



Baccalaureate Programs in the Florida College System – Guiding Principles and Policies

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Introduction

The Florida Legislature passed legislation in 2001 that outlines a process by which community colleges may seek approval by the State Board of Education to grant baccalaureate degrees in limited, high-demand areas, and the approval process is currently outlined in section (s.) 1007.33, Florida Statutes (F.S.). This legislation was in response to the fact that baccalaureate degree production in Florida lagged behind the majority of the nation, and the state was facing a shortage of professionals in specific high-demand occupations like teaching and nursing. Expanding access to the baccalaureate degree through the community colleges was a way to address these economic concerns and increase baccalaureate production in the state.

Since the implementation of s. 1007.33, F.S., over a decade ago, the number of baccalaureate programs offered within the Florida College System (FCS) has dramatically increased and includes both Bachelor of Science (BS) and Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degrees. Currently, colleges are approved to offer approximately 150 programs in a variety of fields such as education, nursing and other health sciences, business, management, technology, and public safety. All approved baccalaureate programs are tailored to meet specific local and regional workforce needs. As a result of baccalaureate approval, many colleges have elected to change their names to reflect their status as four-year degree granting institutions by eliminating the words “community” or “junior” from their titles, and some are now called state colleges.

There have been numerous benefits to offering baccalaureate degrees within the FCS in addition to addressing the economic issues outlined previously. By offering baccalaureate opportunities, the FCS is able to help meet the educational needs of non-traditional students, many of which are place-bound due to family and employment responsibilities. FCS baccalaureates are also less costly than those offered at the state universities and many other nonpublic postsecondary institutions, thus providing opportunities for those who might otherwise not be able to afford to further their education and increase their earning potential.

Rule 6A-14.095, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), further defines the FCS baccalaureate program approval process outlined in s. 1007.33, F.S. In addition to statute and rule, these guidelines are intended to assist in consistent implementation and common practice statewide.

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Articulation within the Florida College System

Introduction

Florida’s “2 + 2” articulation system has long been considered a national model for facilitating the transfer of students with two-year degrees earned at a Florida College System institution to upper-division studies at a public or private college/university. The Florida Statewide Articulation Agreement established in 1971 and currently codified in s. 1007.23, F.S., and Rule 6A-10.024, F.A.C./Board of Governors (BOG) Articulation Resolution, is the most comprehensive articulation agreement in the nation. Critical components include:

- Defining the Associate in Arts (AA) degree as the university parallel degree;
- Providing for a transferable Associate in Science (AS);
- Establishing requirements for awarding degrees and degree definitions;
- Guaranteeing transfer of the general education block of credit;
- Guaranteeing transfer of credit via the Statewide Course Numbering System;
- Establishing a process for determining credit-by-examination equivalencies; and
- Establishing a common college transcript.

It is within the context of this “2 + 2” statewide articulation system that FCS baccalaureate programs are developed and operate.

“2 + 2” System and FCS Baccalaureate Program Admissions

The admissions process for FCS baccalaureate programs is modeled after the statewide “2 + 2” transfer admissions process, and applicants should have completed an AA degree, AS degree, or at least 60 college credit hours (including satisfaction of general education requirements for an AA or AS degree), from a regionally or nationally accredited institution prior to admittance. The AS degree is considered fully transferable within the FCS and admissions to appropriate FCS baccalaureate programs should adhere to the “2 + 2” model for AS graduates. Policies for the admission of Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree graduates are at the discretion of the institution and will likely require case-by-case consideration.

All students, including native associate degree graduates, are required to apply for baccalaureate admission through a **separate and selective** admissions process in order to be admitted into an upper division program at FCS institutions. The purpose of the separate admissions process for baccalaureate degree seekers is to ensure that colleges are maintaining an open-door admissions policy for associate degrees as part of their primary mission, pursuant to s. 1007.33, F.S.

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The FCS *Student Data Base*, produced annually by the Community College and Technical Center Management Information Systems (CCTCMIS), regulates this system by separating lower and upper division students for reporting purposes.

The “2 + 2” policy does not preclude first-time-in-college associate degree seekers from declaring their intent to pursue a FCS baccalaureate degree as a secondary objective or from seeking advisement for an appropriate lower division course of study to prepare them for the intended baccalaureate degree. In fact, a 2012 amendment to s. 1007.23, F.S., requires each AA degree seeker to indicate a baccalaureate degree program offered by an institution of interest by the time the student has earned 30 credit hours, and FCS baccalaureate degree programs are included in this policy. However, associate degree seeking students should not be enrolled as upper division students upon declaring their intended baccalaureate degree, and they should be required to engage in a separate admissions process for the baccalaureate program after completion of their associate degree.

Primary Degree Pathway

The **primary degree pathway** for a baccalaureate program is the course of study through which a student can complete the program within 120 credit hours (or other State Board of Education approved program length). The *Common Prerequisite Manual*, maintained by the [Florida Virtual Campus](#), establishes the primary degree pathway for each baccalaureate program offered at FCS and State University System institutions. Students who complete the common prerequisite courses listed in the *Common Prerequisite Manual* for a particular program as part of their associate degree should be able to transition directly into and complete the upper division program without the accumulation of excess credit hours.

In addition to common prerequisite courses, the primary degree pathway for many FCS baccalaureate programs is often defined by a preferred associate degree. For instance, the primary pathway to the BS in Nursing degree is an AS in Nursing, and the primary pathway for most BAS degrees is a related AS degree. Teacher education programs typically require completion of an AA degree. Colleges should determine the primary degree pathway for their baccalaureate programs (that must align with the courses listed in the *Common Prerequisite Manual*), but defining alternative degree pathways is permissible in order to accommodate students. For example, as stated previously the primary pathway for most FCS BAS programs is an AS degree, and space is allocated in the upper division curriculum for these students to complete the remainder of the General Education requirement. However, many BAS programs will accommodate AA degree graduates by allowing them to take lower division technical courses after being admitted in lieu of the General Education courses taken by AS degree graduates. This flexibility in the sequencing of coursework allows colleges to accommodate students from a wide array of educational backgrounds through non-traditional articulated pathways, while maintaining academic integrity.

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Statewide Course Numbering System

S. 1007.24, F.S., establishes the Statewide Course Number System, and all policies outlined in this statute, as well as in Rule 6A-10.024, F.A.C., apply to articulation within the FCS. Per s. 1007.24, F.S., “Any student who transfers among postsecondary institutions that are fully accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education and that participate in the statewide course numbering system shall be awarded credit by the receiving institution for courses satisfactorily completed by the student at the previous institutions.” Course transfer policies outside of the scope of the Statewide Course Numbering System and related statutes and rules are at the discretion of the individual institution, including the transfer of credit from non-regionally accredited and out-of-state postsecondary institutions.

Articulated Acceleration Mechanisms

Policies for awarding credit earned through articulated acceleration mechanisms are outlined in s. 1007.27, F.S., and Rule 6A-10.024, F.A.C. These acceleration mechanisms include dual enrollment and early admission, Advanced Placement, the International Baccalaureate Program, and the Advanced International Certificate of Education Program. Appropriate credit should be awarded and applied towards a student’s FCS baccalaureate degree for successful completion of these acceleration mechanisms pursuant to the college’s policies.

As is stated in the rule, it is up to the discretion of the receiving institutions to award credit “for examinations that are not listed in this rule or that do not have recommended course equivalents, minimum scores, and maximum credits.” Institutional discretion also applies to the award of credit in excess of 45 credits earned through acceleration mechanisms.

Programmatic Issues Related to FCS Baccalaureate Programs

Upper Division Course Enrollment

As discussed previously, admission to FCS baccalaureate programs operates within a “2 + 2” system and applicants must have earned an associate degree or at least 60 credit hours prior to baccalaureate program admittance. However, students not admitted to a baccalaureate program may enroll in upper division courses if allowed per institutional policy (i.e., associate degree seeking, non-degree seeking, and special status students). Students must first complete all developmental education requirements before enrolling in an upper division course.



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Foreign Language Competence

FCS baccalaureate programs are expected to require students to demonstrate foreign language competence in order to maintain the status and academic rigor of FCS baccalaureate programs. Rule 6A-10.02412, F.A.C., defines foreign language competence as two high school credits in one foreign language or at least eight credit hours in one foreign language at an undergraduate institution. Students can also demonstrate equivalent foreign language competence on the basis of scores on an approved exam. In addition, s. 1007.262, F.S., maintains that a student who demonstrates proficiency in a native language other than English is exempt from a requirement of completing foreign language courses at the secondary or Florida College System level.

This means that while AA degree seekers will be required to demonstrate competency in a foreign language prior to completing the AA degree beginning in 2014-2015, AS graduates should also be required to demonstrate foreign language competence before or after baccalaureate program admission.

Baccalaureate Degree Concentrations

Pursuant to Rule 6A-14.095(7), F.A.C., colleges intending to add or modify a concentration within an existing approved baccalaureate program must submit the Application to Add or Modify Concentration(s) to an Existing Baccalaureate Degree Program, located at http://www.fldoe.org/cc/students/bach_degree.asp. The structure and content of baccalaureate degree concentrations is at the discretion of the institution, but degree concentration additions and modifications must be reviewed and approved by the State Board of Education prior to implementation.

Reporting Transitional Students

The transitional student code in the CCTCMIS *Student Data Base* is intended to include students who meet the minimum requirements for baccalaureate admission, but are working on completing additional admission requirements for a specific program. Historically, this code has not been used consistently across colleges, and there has been ambiguity regarding what types of students should/should not be included in this category. To encourage consistency in the reporting of baccalaureate transitional students and ensure accuracy in reporting enrollment numbers, the following definition has been adopted for transitional students:

Baccalaureate – Transitional: *Students who meet the minimum requirements for baccalaureate admittance (i.e., earned associate degree or a minimum of 60 college credits successfully completed, including satisfaction of general education requirements for the associate degree) but are not eligible for admission to a specific baccalaureate program or are on the “wait list” for limited enrollment, restricted access programs. The “transitional” classification is designated for students seeking admission to a baccalaureate program that*

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are completing additional requirements prior to being fully admitted into a specific baccalaureate program. Additional requirements may include the completion of common prerequisite courses, or obtaining licensure or certification exam results. This classification is intended to be temporary while the student completes the remaining admission requirements for a specific baccalaureate program.

Students who have not yet completed an associate degree or at least 60 college credits should not be coded as baccalaureate transitional students, even if they have declared their intent to pursue a specific baccalaureate program upon completion of the associate degree.

Annual Baccalaureate Performance Accountability Report

S. 1007.33, F.S., requires colleges to annually (and at the request of the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, the Chancellor of the Florida College System, or the Legislature) report the status of its baccalaureate programs using a specific set of compliance indicators. Upon review of the compliance indicators, the State Board of Education may require a college’s board of trustees to modify or terminate a baccalaureate degree program.

To fulfill this reporting requirement, colleges must complete the Annual Baccalaureate Performance Accountability Report Template (Template), referenced in Rule 6A-14.095, F.A.C., and located at http://www.fldoe.org/cc/students/bach_degree.asp, by August 15th of each year. An optional supplemental form is also posted on the website that can be used as a guide for providing the performance and compliance indicators information.

Colleges may provide supplemental data and/or information for these compliance indicators, but doing so is not required. The Template requires colleges to provide a brief summary of successes and/or unique features of each baccalaureate program, including surveys of graduates and employers. Colleges are required to submit survey data with their reports. To standardize this process, colleges should use the questions below when surveying the appropriate stakeholders. However, colleges may include additional survey questions to highlight the uniqueness of their programs.

Graduate Survey Questions

- Please rate your overall level of satisfaction regarding the quality of the _____ baccalaureate degree program.
 - Very Dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Satisfied
 - Very Satisfied

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- The coursework in the _____ baccalaureate program prepared me for employment and/or career advancement.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- Would you recommend the _____ baccalaureate program to others?
 - Yes
 - No

Employer Survey Questions

- Please rate your level of satisfaction with the degree to which the _____ baccalaureate program prepared your employee(s) for employment and/or advancement within your organization.
 - Very Dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Satisfied
 - Very Satisfied
- The _____ baccalaureate program is responsive to your workforce needs as an employer.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- Would you recommend the _____ baccalaureate program to more of your employees?
 - Yes
 - No