

**PIERPONT COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE**  
**Board of Governors Policies and Procedures**  
**POLICY # 52**  
**TITLE: DEGREE DEFINITIONS**

**Effective Date: September 27, 2006**

**Amended: November 14, 2017**

**Repealed:**

---

**SECTION 1: GENERAL**

- 1.1 This policy defines the degrees that may be awarded by Pierpont Community & Technical College (Pierpont) and is intended to be used in design of all degrees programs at the College.
- 1.2 Title 135 Procedural Rule, West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education (WVCTCE); Series 11 Degree Designation, General Education Requirements, New Program Approval, and Discontinuance of Existing Programs:
  - 1.2.1 Certificate and Associate Degree programs are central to the mission of community and technical colleges. They are a means through which the institution develops and maintains integrity in its educational programs. Appropriately defined, these degrees become an integrating force for the institution, set academic standards and goals for achievement of students, and establish the relationship between the college and other institutions at community colleges and baccalaureate college levels.
  - 1.2.2 The Associate Degree is recognized by Baccalaureate Degree granting institutions and by employers as a critical indicator that a student has demonstrated proficiencies at levels deemed appropriate to enter upper-division college programs or to enter a field of work. Certificate of Applied Science and Associate degree programs must consist of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, including an evaluation procedure that assesses the outcomes of the learning process.
  - 1.2.3 All degree programs must include a complement of general education requirements appropriate to the level of degree.

**SECTION 2: DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 Degree Program: A degree program is an area of study approved by Pierpont, the WVCTCE, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and the U. S. Department of Education (USDOE) when applicable, and listed on the official WVCTCE inventory of degree programs. That degree, which is an award signifying a rank or level of educational attainment and which is conferred on students who have successfully completed a degree program, is represented by the official degree designation, e.e. A.A. – Associate in Arts,

A.S. – Associate in Science, A.A.S – Associate in Applied Science, or C.A.S. – Certificate in Applied Science. The degree program completed would be listed on the student's diploma.

2.1.1 For students to earn the degrees, the program must consist of a coherent and sequenced set of courses, including an evaluation procedure that assesses the outcomes of the learning process. The program must state the proficiency outcomes required for the students to transfer to baccalaureate institutions and/or achieve career goals.

2.1.2 Certificate and associate degree programs must include a full complement of general education requirements appropriate to the level of the degree, including essential communication and computation skills.

2.2 Associate Degree: A program of study equivalent to two years of full-time study consisting of major and liberal studies (general education) components.

2.2.1 The Associate in Arts (AA) Degree: The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and similar areas. While a student may enter directly into employment upon attainment of this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful transfer with junior status. The degree designator consists of 60 credit hours, unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies.

2.2.1a General Education in this degree designation includes an emphasis in arts, humanities, social sciences, and similar areas. A substantial component of this degree, at least 24 semester hours of coursework, shall be in general education.

2.2.2 The Associate in Science (AS) Degree: The purpose and intent of this degree are to prepare the student to transfer to an upper division baccalaureate degree program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in the areas with substantial undergraduate requirements in mathematics, natural sciences, and similar areas. While a student may enter directly into employment upon attainment of this degree, the goals of programs that award this degree is successful transfer with junior status. The degree designation consists of 60 credit hours unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies.

2.2.2a General Education in this degree designation includes an emphasis in agriculture, engineering, and technology, and the sciences with a substantial undergraduate requirement in mathematics and the natural sciences. A large component of this degree, at least 24 semester hours of coursework, shall be in general education.

2.2.3 The Associate in Fine Arts (AFA) Degree: The dual purpose and intent of this degree is to prepare students to enter directly into employment in a specific art-related career while also preparing students for transfer to an upper division baccalaureate program. It gives emphasis to those majoring in areas with substantial emphasis in the

arts. While a student may enter directly into employment upon attainment of this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful transfer with junior status. The degree designation consists of 60 credit hours unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies.

2.2.3a General Education in this degree designation includes an emphasis in art-related areas. A large component of this degree, at least 24 semester hours of coursework, shall be in general education.

2.2.4 The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) Degree: The dual purpose and intent of this degree is to prepare students to enter directly into employment in a specific career. It gives emphasis to those majoring in occupational programs designed with and through employer advisory committees. It is the goal of this degree to achieve acceptance as an employment credential. While a student may be able to achieve successful transfer of some or all of the courses within this degree, the goal of programs that award this degree is successful employment. The degree designation consists of 60 credit hours unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies.

2.2.4a General Education in this degree designation includes a basic foundation for life-long learning and future career changes, and at least 15 semester hours of coursework for this degree shall be in general education, unless otherwise required by the accrediting agency. General education shall include communication and computation skills and other general education coursework related to the specific occupational career area.

2.3 Certificate of Applied Science (CAS) Degree: A program of study equivalent to at least one but less than two years of full time study consisting of major and general education components.

2.3.1 Certificate of Applied Science (CAS) Degree: A certificate program in applied science is a coherent, specializes curriculum designed for students in search of a specific body of knowledge for personal/career development or professional continuing education. The purpose and intent of the certificate degree program are to prepare the student to enter directly into employment in a specific career and meet the documented workforce needs of local employers. Generally, certificate programs provide the foundation for the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) Degree for occupational programs. Like the AAS degree, the goal of certificates is to achieve acceptance as an employment credential. The degree designation consists of 30 credit hours, unless otherwise required by accrediting agencies.

2.3.1a General Education in this degree designation includes at least 6 semester hours of coursework, including courses in essential communication and computation skills.

2.4 Program of Study: A program of study is a defined curriculum within an approved degree program. An institution should include the program of study on the student

transcript. The program of study is identified by a distinct Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code.

- 2.5 Concentration: Concentrations provide a thematic focus of study that enables the student to spend time and effort to acquire depth in a particular discipline, in addition to meeting the normal breadth of requirements for the associate's degree. A student might choose a concentration to begin early preparation for a specific academic area that they might wish to later pursue in a bachelor degree program. Typically, approximately 12-18 credit hours would be expected for a concentration within an associate degree program. Concentrations should appear on the student transcript.
- 2.6 Advanced Skill Certificate: A series of courses or competencies that prepare individuals for a specific skill and carry value of 12 or more but less than 30 credit hours, or non-credit contact hours equivalent to 12 or more but less than 30 credit hours. Certificates may be contained within a degree program, or be a standalone certificate that is not financial aid eligible.
- 2.7 Skills Set Certificate: A series of courses or competencies that prepare individuals for a specific skill and carry value fewer than 12 credit hours or non-credit contact hours equivalent to fewer than 12 credit hours. Certificates may be contained within a degree program, or be a standalone certificate that is not financial aid eligible.

### SECTION 3: BOARD POLICY

- 3.1 Requirements for Associate Degrees offered by Pierpont are limited to a maximum of 60 semester hours of credit and must meet requirements outlined in West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education Series 11. The degree program of study shall include major and general education components. Exceptions to this policy, for programs established prior to 2011, must be approved by the President, as appropriate, and approved by the Board of Governors. Exceptions will be approved by the WVCTCE.
- 3.2 Requirements for CAS Degrees offered by Pierpont are limited to a maximum of 30 credit hours and must meet requirements outlined in West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education Series 11. The degree program of study shall include major and general education components. All AA; AS degrees must follow Series 11, Intent to Plan guidelines. Board approved programs must be pre-approved by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and the U.S. Department of Education.