
Docket Item:

HECC Community College Program Approval Process Overview

Summary:

Under ORS 341.465, the board of a district operating a community college, upon approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, may award certificates and associate degrees and training certificates indicating completion of noncredit courses and programs. Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) Chapter 589 Division 6 describes both local and HECC responsibilities for community college program and course approval. OAR 589-006-0100 states that HECC will provide community college district boards with the standards, criteria, and procedures required for state program approval. This information is contained in the Oregon Community Colleges Handbook & Planning Guide (CCWD Handbook).

Docket Material:

OAR 589-006-0150 describes the local community college responsibilities for program approval which include: the requirement to have local processes in place to ensure that local and state program approval standards and criteria are implemented and maintained, that state-approval standards are achieved for all programs offered by the local community college, and that community colleges follow the program approval process as outlined in the Oregon Community Colleges Handbook & Planning Guide.

Pre-approved Programs

The Oregon Community Colleges Handbook & Planning Guide (CCWD Handbook) states that Oregon community colleges are pre-approved to offer the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT), Associates of Science (AS), the Associate of Science Oregon Transfer-Business (ASOT), the Associate of Science Transfer-Computer Science (ASOT), and Associate of General Studies (AGS). All of these degrees are designed to prepare students to transfer into upper division courses for a baccalaureate degree. Quality assurance for these programs is maintained through local approval, regional accreditation provided by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), and the requirement to ensure continued alignment and transferability with university partners. Staff in the Office of Community Colleges & Workforce Development also individually approve all lower Division Collegiate (LDC) courses offered by Oregon community colleges.

Career & Technical Education Program Approval

For Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, Associate of Applied Science Options (AASO) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificates, including Career Pathways certificates, community colleges must submit programs to HECC for approval. As described in 589-006-0050(3), these programs are designed to prepare graduates for direct entry into the workforce, but may also help students prepare for career advancement, occupational licensure, or further study at the baccalaureate level.

The approval standards for CTE programs are in the [CCWD Handbook](#) and attached. The key elements a college must submit for program approval include: 1) clear evidence of need, 2) collaboration with key constituents, 3) alignment with other parts of the education, workforce and economic development systems, 4) clear design from admissions through evaluation, and 5) capacity to offer the program. The CCWD Handbook also contains an [Approval Planning Guide](#), including a [Quick Reference Steps and Timeline](#).

Staff Recommendation:

This is an informational and discussion item only.