

Idaho State Board of Education
GOVERNING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
SECTION: III. POSTSECONDARY AFFAIRS

SUBSECTION: E. Certificates, ~~and Degrees~~, and Delivery Definitions— ~~December~~
October 2026⁵

1. ~~4.~~ Purpose: This policy establishes consistent definitions across Idaho's public postsecondary institutions for the certificates, degrees, and microcredentials awarded to students and for the formats through which programs and courses are delivered. It also establishes the requirements for Board authorization of certificates and degrees and for the award of honorary degrees.

2. ~~Definitions~~ Academic and Career-Technical Degrees and Certificates

Programs of instruction require specified numbers of credits earned through educational work on the part of students. Completion of the program of instruction results in the awarding of a certificate to or conferring of a degree upon the student by the faculty and the Chief Executive Officer. The following definitions have been approved by the Board to be used consistently across all institutions:

a. MICROCREDENTIALS

Credentials awarded for mastery of defined skills or concepts, including career technical and academic skills. Microcredentials reflect skills, knowledge, and abilities gained in increments and measured by identified outcomes that are equal to or less than a single course ~~of study~~ but may also build upon or complement each other, resulting in a stacked microcredential. Microcredentials are most often distributed as digital badges. To ensure verifiability and interoperability, all digital badges must be issued on a platform that has achieved certification for adherence to Open Badges standards and verifiable digital metadata specification.

I. Stacked Microcredential

A set of organized microcredentials that an individual can earn after meeting specific outcomes. Completion of stacked microcredentials may result in credit through institutions' prior learning assessment policies.

II. Digital Badge

A visual representation of one or more microcredentials that provides a verifiable and portable record of achievement through embedded metadata. Its issuance is contingent upon successful completion of assessments tied to industry-relevant competencies or academic standards.

b. CERTIFICATES

Certificates defined below are distinguished by whether they are embedded within a parent degree or career technical program or offered as a standalone credential. Institutions proposing a new certificate must specify this designation at the time of proposal and must monitor the designation on an ongoing basis consistent with

the applicable subsection below.

i. Academic Certificate of Completion

A credential awarded for completion of a coherent program of study consisting of one (1) to six (6) semester credits, representing a coherent body of knowledge that does not lead to an academic undergraduate certificate or a degree.

ii. Academic Undergraduate Certificate

A credential awarded for completion of a coherent program of study consisting of seven (7) semester credits or more, representing a coherent body of knowledge that may lead to an academic degree. Academic undergraduate certificates may be earned as standalone certificates or ~~attached to~~embedded within an undergraduate degree.

iii. Graduate/Professional Certificate

A credential awarded for completion of a coherent program of study consisting of nine (9) or more semester credits of graduate course work, representing a coherent body of knowledge that may lead to a degree or may be unique and standalone. Graduate certificates may be earned as standalone certificates or ~~attached to a~~embedded within a graduate degree.

iv. Technical Certificate

A credential awarded for completion of requirements in an approved career technical program that represents mastery of a defined set of competencies. Technical certificates are awarded based on a total number of required credits and intended to be stackable:

- 1) Technical Certificate of Completion – 1 to 7 credits
- 2) Basic Technical Certificate – 8 to 29 credits
- 3) Intermediate Technical Certificate – 30 to 51 credits
- 4) Advanced Technical Certificate – 52 to 59 credits

v. Specialized Certificate

A credential awarded upon successful completion of specific credit-bearing courses within a career technical or academic program of fewer than 60 semester credits that have been industry validated and sequenced for the purpose of developing new skills and upgrading existing skills in an occupation. Specialized certificates are to be stacked on or appended to other credentials as advanced training. In exceptional cases, stand-alone Specialized Certificates may be proposed if justified by the content of the certificate.

~~b.c.~~ ASSOCIATE OF APPLIED SCIENCE DEGREE: A credential awarded for completion of requirements in an approved career technical program of at least 60 semester credits (includes a minimum of 15 general education credits) and represents mastery of a defined set of competencies.

~~e.~~d. ASSOCIATE DEGREE: A credential awarded for completion of requirements entailing the equivalent of at least 60 semester credits of academic work (includes a minimum of 36 general education credits, see Board Policy Section III.N). An Associate Degree ~~shall~~must not require more than 60 semester credits unless necessary for matriculation to a specific baccalaureate program or for unique accreditation, certification, or professional licensure purposes or by exception approved by the Board.

~~d.~~e. ~~e.~~ APPLIED BACCALAUREATE DEGREE: A credential awarded for completion of requirements entailing the equivalent of at least 120 semester credits of academic and career technical coursework (includes a minimum of 36 general education credits, see Board Policy Section III.N). At least 36 credits must be at the 300x and 400x level or the equivalent advanced level for career technical coursework. An Applied Baccalaureate degree accepts applied and career technical lower division credit toward the major. It adds upper division coursework in general education competencies, higher order academic skills, and advanced technical or professional practice. The upper division content must build on the lower division technical credit and lead to an identified occupational pathway. Proposals must document that pathway and the Idaho or regional workforce demand. ~~reposed ps~~ An applied baccalaureate degree must not require more than 120 semester credits unless needed for unique accreditation, certification, or professional licensure purposes or by exception approved by the Board.

f. BACCALAUREATE DEGREE: A credential awarded for completion of requirements entailing the equivalent of at least 120 semester credits of academic work (includes a minimum of 36 general education credits, see Board Policy Section III.N). At least 36 credits must be at the 300x and 400x level. A baccalaureate degree must not require more than 120 semester credits unless needed for unique accreditation, certification, professional licensure purposes, or by exception approved by the Board.

~~e.~~

~~f.~~g. REDUCED-CREDIT BACCALAUREATE DEGREE: A credential awarded for completion of requirements entailing the equivalent of at least 90 semester credits of academic or a combination of academic and career technical coursework (includes a minimum of 36 general education credits, see Board Policy Section III.~~NG~~). At least 36 credits must be at the 300x and 400x level or the equivalent advanced level for career technical coursework in an Applied Baccalaureate degree. A reduced-credit baccalaureate degree must meet all standards and learning outcomes for a baccalaureate degree. ~~These baccalaureate degrees are limited to workforce-focused circumstances where this streamlined pathway does not disadvantage learners. A reduced-credit baccalaureate degree may be proposed when the institution demonstrates that a shortened time to credential, not workforce demand for the field alone, addresses a documented gap between~~

employer need and the supply of qualified graduates in Idaho. The proposal must cite the specific occupation and data source relied upon, which must reflect Idaho or regional labor market conditions rather than national trends alone. The program must be narrowly tailored to the skills and competencies required for the identified occupation. Reduced-credit degrees might not align with graduate school entrance must not be proposed for a program preparing students for licensure or certification where the credit reduction would create a gap against the licensing body's minimum requirements, licensure, or certification requirements. Proposals must describe how students will be advised about the implications of a reduced-credit baccalaureate and that they might not align with graduate school requirements. Program titles must clearly indicate the reduced-credit threshold and conform to Board-approved naming conventions.-

—h. h. GRADUATE DEGREE: A credential awarded for completion of academic work beyond the baccalaureate degree, including any required research. Graduate degrees consist of master's degrees, specialist degrees, and doctoral degrees.

i. DUAL DEGREE: An academic arrangement where a student simultaneously pursues and earns two distinct degrees, either within an institution or across collaborative partner institutions.

j. ACCELERATED DEGREE~~S~~: An academic arrangement where a student earns two sequential degrees in a shortened time frame.

43. Requirements for Certificates and Degrees

A postsecondary institution has authority to establish the number of earned credits required for each certificate and degree (see III.G and Board Policy III.N Statewide General Education). The~~A~~ credit requirements must receive Board approval in accordance with the program approval policies provided in Board Policy III.G. Institutional catalogs ~~shall~~must specify the required number of earned credits for each certificate and degree.

54. Authorization Required

Programs offered at the institution, as well as the certificates and degrees to which they lead, are subject to review and approval in accordance with the program approval policies provided in Board Policy III.G. A certificate or degree conferred upon the student is conferred under the authority of the Board.

65. Authorized Microcredentials, Certificates, and Degrees

A current listing of authorized certificates and degrees awarded by each institution is

maintained at the institution by the Chief Executive Officer and for all institutions at the Office of the State Board of Education. Career-technical microcredentials must be tracked as digital badges using a platform approved and managed by the Division of Career Technical Education. Each institution must maintain a comprehensive list of all microcredentials, including those tracked by the Division of Career Technical Education.

7.6. Honorary Degrees

Each institution may award honorary degrees, not to exceed the highest level of Board-authorized degrees currently awarded by the institution, to persons in recognition of distinguished achievements at the local, state, or national level in areas such as education, public service, research, sciences, humanities, business, or other professions. The award of an honorary degree must receive the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer upon recommendation by the faculty.

Each institution will develop its own procedures for seeking nominations for and selecting honorary degree recipients. Those procedures may include a statement of eligibility requirements for honorary degrees. However, no person who is currently employed by the institution, is a member of the Board, is staff of the Office of the State Board of Education, or is an incumbent elected official is eligible for an honorary degree during the term of employment, appointment, or office.

g. 7.8. Academic and Career Technical Credit Hour Requirements

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

- a. One (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (a) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

8.9. Program Delivery Definitions

Institutions must consistently adopt the following program delivery definitions to ensure interinstitutional consistency, aid the integrity of the Board's program inventory, and set reliable expectations about the digital and location-based learning experiences students will encounter throughout their coursework.

-

- a. "Fully Online" programs are completed through asynchronous online courses as defined in 10.a, with no required in-person, hybrid, or synchronous remote courses unless required for accreditation, assessment, or to comply with the specifications of state or federal programs and grants. Limited synchronous remote instruction may be required as part of coursework in a fully online program if specific conditions are met:
 - i. students must be made aware of any required synchronous instructional or assessment elements prior to program registration;
 - ii. required synchronous elements must be accessible under current Title II requirements.
- h. "Blended" programs feature any blend of online, in-person, hybrid, and/or synchronous remote courses as part of required learning experiences. Students may complete a program that includes courses offered in multiple formats as defined in section 10 below.

940. Course Delivery Definitions

Institutions must adopt and maintain the following course delivery definitions in advance of course registration to ensure interinstitutional consistency and to aid student understanding of how and when components of a course are to be completed:-

- a. An "Asynchronous Online Course" can be completed entirely asynchronously with no required in-person, hybrid, or synchronous remote courses unless required for accreditation, assessment, or to comply with the specifications of state or federal programs and grants. Asynchronous online courses must include regular and substantive interactions as required by 34 CFR 600.2.
- b. An "In-Person Course" is delivered through regularly scheduled classroom instruction. Online tools may supplement instruction, but scheduled class meetings are not replaced by online activities except on an occasional or emergency basis.
- c. A "Hybrid Course" offers substantial and valuable in-person, asynchronous online, and/or synchronous remote components on a regular schedule (e.g., weekly).
- d. A "Synchronous Remote Course" meets in real-time via digital conferencing tools at scheduled class meeting times. The frequency of meetings depends on the course, and some meetings may be substituted with asynchronous online activities. Instruction may be delivered to individuals or to groups of students at remote sites. -
- A "Correspondence Course"- provides instructional materials and assessments, through mail or electronic transmission to students who are separated from the

instructors. Interaction between instructors and students in a correspondence course is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student (24CFR 600.2).

10. Course Delivery Expectations

- a. In cases where a course is delivered through multiple modes of instruction, an institution may stack delivery definitions to more accurately articulate the student experience where providing additional details is possible. If only one modality may be listed in a specific software system, an institution must list the primary mode of instruction and make the stacked definition available for students elsewhere.
- b. Under all course delivery definitions, class activities and assignments are completed within the time frames and deadlines set by the instructor and/or program as outlined in Board Policy III.B. -
- c. Delivery mode must not affect the transferability of a course under Board Policy III.V.