

CHABOT-LAS POSITAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR ASSOCIATE DEGREE AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Prepared by Donald R. Milanese*

*Charge: Through discussions about the meaning of the associate degree and the philosophy of general education, the College should reach a timely resolution about high unit requirements for general education and graduation. The last accreditation team also made this recommendation (to Chabot). Additionally, the College should reach a resolution on general education requirements for the associate degree, and the approval mechanisms for the American Cultures requirement.***

I. Philosophy and Criteria for Associate Degree and General Education) (Title V, Section 55805)

The awarding of an Associate Degree is intended to represent more than an accumulation of units. It is to symbolize a successful attempt on the part of the college to lead students through patterns of learning experiences designed to develop certain capabilities and insights.

Among these are the ability to think and to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; to use mathematics; to understand the modes of inquiry of the major disciplines; be aware of other cultures and times; to achieve insights gained through experience in thinking about ethical problems; and to develop the capacity for self-understanding. In addition to these accomplishments, the student shall possess sufficient depth in some field of knowledge to contribute to lifetime interest.

In establishing or modifying a general education program, ways shall be sought to create coherence and integration among the separate requirements. It is also desirable that general education programs involve students actively in examining values inherent in proposed solutions to major social problems.

The governing board of a community college district shall also establish criteria to determine which courses may be used in implementing its philosophy on the associate degree and general education.

*With thanks to Cynthia Hicks, Chabot College Curriculum Committee Chair, for permission to “borrow” from the Chabot College Curriculum Committee Report to the Senate, dated May 8, 2003.

**Las Positas College: 2003 Accrediting Commission Recommendations, July 2003.

The governing board of a community college district shall, on a regular basis, review the policy and criteria established pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

II. Type of Course Appropriate to the Associate Degree (Title V, Section 55805.5)

The criteria established by the governing board of a community college district to implement its philosophy on the associate degree shall permit only courses that conform to the standards specified in Section *55002 and that fall into the following categories to be offered for associate degree credit:

- (a) All lower division courses accepted toward the baccalaureate degree by the California State University or University of California or designed to be offered for transfer;
- (b) Courses that apply to the major in non-baccalaureate occupational fields;
- (c) English courses not more than one level below the first transfer level composition courses, typically known as English 1A. Each student may count only one such course as credit toward the associate degree;
- (d) All mathematical courses above and including Elementary Algebra;
- (e) Credit courses in English and mathematics taught in or on behalf of other departments and which, as determined by the local governing board, require entrance skills at a level equivalent to those necessary for the courses specified in sections (c) and (d) above.

*55002 (Standards and Criteria for Courses and Classes)

III. Minimum Requirement for the Associate Degree (Title V, Section 55806, effective 1983)

Beyond the unit requirement difference, the AA and AS degrees are not well defined. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office notes that "There is no difference in law as to the requirements for the AA and AS degrees, and no State guidelines on which majors should be assigned which type of degree. However, many colleges are guided by the language of a regulation applicable before 1983, which said that the Associate in Science was to be awarded for majors 'in the fields of engineering, physical and biological sciences, or occupational curriculum' " (state Curriculum Handbook 3-4).

	Title V	Chabot	LPC
AA Degree	60	60	60
AS Degree	60	60	60
Gen Ed AA	18	29	29
Gen Ed AS	18	*19	*19
Major Requirement	18	Any requirements for the major not specified in catalog.	18

**(Only 15-18 units out of four divisions of learning)*

- A. General Education Requirements:** Students receiving an Associate Degree as per Title V shall complete a minimum of 18 semester units of general education, including a minimum of three semester units in each of the areas of Natural Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Humanities and the same minimum in each pair of Language and Rationality. The remainder of the units requirement is also to be selected from among these four divisions of learning or as determined by local option:

General Education Requirement for Associate in Arts Degree			
	Title V	Chabot	LPC
A. Natural Science	3	3	3
B. Social and Behavioral Science	3	3	3
C. Humanities	3	3	3
D. Language and Rationality			
1. English Composition	3	3	3
2. Communications and Analytical Thinking	3	3	3
E. Remainder of units to be selected from A-D above by local option	3		
(E) Local Options			
1. English Composition		3	3
2. American Institutions		6	6
3. Health		3	3
4. Physical Education		2	2
TOTAL	18	29	29
General Education Requirement for Associate in Science Degree			
	Title V	Chabot	LPC
A. Natural Science	3	3	3
B. Social and Behavioral Science	3	3	3
C. Humanities	3	3	3
D. Language and Rationality			
1. English Composition	3	3	3
2. Communications and Analytical Thinking	3	3	3
E. Remainder of units to be selected from A-D above by local option	3		
(E) Local Options			
1. American Institutions or Health		3	3
2. Physical Education		1	1
TOTAL	18	*19	*19

*Under (E) Local Options, a maximum of only 3 units are in compliance with Title V, assuming students take American Institutions course work.

B. Math Proficiency—Title V addresses math proficiency by stating that students who receive an AA or AS must demonstrate competence in mathematics. Math proficiency for the AA and AS degrees in our District is achieved as follows:

1. LPC students may follow one of several options, including testing, previous course work, or completion of one of the listed courses. Courses taken to fulfill this requirement must reflect a grade of “C” or higher or “CR.”
2. Chabot identifies specific courses to meet this requirement, and the course must be passed with a grade of “C” or higher or “CR”. In addition, the Chabot College Catalog states that when appropriate, the course can simultaneously satisfy other graduation or disciplinary requirements

C. Double Counting Major Requirement in General Education (Title V, Section 55806)

While courses might satisfy more than one general education requirement, it may not be counted more than once for these purposes. A course may be used to satisfy both a general education requirement and a major requirement. Whether it may be counted again for a different degree requirement is a matter for each college to determine. Students may use the same course to meet a general education requirement for the Associate Degree and to partially satisfy a general education requirement at the California State University, if such a course is eligible under the provisions of section 40405 of this title.

D. Ethnic Studies (Title V, Section 55806)

Ethnic Studies will be offered in at least one of the required areas.

E. Local Options for General Education (Board Manual—Policies #5238 and #5240):

1. Language Rationality (English Composition)—for the AA degree, our District requires an additional 3 units of English Composition for a total of 6 units.
2. Health Education—different requirement between AA and AS degrees:
 - a. For AA—3 units of Health Education required at both colleges, though Chabot gives additional course options beyond Health 1;
 - b. For AS—3 units of either American Institutions or Health Education.

3. Physical Education—different requirement between AA and AS degrees:
 - a. For AA—2 units with differing course options between the two colleges;
 - b. For AS—1 unit with differing course options between the two colleges.
 - c. Background: Though physical education was once required by state law, the law changed in the 1970s, and community college students were no longer required to take physical education in order to earn a degree. Nevertheless, our District has continued to require PE for an AA and AS. The initial requirement was approved by the Board of Trustees in 1961, i.e., ½ semester unit of PE each semester for anyone enrolled in one-half or more of the work normally required of full-time students. There were exceptions to the PE requirement, including age, physical limitation, holding degree, etc.
4. American Institutions—different requirements between AA and AS degrees:
 - a. For AA—6 units and courses cannot be double counted for general education. Chabot’s catalog asterisks each of the courses listed for the requirement and specifies that they may fulfill one area only; there is no similar language in the LPC catalog though that is implied.
 - b. For AS—3 unit option of either American Institutions or Health Education.
5. American Cultures: effective in Fall 1995 and required for both the AA and AS degree—no separate unit requirement. Students must complete one of the listed courses with a grade of “C” or higher or “CR.” Where it is appropriate, the course can simultaneously satisfy other graduation or disciplinary requirements. Students can fulfill this requirement at LPC by completing any of the courses listed while Chabot students are restricted to specific sections with the letter “A” before the section numbers.

IV. Key findings resulting from a statewide survey in 1998 by Carolyn S. Borg, Ed.D.:

- A. One-third of the colleges require between 18 and 23 units of general education for the A.A. degree, another third between 24 and 29 units, and another third requires 30 or more general education units;
- B. The number of general education units required for the AA is the same as the number of units for the AS degree—76% of California Community Colleges;
- C. One-third of the colleges require English 1A or a course at that level for the Associate Degree, while 62% accept a course one level below English 1A;

- D. The majority of colleges (81%) accept a course at the Basic Algebra level to meet math competency requirements. Ten percent require a course at a higher level, and 7% link the math requirement to the degree sought.
- E. There is no clearly identified transfer major for the California Community College system.

V. Issues:

- A. The Accreditation Commission has recommended that Chabot College review its General Education Program and Graduation Requirements, especially in the number of units required for the Associate in Arts Degree. Because both colleges share the same unit requirement, the Chancellor has included Las Positas College in this review. Specific local option requirements beyond the 18 unit G.E. Title V requirement include: the additional 3 units of English Composition for the AA degree, Health Education, Physical Education, American Institutions, and American Cultures.
- B. Both colleges are out of compliance with the AS degree. We require 15-18 units, depending upon course selection under American Institutions or Health—if American Institutions are selected, then the units accomplished for AS increase to 18 units.
- C. In addition to having a high-unit AA degree, many of the majors are high-unit majors. The result is that students may not be able to afford the time and expense it would require to take electives and experience fields of study beyond their majors and GE requirements. There is concern that students who can meet their educational goals without an associate degree may choose to forego getting a degree rather than putting in what is perceived as extra time and money.
- D. Adding a computer literacy (Information Competency) to the associate degrees.
- E. Double counting major requirements for the A.A. and A.S. degrees towards G.E. requirements.
- F. Other?

(10/20/03)