i>Technical Education - minimum credits</i>	0	0	45 quarter/ 30 semester