

college's approved academic unique need course inventory. Generally, these courses should be selected from the institution's core curriculum. See SACSCOC [Principles of Accreditation](#) for further information.

A program specialty is a variation within one AAS or AAA degree that allows students to take a particular sequence of courses. A specialty does not result in a different AAS or AAA degree and is not listed on the Coordinating Board program inventory, but may result in a separate certificate award. The specialty must match the program CIP code of the approved award and must have at least 50 percent of the technical specialty component (including WECM and ACGM courses) in common. Program specialties may be approved as additions to the original degree. For example, an institution could offer a single degree program, AAS in Hospitality Management, with two specializations, one in Hotel Management and another in Tourism.

An AAS or AAA degree program that provides a shortened track of 16-45 SCH for students who hold a related degree may offer an Advanced Technical Certificate (ATC) for the shortened track. For example, an AAS degree program in Sonography may provide an ATC in Sonography for students who already hold an AAS in Echocardiography. In this case, the program inventory would list both an AAS and an ATC in Sonography. The ATC is discussed further below, in Characteristics of Workforce Certificates.

All students enrolled in an associate degree program or a Level Two certificate program must meet the requirements of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI). More information about TSI requirements is available at [Coordinating Board Rules Chapter 4, Subchapter C](#).

#### E. Characteristics of Workforce Certificates

A credit certificate should constitute progression toward an AAS or an AAA degree. At least 50 percent of the course credits should be drawn from a single technical specialty. The remaining courses may be technical or academic courses.

Credit certificates will be approved in four different categories or levels:

1. A level one certificate (CERT1) can be completed by a student in one calendar year or less. It must consist of at least 15 SCH and no more than 42 SCH. Students in level one certificate programs are not required to take the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) or any other assessment exam prior to entering the program.
2. A level two certificate (CERT2) is defined as any certificate for which a student must meet certain eligibility requirements prior to entry into the program. A CERT2 program may consist of between 30 SCH and 51 SCH. Students enrolling in CERT2 programs are subject to the TSI requirements and may be subject to other eligibility requirements as determined by the institution.
3. An Enhanced Skills Certificate (CERT3) is a certificate associated with an AAS or AAA degree program. The certificate must be clearly defined in course content and outcomes. It must consist of at least 6 SCH and no more than 12 SCH and may extend an AAS or AAA degree to an overall total that must not exceed 72 SCH. It is intended to provide skills beyond career entry as identified by business and industry.

4. An Advanced Technical Certificate (ATC) is a certificate that has a defined associate or baccalaureate degree as a prerequisite. In some cases, junior-level standing may be a prerequisite for admission into an ATC. The ATC must consist of at least 16 SCH and no more than 45 SCH. It must be focused, clearly related to the prerequisite degree, and justifiable to meet industry or external agency requirements. An advanced technical certificate attached to an AAS degree must be in the same program area as the AAS degree. For an advanced technical certificate attached to a baccalaureate degree or to junior-level standing in a baccalaureate program, the institution should consult with Coordinating Board staff to determine the appropriate program area to which the certificate should be assigned.

The following credit and noncredit certificates and awards may also be offered:

1. A Career Foundation Core (CFC) Certificate is created through a statewide curriculum development process recognized by the Coordinating Board with input from business, industry, and instructional specialists. Each CFC certificate is based upon the identification of a sequence of courses and learning outcomes that represent a career foundation core within a specific career cluster. A CFC can be defined as a level one or level two certificate. A level one CFC certificate draws its core entirely from the WECM, while a level two CFC can draw from both the WECM and ACGM. The intent of this award is to maximize an individual student's opportunity for employment, with options to pursue the program's associate degree or transfer to another higher education institution or technical college. This certificate also allows a student to pursue a second year in a specific Career Pathway program.
2. A Continuing Education (CE) certificate program consists of workforce knowledge and skills identified in the same manner as those in credit programs. All CE certificate programs must be listed on the college's approved inventory of programs and must be transcribed. Workforce education programs of 780 contact hours or more may be offered only as SCH. An exception is made for Emergency Medical Technology/Paramedic continuing education programs, CIP 51.0904, which may have a maximum of 800 contact hours.
3. A Marketable Skills Achievement Award (MSA) is a sequence of credit courses that meet the minimum standard for program length specified by the Texas Workforce Commission for the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program (9-14 SCH for credit courses or 144-359 contact hours for workforce continuing education courses). An MSA award must meet the following characteristics:
  - a. The award is TSI-waived under [Coordinating Board Rule 4.54b](#);
  - b. The content of the award must be recommended by an external workforce advisory committee, or the occupation must appear on the Local Workforce Development Board's Demand Occupations list;
  - c. In most cases, the award should be composed of WECM courses only. However, non-stratified academic courses may be used occasionally if recommended by the external committee and if appropriate for the content of the award;
  - d. The award complies with the Single Course Delivery guidelines for WECM courses (see Chapter Four); and
  - e. The award prepares students for employment in accordance with guidelines

established for WIA.

Marketable Skills Achievement Awards do not require Coordinating Board approval and do not appear in the Board's Workforce Education Inventory.

#### 4. Institutional Awards

In addition to awards recognized by the Coordinating Board, colleges may offer institutional awards of fewer than 15 SCH or 360 continuing education contact hours for completion of a course or series of courses that represent achievement of an identifiable skill proficiency. Institutional Awards do not require Coordinating Board approval and do not appear in the Board's Workforce Education Inventory.

### F. Characteristics of Continuing Education (CE) Programs

A coherent sequence of continuing education courses that totals 360 or more contact hours must be submitted as a workforce education certificate program. Courses are considered to be part of a coherent sequence if they meet one of the following requirements:

1. include required and/or recommended prerequisites or co-requisites;
2. lead to an external credential (license, certification, or registration); or
3. are taken by a majority of students in sequence to meet occupational qualifications.

Workforce CE courses with basic skills content must be designed for specific occupations and specific occupational target populations and must include appropriate occupational objectives. Courses that are primarily intended to develop basic skills, such as Adult Basic Education, GED preparation, and TSI preparation, are not eligible for state funding under this category.

#### 1. CE Administrative Criteria

The institution must have an identifiable office or division with designated professional staff to plan and administer workforce continuing education programs. Through this office, the institution must ensure that both administrative and program criteria are followed for learning experiences offering CEU.

The institution must provide a supportive and positive learning experience through appropriate educational facilities, learning materials, equipment, and support services consistent with the goals and planned learning outcomes of each learning experience.

#### 2. CE Program Criteria

The program or activity must be planned in response to educational needs that have been identified for a target audience.

Each program or activity must have clear and consistent written statements of intended learning outcomes (e.g., behavioral or performance objectives). These outcomes should represent what learners are expected to accomplish as a result of the learning activity (the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to move a target audience to another level of competencies). Program content, instructional methods, and types of learner