

Frequently Asked Questions about Course & Program Approval

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Frequently Asked Questions about Course & Program Approval

General Questions

Where do I find... in the Program Approval Manual or the Administrative Rules?

- The Program Approval Manual is an instructional manual for completing requests for approval of programs and courses. The PAM contains valuable information including the required applications, timelines for staff review and Board approval, and notification of approval. The [PAM](#) can be found on the ICCB Website.
- The Administrative Rules are the over-arching guidelines the ICCB uses to administer the Illinois Public Community College Act. The Rules contain valuable information on what guides our policies, such as requirements for approval outlined in the PAM. The System Rules of the ICCB includes all the rules that govern our institutions, including our Administrative Rules and those from other agencies. The [Systems Rules Manual](#) can be found on the ICCB Website.

Where can I find definitions for various Programs and Course Types?

- Associate Degrees, Certificates and Courses - **Administrative Rules Section 1501.301** includes broad definitions for all baccalaureate/transfer degrees, AAS degrees and Certificates, and courses. **Section 1501.302** includes definitions for degree credit hour ranges and general education credit hour requirements. **Section 1501.309** includes definitions for courses and required contact to credit hour ratios.

What are the credit hour limits for programs?

- Credit hour ranges for all degree and certificate programs can be found in the ICCB **Administrative Rules Section 1501.302 a)3)A).**

Where can I find how many credit hours of general education are required for programs?

- General education hour requirements for all degree programs can be found in the ICCB **Administrative Rules Section 1501.302 a)3)B).**

Where can I find a list of Board meeting dates?

- Both [ICCB](#) and [IBHE](#) post their Board meeting dates online, on each agency's website. Deadlines for Board agenda items are determined by each Board's staff. If you have questions about those deadlines, contact [ICCB Staff](#).

What if the college has been told by USDOE or an accrediting body that they need to provide evidence of course or program approval?

- First, retrieve the course approval email from ICCIS or your official notification of program approval. If that does not suffice for your purposes, contact [ICCB Staff](#) with a request for evidence of approval. Please include information specific to the program(s) or course(s) for which you need an approval date, a timeline for providing this evidence, and any other pertinent information to the request. Staff will work with you to submit this information accordingly.

- Occasionally, USDOE or an accrediting body will ask for proof that ICCB approval isn't required for the college to offer an existing program at a new location within the college's district. If this occurs, contact [ICCB Staff](#) and we will work with the college to provide this information.

What are good resources for information about ICCB processes and requirements?

- [ICCB Program Approval Manual](#)
- [ICCB System Rules Manual](#)
- [ICCB Adult Education Provider Manual](#)
- ICCB MIS Manual – Contact [ICCB Institution Research Staff](#)

Who do I contact with questions about courses, programs, ICCIS or anything related?

- Contact [Tricia Broughton](#), Director for Curriculum & Instruction.

Curriculum-Specific Questions

What if revisions to a program have increased the credit hours beyond what is allowable according to Administrative Rules?

- Requests for exceptions to this **Administrative Rule Section 1501.302 a)3)A)** must be submitted in writing to the ICCB. Submit a cover letter requesting a waiver to the Administrative Rule Section and include documentation supporting your request for the waiver. This can be emailed to [ICCB Staff](#).

What types of curricula require ICCB Approval?

ALL Credit-bearing programs offered by a community college are required to be approved by the Illinois Community College Board. This includes:

- All Baccalaureate/Transfer programs:
 - Associate in Science (A.S.)
 - Associate in Arts (A.A.)
 - Associate in Fine Arts (A.F.A)
 - Associate in Engineering Science (A.E.S.)
 - Associate in General / Liberal Studies (A.G.S. / A.L.S.)
 - General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) Credential certificates
- All Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs:
 - Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.)
 - CTE Certificates of any length/credit hours

What types of curricula require IBHE (Illinois Board of Higher Education) Approval?

- All Associate degree programs, whether Baccalaureate/Transfer or CTE, must also be approved by the IBHE.

What is the program approval process?

- The community college completes an application for approval and has it approved through campus processes to be forwarded to ICCB for review.
- ICCB Staff review the application. Applications can be submitted to staff at any time throughout the year.
- ICCB Staff will contact the appropriate college staff if there are questions related to the application. The college will provide a response to this request in timely manner.
- ICCB Staff will review the college's response/additional information until satisfied with the information.
- ICCB Staff will forward to additional members of the program approval review team for further questions/comments.
- ICCB Staff will make a recommendation to the ICCB, and where appropriate to the IBHE, for approval of each program.
- ICCB Staff will notify the appropriate college staff when the program has been approved and information required to update the curriculum master file has been processed.

How long does the program approval process take?

- Approval time varies and depends on the type of program application, level of approval being requested, the thoroughness of the application, and date of the next ICCB/IBHE meetings.
- Assuming a complete and quality application submission, ICCB staff cannot guarantee Board approval for programs by the Fall semester for applications submitted after March 31st of each year. ICCB staff cannot guarantee Board approval for programs by the Spring semester for applications submitted after October 31st of each year.
- Board agenda item deadlines are between eight (8) and four (4) weeks ahead of each agency's meeting. All degree programs, which require the approval of both ICCB and IBHE, must be approved by ICCB before the deadline for the next IBHE agenda to be considered for approval by IBHE. If you are unsure about the timeline for approval of your institution's program, please contact the appropriate [ICCB Staff](#).

What are the various types of program applications?

All applications for programs can be found in the [Program Approval Manual](#) on the ICCB Website.

- Application for Permanent Approval of a Career & Technical Education (CTE) Curriculum (Form 20) – This application is appropriate for all new CTE programs, degrees and certificates, the college has not offered previously.
- Application for *Temporary* Approval of a Career & Technical Education (CTE) Curriculum (Form 20T) – This application is appropriate for all new CTE programs, degrees and certificates, the college has not offered previously and for which the college wishes to request a temporary approval status.
- Application for a Reasonable & Moderate Extension (RME) of an existing CTE program (Form 21/21S) – This application is appropriate for any program being created as a subset of an existing program. There are Administrative Rules that relate to the criteria for approval as an RME. Please refer to Section 1501.302 d) for more information.

- Application for Associate in Fine Arts, Engineering Science, or General Studies (Form 20B) – This application is appropriate for any new addition of these Baccalaureate/Transfer programs to an institution’s offerings. All institutions are currently approved to offer Associate in Science (A.S.) and Associate in Arts (A.A.) degrees
- Application for Reasonable and Moderate Extension: General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) Credential (Form 21GECC) – This application is appropriate for adding the GECC Credential to the institution’s offerings. This is a Baccalaureate/Transfer related curriculum.

What are the various levels of program approval?

- Permanent Approval – This level of approval is the standard request and requires a full application and approval by all appropriate Boards.
- Temporary Approval – This level of approval is appropriate for programs the college may be offering to address an immediate labor market need or want to monitor for continued program need. This level of approval has an “abbreviated” application and only requires approval of ICCB initially. Temporary approval may be requested for a period up to three (3) years, after which time the college must choose to apply for Permanent approval or discontinue the program. Upon permanent approval, the program must complete an additional application and be approved by all appropriate Boards.

What constitutes a thorough and quality application?

- Confirm you are using the most current program application.
- Answer ALL questions as thoroughly as possible. Address each part of each question. “Not Applicable” is not acceptable as a response. Explain why your institution/program believes response to the question isn’t necessary.
- Use lay-person’s terms. Do not assume staff reading the application understand program-specific jargon. Spell out all acronyms.
- If including multiple programs in one application (i.e. an AAS degree and a related Certificate), be sure to address questions that ask for separate information with separate responses. This includes the programs’ purposes, catalog descriptions, curriculum charts, enrollment charts.
- Be sure the cover page includes all necessary information, such as signature/date by the institution’s CAO and the Board of Trustees approval date.
- Include the necessary Form 22 for each program. This form is how ICCB Staff update the college’s curriculum master file record once the program has been approved.
- Be sure to include a Rationale to justify credit hours over 60ch for AAS degrees, and over 30ch for Certificates.
- Be sure to include ALL the required Charts.
- Check for providing ALL the information asked for in the Charts.
 - The Employer Partners Chart – be sure to include the location (city/state); do not provide a link to their website or Facebook page.
 - The Faculty Needs Chart – be sure you pay attention to which new faculty carry over year to year

- Credentialing for Students vs Accrediting for Programs – these sections are often not comprehensive enough for staff to discern what industry credentials the program prepares towards and which associated accrediting body the program is “approved” by. This is not HLC. This is any industry/professional organization that oversees the curricular requirements for programs that lead towards their related credentialing.
- Assessment of Student Learning – be sure to include a comprehensive end of program assessment method for the program.
- Source of Funds – be sure to provide evidence the college is working towards a Program of Study IF you plan to use Perkins Funds to support the program.

How do colleges submit an application for program approval?

- Complete the application and save as an MS Word or pdf document. Email the application to [ICCB Staff](#) through the appropriate college contact. Requests to offer new curriculum of any kind cannot be submitted via the Illinois Community College Information System (ICCIS).

Who determines the Curriculum Prefix and Number?

- The community college determines this information. You may access this information through your Institutional Research staff, or by downloading a master file through ICCIS. ICCB Staff verify the requested course or curriculum prefix and number is not already in use or withdrawn/inactive.

What does ICCB consider a “micro-credential”?

- ICCB does not define a “micro-credential” as a separate program classification. Therefore, there is no determination on range of credit hours for such. This is an institutional decision.
- Typically, these programs would prepare individuals for entry-level employment or an upgrade in skills for existing employment or advancement in the field.
- A credit program offered as a micro-credential would typically be considered a CTE certificate and possibly (although not required to be) a subset of a larger program, certificate or degree. Such a program would be required to follow all appropriate processes for ICCB approval.

What is the difference between inactivation and withdrawal of a program?

- Inactivating a program means no new students are being admitted into the program, but it allows you to leave courses attached to it until students can complete their course of study.
- Withdrawal of a program means no new students are being admitted, all students have completed the program, and all courses are also being withdrawn or re-assigned to another active curriculum.

How do I know whether a program meets the criteria for approval via Reasonable & Moderate Extension (RME)?

- Please refer to ICCB’s System Rules Section 1501.302 d)2) for the credit hour differences allowed in the development of RME degrees and certificates.
- Please refer to the [Program Approval Manual](#) for the Form 21 Application for Reasonable & Moderate Extension of an Existing Curriculum for submission instructions.
- An RME is allowable based on the relationship the proposed extension has with the original parent program. This relationship is determined by commonality between the two programs including associations such as CIP code, program purpose, and credit hours. To summarize the criteria for an RME from System Rules, in a proposed RME the following criteria must be met:
 - In an A.A.S. degree, no more than 15 credit hours of different coursework is allowed;
 - In a Certificate of 30 credit hours or more, no more than 9 credit hours of different coursework is allowed;
 - In a Certificate between 9-29 credit hours, no more than 6 credit hours of different coursework is allowed.
 - For Certificates less than 9 credit hours, refer to the Form 21S application instructions.
 - No proposed RME degree or Certificate can be larger in credit hours than the original parent program.
 - “Different” coursework *is not limited to* new coursework. Different refers to credit hours/coursework not specifically required in the general education, CTE component, or elective options within the parent program.

Course-Specific Questions

Where can I find what general education courses are required for degree programs?

- General education credit hour requirements are found in **Administrative Rules Section 1501.302 a)3)B)**. How many credit hours or courses are required in each of the academic discipline areas is specified by the Illinois Articulation Initiative. This is referred to as the General Education Common Core (GECC) Curriculum. Specific information for requirements in each academic discipline for baccalaureate/transfer degrees can be found on the i-Transfer Website at <http://itransfer.org/courses/gecc/geccpackage.php> .
- General education must constitute a minimum of 15 credit hours in CTE degree programs. However, there are no specified credit hours or courses required in each of the academic disciplines for CTE programs (i.e. A.A.S. degrees). ICCB Staff recommend that general education coursework should support the CTE content of the curriculum, and if possible provide the benefit of transferability for the student.

What is the course approval process?

- ALL courses offered by a community college are required to be submitted to the Illinois Community College Board for appropriate funding classification. This includes:
 - Baccalaureate/Transfer courses (PCS 1.1)
 - CTE courses (PCS 1.2)
 - Developmental courses (PCS 1.4)

- Vocational Skills courses (PCS 1.6)
- Adult Education / ESL courses (PCS 1.7, 1.8, and 1.9)
- Courses are developed at the college and once approved for submission to ICCB, course requests are submitted using [ICCIS](#), the online web submission tool.
- Courses are reviewed by ICCB Staff and either approved or denied. Denied courses will include an explanation for the denial. The course request must be revised before it can be resubmitted through ICCIS for further review.
- Upon approval, ICCIS generates an approval email that serves as the college's documentation the course has been reviewed/approved by ICCB Staff. *Keep this information for your records.*
- ICCIS Submissions change the immediate record on the master files, however, the data from each day saves each night. Therefore, changes expected to be reflected on a new master file download will not be there until after the changes have saved.
- ICCB Staff has 30 days from receipt of the ICCIS request to review and/or approve.

What is ICCIS?

- The [Illinois Community College Information System \(ICCIS\)](#) is an online web tool agency staff utilize for review of requests from colleges to offer new courses, to modify existing courses and programs, inactivate programs, withdraw courses and programs, and reuse of previously withdrawn courses.
- ICCIS allows authorized users to make updates to their master files and submit those requests to ICCB Staff for review.
- This system reflects current records on both the Course and Curriculum Master Files for each institution.
- This system also allows authorized users to search the college's Master Files for various course and program information, and download entire Master Files.

Who has access to ICCIS?

- Only individuals within the Illinois Community College System have the ability to access data in ICCIS. Access will not be granted to anyone who is not associated with ICCB or an Illinois community college.
- Each college has a designated "Course & Curriculum Contact" who submits course and curriculum requests to ICCB. In addition, some institutions have a designated MIS/IR staff person who has access to ICCIS for the purposes of retrieving master files.
- Colleges are allowed up to four (4) individuals access to ICCIS. All additions to ICCIS must be authorized by the existing Contact. Requests for additional authorized users should be sent to [ICCB Staff](#).

Where can I find training on ICCIS?

- Periodically, ICCB Staff will hold online training sessions for ICCIS. There are screen shots of ICCIS and instructions for basic submissions available in the [Program Approval Manual](#) on the ICCB website.
- If you feel the need for additional training, contact [ICCB Staff](#) with a request.

How do I submit requests to change existing courses or programs?

- Modifications to courses and programs; Inactivation of programs; Withdraw of programs; Withdraw of courses; and Reuse of courses can be submitted through ICCIS.
- Reactivation of an inactive or withdrawn curriculum requires additional application to ICCB. Instructions on reactivation can be found in the [Program Approval Manual](#) on the ICCB website.

What is the difference between a CIP Code, Generic Course Code, and PCS Code?

- The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) is a US Department of Education issued list of codes used for categorizing curriculum across States. A CIP code is a 6-digit identifier that labels a course within major educational program areas. A list of all CIP codes can be found in the ICCB MIS Manual and in the [Appendix A](#) of the ICCB Program Approval Manual, available on the ICCB website. These CIP codes are used for curricula.
- The Generic Course List is a list of codes which mirrors CIP Codes of the curricular list, but is for use with courses. The Generic Course List also includes course codes specifically for use with topics courses, internship courses, seminar courses, and licensure review courses. A searchable [Generic Course List](#) is available on the ICCB's website.
- The Program Classification System (PCS) Code is how ICCB categorizes the type of instruction. These are the PCS categories:
 - 1.1 = Baccalaureate/Transfer Education
 - 1.2 = Career and Technical Education
 - 1.4 = Developmental Education
 - 1.6 = Vocational Skills Education
 - 1.7 = Adult Basic Education
 - 1.8 = Adult Secondary Education
 - 1.9 = English as a Second Language Education

Why isn't a specific Generic Course Code available in the drop down menu in ICCIS?

- Most likely this is because the Code you want to select is not approved for the PCS you have selected. Each Code is individually approved for a specific PCS code/codes. Not all Codes are allowable under all PCS categories of instruction.

How do I request a waiver to the Administrative Rules for courses?

- Waivers to the Administrative Rules to offer a new or existing course in an accelerated format, or to be repeated beyond the allowed limit (3 times) can be requested by providing the following:
 - Waivers to the **Administrative Rules Section 1501.507 b)10)** allowing for an accelerated format should be requested in writing with a letter from the college's CAO to the ICCB Executive Director. The letter should include a rationale for need to offer the course in such format, basic course information (course prefix/#, title, credit hours), a timeframe for the offering, an effective date, and any additional pertinent information helpful in supporting the request. The letter/request can be emailed to [ICCB Staff](#).

- Waivers to the **Administrative Rules Section 1501.309 h)** allowing for repeatability beyond the current limit (3 times) for a specific course can be submitted for courses which prepare individuals for training which must be repeated on an annual basis to maintain employment. A request for additional repeatability can be submitted through ICCIS, however, supporting documentation for this request must be attached to the electronic submission. This shall include a letter requesting the additional repeatability, rationale for said request, documentation that students/local employees must complete an annual training through said course to maintain employment, basic course information (course prefix/#, title, credit hours), a timeframe for the offering, an effective date, and any additional pertinent information helpful in supporting the request.

Who determines the Course Prefix and Number?

- The community college determines this information. You may access this information through your Institutional Research staff, or by downloading a master file through ICCIS. ICCB Staff verify the requested course or curriculum prefix and number is not already in use or withdrawn/inactive.

Where is the funding category/reimbursement rate for each course listed?

- Funding category for a course is determined by its PCS and Generic Course Code/CIP combination. A list of Funding Categories by PCS and CIP can be found on the [ICCB Website](#).
- Reimbursement rates are the dollar amount per credit hour the college is paid. The reimbursement rate is based on the funding category and change every fiscal year. Contact [ICCB staff](#) for the most current list of reimbursement rates.

When modifying a course from PCS 1.2 to 1.1, is evidence of articulation required?

- Yes. You must either include the IAI-approved code for the course in the course description OR attach three (3) current and signed Form 13s (Articulation forms) to your submission through ICCIS. Current means signed and dated by the baccalaureate institution within the last five years. Form 13s can be found in the [Program Approval Manual](#) on the ICCB Website.
- Similarly, even if the course is classified as PCS 1.2 (CTE) but the college intends for students to use the course as an elective in a Baccalaureate/Transfer program, articulation is required. Current and signed Form 13s should be kept on these courses.

Can courses of any PCS be attached to programs of any PCS?

- It depends. Courses are typically attached to related programs, therefore the PCS is often the same. Generally speaking, PCS 1.1 (baccalaureate/transfer) and PCS 1.2 (CTE) courses can be attached to programs of either PCS. Most often, however, baccalaureate/transfer courses are attached to baccalaureate/transfer programs such as the A.S., A.A., A.F.A., and A.E.S degrees; and CTE courses are attached to CTE programs such as A.A.S degrees and Certificates.
- Where these practices apply more strictly is with other PCS types. For example, vocational skills courses (PCS 1.6) can only be attached to PCS 1.6 curriculum;

developmental ed courses (PCS 1.4) can only be attached to PCS 1.4 curriculum; and adult ed/ESL courses (PCS 1.7/1.8/1.9) can only be attached to those curriculum.