

**MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**Policy and Procedures Manual**

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policy 301.12 – Undergraduate Degree Requirements;

Associate Degrees and Certificates of Applied Science

**Effective: November 17, 2006; Issued: November 27, 2006**

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A. Units of the Montana university system (MUS) and the publicly-funded community colleges may offer the associate of arts and the associate of science degrees. They may also offer the associate of applied science degree, and the certificate of applied science, in those academic and occupational areas approved by the board of regents.

B. Degrees designed for transfer.

1. The associate of arts or the associate of science degree is designed for transfer to a four-year institution. Except as provided in paragraph B.2 below, the degree title carries no designation of field of study and is normally limited to 60 credits, which includes an approved general education program that satisfies the requirements of board policy 301.10.
2. In rare cases, a compelling, externally imposed requirement may justify more than 60 semester credit hours and/or a designated field of study in the degree title in an associate of arts or associate of science degree. The unit requesting such a modification of degree requirements should address its request to the deputy commissioner for academic and student affairs. Upon receipt of such a request, the deputy commissioner shall refer it to the two-year education council for review and recommendation to the academic and student affairs committee of the board of regents. These designated degree programs may not satisfy board policy 301.10 on general education because of the number of specialized courses that make up the degree.

C. Degree and certificate designed for employment.

1. The associate of applied science degree and the certificate of applied science are designed to prepare students for immediate employment. Except as provided in paragraph I.C. of board policy 301.11, which describes the bachelor of applied science degree, the associate of applied Science degree or the certificate of applied science does not transfer as a block of coursework meeting lower-division requirements toward a baccalaureate degree. Individual courses within the degree may transfer to meet course requirements at the receiving institution at the discretion of that institution.
2. The certificate of applied science is a program of applied study primarily designed to prepare students for immediate employment in a job indicated by the certificate title. The certificate must ordinarily be approved by the board of regents under board policy 303.1. With the exceptions noted in paragraph C.3 below, the certificate of applied science is normally distinguished by the following characteristics:
  - (a) a short program of study (30-45 total credits) with the expectation that the certificate can be completed in, at most, one calendar year; and
  - (b) general education coursework that meets accreditation requirements and comprises no more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total credits in the certificate program.
3. When the program of study for a proposed certificate of applied science does not meet the characteristics described in paragraph C.2 above, the institution must request an exception to the requirements for certificate programs through the deputy commissioner for academic and student affairs, citing a compelling reason for the variation and/or for culminating the program with a certificate of applied science, rather than an associate of applied science degree. Upon receipt of such a request, the deputy commissioner shall refer it to the two-year education council for review and recommendation to the academic and student affairs committee of the board of regents.

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4. The associate of applied science degree combines applied and academic course work in a program of study designed to prepare students for career entry into a specific occupational area, as indicated by the degree title. The program design may combine a certificate of applied science program with additional required courses or may be a distinct curriculum unrelated to any co-existing certificate program. With the exceptions noted in paragraph C.5, below, the associate of applied science degree will have the following characteristics:
  - (a) a program of study (60-72 credits) requiring at least four semesters to complete, but no more than two academic years, including a summer session between the academic years if necessary;
  - (b) an occupational emphasis, achieved through a minimum of 2/3 of the total credits in the degree devoted to technical course work in the discipline specific to the occupational goal;
  - (c) general education or related education courses that meet accreditation requirements and that align with the amount and level of general education required in similar associate of applied science degree programs in Montana.
5. When the program of study for a proposed associate of applied science degree does not meet the characteristics described in paragraph C.4, above, the institution must request an exception to the requirements for associate of applied science degree programs through the deputy commissioner for academic and student affairs, citing a compelling reason for the variation from the degree requirements. Upon receipt of such a request, the deputy commissioner shall refer it to the two-year education council for review and recommendation to the academic and student affairs committee of the board of regents.

D. In determining the number of credits in a degree program, under this policy, campuses will include every class that a student must complete to earn the credential, including (but not limited to) pre-requisite classes, classes that must be completed to apply for admission to a program and general education coursework. If remedial or developmental courses are appropriately required for an associate of applied science or certificate credential, they must be included in the credit total. Otherwise, they are excluded from the credit calculation.

History:

Action of the Board of Regents to adopt Two-Year Committee recommendations, July 11, 1997; Item 104-105-R0799 amended by action of the Board of Regents July 8, 1998; policy approved September 24, 1999. Revised May 20, 2005 (Item 127-103-R0505), clarified requirements for AAS and created new degree, format change. Revised November 17, 2006 (Item 133-101-R1106), approved November 17, 2006.