

This email message is being sent on behalf of Rex C. Peebles, Assistant Commissioner; Workforce, Academic Affairs and Research; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Senate Bill 497, passed by 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, requires that students enrolled at a public institution of higher education not be required to complete more than the minimum number of Semester Credit Hours (SCH) than are required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC), which is 60, to earn an associate degree. Allowances for exceeding the 60 SCH limit can be granted when a compelling academic reason exists. Acceptable justifications for exceeding the 60 SCH limit are programmatic accreditation requirements, statutory requirements, requirements for licensure/certification of graduates, and other possible exceptions. Justification of a compelling academic reason will have to be submitted by institutions for a case-by-case consideration by Coordinating Board staff. Specialized academic associates degrees (Field of Study or Voluntary Transfer Compact disciplines) are also limited to 60 SCH. The 60 SCH limit is effective with the start of the fall 2015 semester.

The purpose of this notification is to outline the process to be used to update each institution's list of awards in the Degree Program Clearinghouse and the timeline to be used by CB staff to review all changes. Attached are two documents;

1) List of Degrees for your institution - a spreadsheet listing your institution's approved associate degree awards as currently listed in the CB's Degree Program Clearinghouse database, and

2) Summary of all approved CTC associate degrees grouped by CIP Code, type of award (AA, AS, AAS, or AAT), number of SCH, and the number of awards for each number of SCH.

The second document is provided as a resource to show the programs other community and technical colleges offer and the range of SCH for each program. The list was generated on January 31, 2014; the information has most likely changed since the list was produced as institutions implement these changes.

The List of Degrees spreadsheet contains the program CIP Code, CIP Descriptor, type of award, current number of SCH's, degree title, and a blank field labeled "Revised SCH".

In order to comply with the statutory requirement, we ask that you do the following:

1. For all AA, AS, AAS and, AAT awards the institution is reducing to 60 SCH, type "60" in the corresponding "Revised SCH" cell for that award. No other information should be altered, deleted, or added to the List of Degrees spreadsheet. If the award is currently at 60 SCH confirm the award will remain at 60 by populating the Revised SCH cell for that award with "60".
2. If an institution has identified a compelling academic reason for a program to exceed 60 SCH, leave the corresponding "Revised SCH" cell blank. The institution is required to submit documentation detailing the compelling academic need for each award

where a compelling academic need has been identified separately. To request an exemption to exceed the 60 SCH limit, documentation must be submitted via the CB electronic portal for each award where an exemption is being requested. Documentation for consideration of an exemption include; 1) proposed curriculum outline or sequence of courses, 2) a crosswalk of program competencies to course competencies, and 3) justification for the exemption, such as licensure or accreditation requirements and the relationship to the proposed sequence of courses, or other supporting documents.

3. CB staff will not update the SCH of programs requesting exemptions in the Degree Clearinghouse until the compelling academic reason documentation has been reviewed and a final decision has been reached.

In summary, for each award the Revised SCH cell should be populated with "60" to confirm the degree has been revised to 60 or leave the cell blank to inform CB staff documentation of a compelling academic need will be submitted for review for that award.

The completed List of Degrees spreadsheet and exemption requests will be submitted via the CB electronic portal at <https://www1.thecb.state.tx.us/apps/proposals/>. By submitting the revised spreadsheet the institution is certifying the list is a complete and accurate list of all AA, AS, AAS, and AAT degrees offered by the institution and the award will be offered at 60 SCH. The awards without a "60" in the revised SCH field are exempt from this certification pending the compelling academic review process.

CB staff will update the Degree Program Clearinghouse database to reflect the revised number of SCH for each award submitted by the institution. No additional steps will need to be completed for AA, AS, or AAT degrees reduced to 60 SCH. All AAS degrees will be also need to be revised through the Inventory Access and Update portal. The AAS revision process is explained below.

Institutions must submit their revised spreadsheet by October 31, 2014. Institutions are encouraged to submit their changes throughout the year to expedite processing. The "deadline" will allow time for review and discussion by CB staff in order to provide approval or denial of programs identified by the institution as having a compelling academic reason. CB staff will notify all institutions of their decisions by February 27, 2015.

AAS degree programs, regardless if they are being reduced to 60 SCH or submitting documentation of compelling academic reason to exceed the 60 SCH limit, must be revised through the Inventory Access & Update portal at <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AAR/UndergraduateEd/WorkforceEd/inventory>. Institutions must include updated course listings, according to routine AAS SCH change requests. Additional instructions for revising an AAS degree can be found in the *Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education*.

If you need additional information please contact Garry Tomerlin at garry.tomerlin@thecb.state.tx.us or 512.427.6226.

C: CTC Liaison Member

Attachments: List of degrees for your institution
Summary of approved CTC associate degrees