

TO: Chief Executive Officers
Chief Instructional Officers
Academic Senate Presidents
Curriculum Chairs

FROM: Dr. John Stanskas, Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support, Academic Affairs,
Equitable Student Learning, Experience & Impact Office

Cheryl Aschenbach, President, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

RE: Implementation of Revisions to Associate Degree Regulations, Title 5 § 55060-55062

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance regarding the implementation of the Board of Governor's regulatory revisions to the Associate Degree requirements. Implementation of the regulatory revisions will be effective Fall semester 2025.

Background

On September 26, 2023, the Board of Governors approved regulatory changes to the Associate Degree requirements. The approved regulatory action is the culmination of two years of work with the California Community Colleges Curriculum Committee (5C), which included field vetting to clarify the requirements for the development and awarding of the associate degree, realigning general education categories, integrating competencies, and introducing Ethnic Studies as a new category of general education. These revisions to the Associate Degree regulations began in 2020, when the Chancellor's Office and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges brought forward the regulatory recommendation to institute an Ethnic Studies course requirement in Section 55063 (approved July 2021).

Guidance

Local policies, procedures, and standards should be reviewed to ensure alignment with the regulatory changes with required implementation by August 1, 2025. Specific areas to review should include:

Curriculum

- Local unit requirements for general education: the minimum general education requirement was increased from 18 units to 21 units with more specific categorical requirements. Local GE requirements should be analyzed for the overall impact on the number of units required for each local degree. Districts with local GE beyond the previous minimum categories and units should evaluate potential overlaps with new requirements, toward the goal of minimizing impact to student's unit accumulation.

Guidance for Title 5 Associate Degree Regulations Revisions

February 1, 2024

- Integration of competencies into general education: These revisions merge the previous separate competency requirements into distinct general education categories. This includes separating former area 4B “Communication and Analytical Thinking” into “Oral Communication and Critical Thinking” and “Mathematical Concepts and Quantitative Reasoning.”
- Ethnic Studies as a separate general education category: This regulatory revision includes a new Ethnic Studies general education category. Local districts will need to review current course offerings to ensure students are able to access courses meeting these new requirements and ensure that Ethnic Studies courses meeting this requirement are baccalaureate-level. Given [Title 5, section 55061\(6\)](#), an introduction to Ethnic Studies (ES) course could satisfy the ES requirement for the associate degree as it surveys the four autonomous disciplines within Ethnic Studies: Black, African American, or Africana Studies; Native American Studies; Chicano/a/x, Latino/a/x, or La Raza Studies; and Asian American Studies. Colleges should look at the [Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges](#) for the requirements for the instructor of record. Assignment of a course to a discipline remains a local decision. For reference, the [Title 5 Implementation of Ethnic Studies and CCCESFC Ethnic Studies CSU Area F Debrief](#) webinars are available for the most up-to-date Ethnic Studies information.
- New definition for Area of Emphasis: The new definition for an 18-unit “area of emphasis” core for an associate degree will require review of local area of emphasis degrees to ensure alignment. Local definitions and guidelines should be updated as needed.
- Lists of courses approved for local general education: The realignment of GE categories will require colleges to review all courses currently approved for each category and determine if they are still appropriately categorized.

Student Services

- New language that allows districts the option of calculating GPA solely on courses that satisfy degree requirements when a student earns over 60 units should be evaluated locally by district.
- For the revision that students who have been awarded a bachelor's degree from an institutionally accredited institution shall be deemed to have fulfilled the general education course requirements for the associate degree, information about institutional accreditation is available from the United States Department of Education [Institutional Accreditation Website](#) .

Guidance for Title 5 Associate Degree Regulations Revisions

February 1, 2024

Alignment with AB 1705

AB 1705 and the Board of Governor’s regulatory revisions to the Associate Degree requirements are aligned. Under AB 1705, colleges must ensure that students begin in English and math coursework that satisfies a requirement of their program unless the student is highly unlikely to succeed in that coursework and their likelihood of completing program requirements is improved by taking a prerequisite course. When the design of the college’s placement, curricula, and enrollment management culminates in students enrolling in prerequisites outside of their program’s requirements, AB 1705 requires colleges to validate the impact of this approach on students’ progress in meeting gateway English and math milestones for their program. These requirements are detailed in the [AB 1705 Implementation Guide](#) (Nov 2023) and the [AB 1705 FAQ](#) summarizes answers to questions raised on the key provisions of AB 1705.

Summary of Regulatory Changes

Section	Summary
“Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education” (section 55060)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• §55060 and §55061 have been collapsed into §55060 Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education• Additional language revisions, including incorporation of “quantitative reasoning” and “written expression”
“Associate Degree Course Requirements” (section 55061)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General education definitions approved by BOG in July 2021 extracted from §55063.• Focus on standards and requirements when developing and revising associate degrees• General education areas align with CalGETC Pattern. Colleges will determine locally the courses that are approved for each area.• Clarifying that Ethnic Studies courses are baccalaureate-level courses• Below transfer level course requirements must align with Education Code section 78213• Integrative baccalaureate-level courses defined as courses drawing broad connections between multiple perspectives and methodologies and demonstrating relationships within or between disciplines

Guidance for Title 5 Associate Degree Regulations Revisions

February 1, 2024

Section	Summary
“Requirements for Awarding of the Associate Degree” (section 55062)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishes residency requirement for associate degree• Requirement of a “C” or better or “P” for courses in the major/area of emphasis.• Requirement of a minimum 2.0 GPA in degree-applicable courses• New language for local degrees allows districts to calculate Grade Point Average (GPA) solely on courses that satisfy degree requirements when a student earns over 60 units.• Clarifies that a course may be used by a student to meet a general education area, a major/area of emphasis requirement• Adds language from §55064 regarding the use of noncredit courses to fulfill credit requirements as a form of credit for prior learning.• Clarifies students who have been awarded a bachelor's degree from an institutionally accredited institution shall be deemed to have fulfilled the general education course requirements for the associate degree.

Appendix A: Associate Degree Regulations*Effective Fall 2025.***§ 55060. Philosophy and Criteria for the Associate Degree and General Education.**

(a) District governing boards shall adopt and maintain a policy that states their goals for offering associate degrees and their specific philosophy on general education. In developing this policy, governing boards shall consider the following policy of the Board of Governors: The Associate Degree provides a framework within which students complete patterns of learning experiences designed to develop capabilities and insights to support their academic and career goals. Among these capabilities and insights are competencies that are germane to all aspects of higher education and comprise a “general education” curriculum, such as the ability to think critically and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing, to use quantitative reasoning, understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines, to be aware of other cultures and times, to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about ethical problems, and to develop the capacity for self-understanding.

Furthermore, general education introduces students to the variety of means through which people comprehend the modern world. It reflects the conviction of colleges that those who receive their degrees must have mastered principles, concepts, and methodologies both unique to and shared by the various disciplines. A general education program should create coherence and integration among the separate requirements and involve students actively in examining values inherent in proposed solutions to major social problems.

(b) District governing boards shall establish criteria to determine which courses may be used to implement their goals for the associate degree and their philosophy of general education.

Note: Authority cited: Section 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901, 70902, Education Code.

§55061. Associate Degree Course Requirements.

District governing boards may only approve associate degrees that meet the following course requirements:

(a) A minimum of 60 semester units (90 quarter units) of degree-applicable lower division credit courses, including courses that apply to the major or area of emphasis in career technical fields and courses in composition, reading, and mathematics or quantitative reasoning not more than one level below transfer. Below transfer level course requirements must align with Education Code section 78213.

(b) A minimum of 18 semester units (27 quarter units) of focused study in a major or interdisciplinary area of emphasis.

(1) A “major” is a focused program of study within a specific discipline, which may include some coursework outside the primary discipline. Programs designed to provide transfer preparation must be designed to meet specific lower-division requirements in comparable baccalaureate majors.

(2) An “area of emphasis” is an interdisciplinary program of study encompassing a broad range of courses from multiple related academic disciplines, providing the student with an academic pathway broader than a specific major but more focused than general education.

(c) A minimum of 21 semester units (28 – 31.5 quarter units) of general education in the areas described below.

(1) English Composition, Oral Communication, and Critical Thinking (minimum of 6 semester/8 quarter units) including:

(A) English Composition (minimum of 3 semester/4 quarter units). Courses fulfilling this requirement must be baccalaureate-level and include expository and argumentative writing.

(B) Oral Communication and Critical Thinking (minimum of 3 semester / 4 quarter units).

Courses fulfilling this requirement must be baccalaureate-level and may include oral communication and critical thinking courses.

(2) Mathematical Concepts and Quantitative Reasoning (minimum of 3 semester / 4 quarter units). Courses fulfilling this requirement must be at least college-level and may include mathematics or quantitative reasoning courses, including logic, statistics, computer languages, and related disciplines.

(3) Arts and Humanities (minimum of 3 semester / 4 quarter units). Courses in the humanities study the cultural activities and artistic expressions of human beings. Such courses develop students’ awareness of how people throughout the ages and in different cultures respond to themselves and the world around them in artistic and cultural creation and develop students’ aesthetic understandings and abilities to make value judgments. Courses fulfilling this requirement may include introductory or integrative baccalaureate-level courses in the visual and performing arts, art history, foreign languages, literature, philosophy, religion, and related disciplines.

(4) Social and Behavioral Sciences (minimum of 3 semester / 4 quarter units). Courses in the social and behavioral sciences focus on people as members of society and develop awareness of the methods of inquiry used by the social and behavioral sciences. They stimulate critical thinking about how people act and have acted in response to their societies and promote appreciation of how societies and social subgroups operate. Courses fulfilling this requirement may include introductory or integrative baccalaureate-level courses in cultural

anthropology, cultural geography, economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and related disciplines.

(5) Natural Sciences (minimum of 3 semester / 4 quarter units). Courses in the natural sciences examine the physical universe, its life forms, and its natural phenomena, helping students appreciate and understand the scientific method and the relationships between science and other human activities. Courses fulfilling this requirement may include introductory or integrative baccalaureate-level courses in astronomy, biology, chemistry, general physical science, geology, meteorology, oceanography, physical geography, physical anthropology, physics, and other scientific disciplines.

(6) Ethnic Studies (minimum of 3 semester/4 quarter units). Courses fulfilling this requirement may include baccalaureate-level courses in the four autonomous disciplines within Ethnic Studies: Black Studies; African American Studies; Africana Studies; Native American Studies; Chicano/a/x; Latino/a/x Studies/La Raza Studies; and Asian American Studies.

(d) “Integrative baccalaureate-level courses” draw broad connections between multiple perspectives and methodologies and demonstrate relationships within or between disciplines.

Note: Authority cited: Section 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901, 70902, Education Code.

§55062. Conditions for Awarding of the Associate Degree.

(a) District governing boards shall confer the associate degree upon students who have fulfilled the course requirements of section 55061, and who have met the following conditions:

(1) Satisfactory completion of at least 12 semester units (18 quarter units) in residence within the college district. Governing boards shall adopt policies that permit students to obtain waivers of this requirement in order to alleviate injustice and undue hardship.

(2) Satisfactory completion of each course counted toward the major or area of emphasis requirement with a grade of “C” or better, or of “P” if the course is taken on a “pass-no pass” basis;

(3) Completion of a minimum 21 semester units (or 28 – 31.5 quarter units) general education pattern pursuant to section 55061, or completion of the requirements for an approved intersegmental lower-division general education pattern used for transfer to the University of California or the California State University; and

(4) Completion of the requirements for the associate degree with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 in the degree-applicable courses. If units accumulated beyond those required for the degree lower a student's cumulative grade point average below 2.0, colleges may compute the grade point average based solely on those courses used to satisfy

February 1, 2024

the degree requirements, provided that the coursework used to compute the grade point average fulfill all major/area of emphasis and general education requirements.

(b) Courses that meet or exceed the standards of the California Community Colleges completed at other institutionally accredited institutions shall be counted toward associate degree unit requirements.

(c) Courses may meet multiple requirements, including general education, a major or area of emphasis, and additional requirements stated in section 55061 when courses are locally approved to meet multiple requirements. However, one course may not be counted in more than one general education area, even if the course is approved in multiple general education areas. Students may use the same course to meet a local general education requirement and to satisfy a general education requirement at the California State University or the University of California if that segment accepts the course for this purpose.

(d) Students may receive credit for knowledge or skills acquired through a district's procedures for awarding credit for prior learning.

(e) Students who have been awarded a bachelor's degree from an institutionally accredited institution shall be deemed to have fulfilled the general education course requirements for the associate degree.

(f) The governing board of each community college district shall establish procedures by which a student may petition to have completion of a noncredit course counted toward satisfaction of the requirements for an associate degree.

(g) Students who intend to transfer shall be advised of limitations transfer institutions may place on the transferability of credits, based on institutional accreditation, course modality, and any other relevant factors.

Note: Authority cited: Section 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901, 70902, Education Code.

cc: Dr. Sonya Christian, Chancellor
Dr. Daisy Gonzales, Deputy Chancellor
Dr. Aisha Lowe, Executive Vice Chancellor, Equitable Student Learning, Experience & Impact Office
Dr. Lizette Navarette, Executive Vice Chancellor, Institutional Supports and Success Office
Rebecca Ruan-O'Shaughnessy, Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support