

Course Requirements and Expectations

Purpose

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) will be transitioning to a newly designed Course, Curriculum and Programs (CCP) data system in fiscal year 2025. In preparation, we are reviewing existing data and associated policies to ensure consistency across WTCS. This has also presented an opportunity to clarify policies and ensure alignment between policies and practices. In this document, we seek to clarify course use for the purposes of orientation, testing, and career exploration. We also seek to clarify courses that often go between postsecondary programs and Adult Education. Finally, we hope to ensure transparency for students.

Definitions

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) defines a course as a titled, formal learning experience with prescribed outcomes (competencies), a plan for learning the outcomes and a method to assess student learning.

WTCS identifies courses by an 8-digit number: 2-digit aid code, 3-digit instructional area and 3-digit sequence. Aid codes and instructional areas are defined by the System Office, while sequence is established locally at each college (except for System-wide aligned courses). Aligned courses contain standardized components across participating WTCS colleges including course number, title, description, credits, competencies and learning outcomes. Related policies and guidance are found in the [ESM](#), the [Course Approval Manual](#), and the [Aid Code Definitions document](#).

Course Instructional Levels

WTCS groups courses into three instructional levels as shown below. Courses in each level have the same over-arching characteristics. Within each level, courses are differentiated by aid codes, each of which has unique business rules.

Adult Education (Aid Codes 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78): WTCS Adult Education has been historically classified as “Basic Skills” in Wisconsin Statute [38.001\(3\)\(d\)](#). Today, the System uses the term Adult Education because it is the more widely used and accepted term in the field. WTCS Adult Education courses exist below the postsecondary level and are designed to meet the instructional needs of adults who:

- have attained 18 years of age;
- are not enrolled, or required to be enrolled, in secondary school under State law; and
- meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - would benefit from additional adult education skills to successfully complete secondary/post-secondary education and training and gain/retain employment;
 - are non-native English language speakers wanting to improve speaking, reading, and writing skills in the English Language for the purpose of engaging in community and/or to achieve an academic/career goal;
 - do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; or

- want to increase their skills beyond the secondary level to achieve an academic or career goal either to enter post-secondary education and/or workforce/career.

Postsecondary (Aid Codes 30, 31, 32, 10, 20, 50): WTCS postsecondary courses are credit-bearing courses that can be used in WTCS certificates, technical diplomas, associate degrees or apprenticeship programs. Business rules for each aid code determine what programs can use which types of courses. While using Aid Code 10, the 10-83X series of General College Courses cannot be used in postsecondary programs.

Continuing Education (Aid Codes 42, 47, 60): Continuing education courses include occupational continuing education, general adult education (avocational or self-enrichment) and community services.

WTCS Requirements

For courses in all categories, colleges are required to submit the course number, course title, number of hours and number of credits to the WTCS Course Approval System portal. By fiscal year 2025, colleges will also be required to submit a course description with each course.

Course Credit Hours

Course Credit Computation Rules for all courses are defined in Chapter 4 of the [WTCS Course Approval Manual](#).

Additional Adult Education considerations: The first credit in Adult Education courses may be credited after no less than 4 hours. Ongoing credit hours are awarded in 36-hour increments. Tracking hours of students in Adult Education should be readily documented and available upon request. WTCS [Pre and Post Assessment policy](#) for testing students should be followed.

Course Outcome Summaries and Syllabi

Every WTCS-approved course must have clear documentation of intended course competencies or outcomes. Expected and acceptable documentation of course outcomes varies by instructional level. Documentation options include course outcome summaries, syllabi, explanation of instructional services (such as in a contract), course outlines, or detailed course descriptions or other WTCS approved documentation. See the table at the end of this document for recommendations and requirements.

A syllabus and course outcome summary are recommended for all postsecondary (aid codes 30, 31, 32, 10, 20, 50) and adult education (aid codes 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78) courses. A course description is sufficient documentation for aid code 60 continuing education courses, while aid code 42 and 47 are recommended to have additional information documented, appropriate for the length and rigor of each specific course. Documentation does not need to be submitted in WIDS but should be available to students (and/or service recipients for contracts) and must be made available to the System Office upon request. All courses should have clear learning plans and established methods to assess student learning, which must be described to the System Office upon request. Methods of assessment may vary greatly by instructional level and should be reflective of the length and rigor of each course. Informal, in-class feedback is an acceptable form of assessment for many continuing education courses. Pre- and post-service surveys are acceptable methods to assess the learning of service recipients in contract training. Any arranged learning experience that does not include prescribed outcomes and methods to



assess student learning will not meet the WTCS definition of a course and should not be submitted for approval.

Submission Considerations

Provided they meet the WTCS definition of a course, the following **can** be submitted to the System Office as standalone courses:

- **Test Preparation**
- **Alternative course structures** (conferences, seminars, etc.)
- **GED/HSED counseling/orientation courses:** Allowable per DPI requirements. GED/HSED counseling/orientation courses are session(s) which include: 1) assessing the person's reading level and career interests and aptitudes; 2) discussing the options available to the individual regarding completion of high school; and 3) development of a plan for completion of one of the options discussed.
- **Other Adult Education orientation courses:** These courses include content (e.g. required assessments, personal education planning, introductory training in course management systems and online learning systems, etc.) that may be delivered over multiple sessions.

The following do not meet the WTCS definition of a course and **cannot** be submitted to the System Office as standalone courses:

- **Assessments and tests:** As course components, these must be integrated into courses as a part of coursework; exam courses are not allowed.
- **Academic tutoring:** This is a student support service; tutoring courses are not allowed.
- **Postsecondary program introductions or orientations:** These are best practices for student success, however should not be created as separate courses.

Enrollment

All students should be aware of their course enrollments and understand how to participate in each course. Students should be enrolled in courses with aid codes and instructional areas appropriate for their current educational level and future goals. For Adult Education courses, students should additionally have the option to file an appeal regarding course placement that is clearly understood and available to them. Students should also know what skills are being assessed and how those assessments will be used to create a personal education plan. Students should not be enrolled in an Adult Education course simply due to participation in a college event or through utilization of a college resource such as tutoring.

Automatically enrolling students in a course due to participation in events or support services and reporting as FTE is prohibited unless the course can demonstrate hours participated in and outcomes.

Academic Support Sessions / Tutoring

Academic support sessions or tutoring provide educational assistance to students that typically addresses specific course needs. Tutorial assistance may be provided through staffed and non-staffed methods such as online media and other computerized assistance. These activities do not constitute course enrollments and do not generate FTE. Students who participate in academic support sessions should not be automatically enrolled in an Adult Education course.



Orientations

Orientations are a best practice for student success and serve several purposes in the different instructional levels at WTCS colleges.

For postsecondary programs of study, orientations are a best practice but are not allowed as separate courses. Program orientations should be embedded in the program application and enrollment process and may be embedded into the first course of the program.

For the Adult Education level, orientations are considered a necessary best practice and typically include federally required assessments, student personal education planning, cohort-building, etc. In addition, Adult Education orientations/counseling are required by statute ([Wis. Admin. Code Chapter PI 5.03](#)) if the student is pursuing a GED or HSED. For these reasons, Adult Education orientation hours may be recorded and reported for FTE purposes and meet the definition of a WTCS Adult Education course.

Adult Education orientations should incorporate activities that support learner success. Examples of orientations that meet the definition of a WTCS Adult Education course should contain at least three of these components:

- Assessment/testing
- Personal Education Planning and goal setting
- Digital literacy overview
- Career exploration or understanding career pathways
- Comprehensive Intake and Referrals

General orientations to the college, new student orientation or orientation to postsecondary programs of study should not be classified as WTCS Adult Education orientations or courses.

Implementation

- Colleges should review and self-assess existing courses to ensure alignment with these guidelines.
- Current practices that do not meet WTCS course requirements may still be tracked locally to manage scheduling and faculty load. However, these should not be assigned WTCS aid codes or submitted to the System Office for approval.
- Ongoing technical assistance will be provided by System Office staff as courses are assessed.
- In spring of 2024, System Office Adult Education staff will begin reviewing Adult Education course submissions with large enrollments or significant changes in enrollment over the past three-year period.
- Courses that do not align with these guidelines must be brought into alignment by FY26 (CCP portal opens for FY26 in January 2025).

Table of Documentation Requirements and Recommendations by Aid Code

Aid Code	Required documentation of intended course competencies and outcomes	Recommended documentation of intended course competencies and outcomes	Suggested methods to assess student learning
30, 31, 32, 10, 20, 50	Detailed course description, syllabus, and course outcome summary		Established methods to assess student learning reflective of the length and rigor of each course such as performance assessment tasks (PATs), tests, quizzes, portfolios, presentations, skill demonstrations
73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78	Detailed course description	Syllabus, course outcome summary, clear learning plan	Established methods to assess student learning reflective of the length and rigor of each course
42, 47	Detailed course description	Course outcome summary, clear learning plan; Syllabus for course longer than 24 hours	Established methods to assess student learning reflective of the length and rigor of each course, in-class feedback
60	Detailed course description	Course outline	in-class feedback
Contract training courses	Detailed course description	Contract explanation of instructional services provided	in-class feedback, pre- and post-service surveys