

Explanation of Changes: General Education Terms and Minimum AA/AS Degree Requirements *(Effective 9/27/24)*

Policy Change Purpose (Phase I)

- Modernize the WTCS (Wisconsin Technical College System) general education structure and curriculum to not only meet academic standards but also equip students with the practical skills necessary to excel in the modern workforce.
- Ensure WTCS degree policies are not barriers to student success.
- Ensure students are taking the courses needed for their desired transfer program pathway.
- Reduce the amount of “credit loss” students experience from being required to take a course that their chosen transfer institution does not require or accepts only as an elective.

Background

- 2023: General Education Taskforce established to examine what defines our students’ knowledge skills and abilities in general education across WTCS programs, and to propose policy changes related to general education degree requirements and assessments.
- Provided leadership funds in 2023 and 2024, to support general education innovation in pedagogy and assessment across WTCS to support the cost of GE Deans and faculty attending the annual spring AAC&U Conference on General Education, Pedagogy, and Assessment to ensure best practices are being followed in General Education pedagogy and assessment.
- April 2024: Instructional Services Administrators group requested General Education Taskforce to prioritize examination of AA/AS degree requirements as Phase I. Phase II will include policy refinement where needed and common general education assessment discussions.
 - o The priority for Phase II will be to refine and clarify the scope and goals of Phase II.
 - o The system's General Education leaders' vision includes identifying common language for use within skill set development, supporting the development of shared assessment parameters for systemwide use.
- August 1, 2024: General Education Taskforce presented policy proposal to ISA group.
- August 16, 2024: ISAs provided feedback to WTCS office.
- September 5, 2024: WTCS discusses feedback and policy change implementation with ISA group.

Summary of Changes

- Revise General Studies terms for degree types to align with UCTA terms:
 - o Communications, Speech, and English = Communication
 - o Humanities = Humanities & Fine Arts
 - o Social Science = Social & Behavioral Sciences

- Natural Science = Natural Sciences
- Mathematics = Quantitative Reasoning

- Changes in both AA/AS degree requirements
 - Combine 6 credits English and 3 credits Speech to 9 credits Communication
 - World/Foreign Language: Change 4 credit requirement to 1 course requirement in Global Language or Global Studies
 - Diversity/Ethnic Studies: Change 3 credit requirement to 1 course requirement
 - Remove Health/Wellness 1 credit requirement

- Changes only for AA degree requirements:
 - Humanities & Social Sciences: Change from 24 to 21
 - Natural Sciences & Quantitative reasoning: Change from 10 to 9 (no change in lab or level requirements)
 - Electives: Change from 10 to “Up to 21”

- Changes only for AS degree requirements:
 - Humanities & Social Sciences: no change
 - Natural Sciences & Quantitative reasoning: Change from 20 to 18 (no change in lab or level requirements)
 - Electives: Change from 12 to “Up to 21”

*Electives: The number of true electives a student may have will depend on local college requirements, partner institution requirements, and major requirements for desired pathway of study.

Implementation

- Policy change will be discussed with WTCS President’s Association September 11, 2024.
- Policy change will be shared with all stakeholders across WTCS and formalized in the September Educational Services Manual update at the end of September.
- WTCS Directors will provide technical assistance to colleges for implementation.
- Colleges will determine necessary local requirements for AA/AS degrees based upon local, regional, or transfer partner needs. How electives are determined is a local decision, with flexibility provided to allow for additional credits in the appropriate areas based upon students’ career pathway goals and intended transfer institutions.
- If existing articulation agreements comply with the previous AA/AS degree requirements, they will continue to comply with the new AA/AS degree requirements. No changes need to be made to MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) or other agreements, but colleges may elect to pursue changes with partner institutions if they deem it beneficial to their students.
- The new requirements reflect the common minimum requirements across the Universities of Wisconsin (UW). Any additional requirements of specific UW institutions can be added as local requirements by any college if deemed beneficial to their students.

New AA/AS Requirements

AA and AS Degree Requirements	General Education Core (minimum credits)	AA	AS
Communication	9		
Humanities & Fine Arts	6	Additional 9+ credits in these categories	
Social & Behavioral Sciences	6		
Natural Sciences	6		Additional 9+ credits in these categories
Quantitative Reasoning	3		
Global Studies & Languages	Students must complete one course in this area. One year of World Language in high school with a grade of 'C' or better may satisfy this requirement.		
Diversity/Ethnic Studies	Students must complete one course in this area.		
*Electives	Up to 21		
Total	60		

For the AA:

- **Natural Sciences** must include one lab course.
- **Quantitative Reasoning** must be at the course level of Intermediate Algebra, Quantitative Reasoning, Math for Elementary Teachers, or above.

For the AS:

- **Natural Sciences** must include two lab courses, one from each of the two different science disciplines.
- **Quantitative Reasoning** must be at the course level of College Algebra, Statistics, Quantitative Reasoning, or above.

***Electives:** These credits are not necessarily meant to be “student choice” electives, but rather 21 credits locally determined by each college in a configuration best aligned with transfer, preferably at junior status, to a four-year university or college. A college may allocate these elective credits to additional requirements beyond the WTCS required minimum in any of the General Education categories and for any established pre-major pathway.

Note: Courses using Aid Codes 20 and 10 are allowed in the AA/AS degrees as outlined in the Educational Services Manual (ESM).

Previous AA/AS Degree Requirements ([link](#))

(No changes to AAS, Technical Diploma, or Certificate requirements)

Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) Degrees

Credential Aid Code 20	Associate of Arts Degree (AA)	Associate of Science Degree (AS)
Category Title	Minimum Credits	Minimum Credits
English	6	6
Speech	3	3
Humanities	12	6
Social Science	12	6
Mathematics and Natural Science	Minimum of 10 total credits in Math and Natural Science to include: 3-4 credits of Math at level of Intermediate Algebra or above; OR Quantitative Reasoning or equivalent; OR 4-6 credits in Math for Elementary Teachers (Education Students only) AND 7-8 credits of Natural Science (includes one lab course)	Minimum of 20 total credits in Math and Natural Science to include: Mathematics at the level of College Algebra, Statistics, Quantitative Reasoning or above AND Natural Science (includes two lab courses, one from each of 2 different science disciplines)
Health / Wellness / Physical Education	1	1
World / Foreign Language	4 (Or one year of World Language in high school with a "C" or better)	4 (Or one year of World Language in high school with a "C" or better)
Additional Requirement: Diversity / Ethnic Studies	3 (course may also count toward the social science and/or humanities requirements)	3 (course may also count toward the social science and/or humanities requirements)
Electives	10	12
Total Credit Range	60-70	60-70
Course Aid Codes	20, 10*	20, 10*

*Aid code 10 courses allowable in limited circumstances, please consult appropriate WTCS Education Director for usage guidance.