

OCCUPATIONAL ASSOCIATE DEGREE (OAD) TEMPLATE

INTRODUCTION

The Occupational Associate Degree (OAD) Template must be completed by institutions offering Occupational Associate Degree (OAD) programs. The template supplements and augments ACCET Document 3.1 – Analytic Self-Evaluation Report, which incorporates the ACCET Standards for Accreditation (Document 2). The template expands upon the ACCET Standards specifically referenced herein by adding Specific Field Criteria and Supplemental Questions/Statements, in order to elicit a more relevant and valid self-evaluation of the institution and emphasize those standards where unique characteristics are identified.

OCCUPATIONAL ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

Occupational associate degrees are designed to provide the specific knowledge and skills to prepare graduates for gainful employment and career development. This category of associate degree includes, but is not limited to, the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree, the Associate of Applied Technology (AAT) Degree, and the Associate of Occupational Studies (AOS) Degree. Institutions awarding the OAD must clearly demonstrate (through their mission, planning, curricula, faculty, and student services) the heightened commitment required to ensure student outcomes that distinguish the graduate of the OAD program from the graduate of a similar program offered at the postsecondary certificate or diploma level.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

ACCET accredited institutions wishing to add an OAD degree program must make application using ACCET Document 25.OAD – Application for Occupational Associate Degree Program, with reference to and in accordance with ACCET Document 25 – Policy for New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses. They must also be authorized by the appropriate state education agency to confer the associate degree or must demonstrate that no such authority exists by specific reference to state statute and/or regulation.

All OAD programs must be two academic years in length and must be measured in quarter or semester credit hours, with each degree requiring a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. The programs are typically offered over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or the equivalent.

The curriculum for the OAD program must include the vocational and the general education courses necessary to meet the specific degree requirements. The vocational component of the program must include a minimum of 70% of the coursework directly related to the specific degree requirement. All occupational degree programs must address the development of competencies in general education that enhance essential skills for career development and continued learning. These competencies must relate to and support the vocational objectives of the OAD program in both substance and number. A minimum of 15 semester credit hours or 22.5 quarter credit hours must be included in general education.

STANDARD I – MISSION, GOALS, AND PLANNING

The institution has a mission and goals that are compatible with the mission, scope, and standards of ACCET and has an effective planning process to enhance and improve the institution and its education, training, and services.

- A. **Mission:** The institution clearly states its mission and makes it public. The mission defines the purpose of the institution and provides a definitive basis upon which to deliver and assess its education and training programs. The institution establishes and utilizes specific criteria to measure whether it is achieving its mission. The education and training provided by the institution are consistent with its mission, and the rationale for offering this education is documented by either an assessment of projected need and/or successful market experience.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: The reasons for offering an occupational associate degree program are consistent with the institution's mission, and the benefits to the target population have been clearly determined and documented.

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe the methods used to determine the need for an occupational degree program. Include a summary of data accumulated. Such data may include, but are not limited to: (1) surveys of employers, graduates, and current students; (2) local/regional occupational outlook projections; (3) regional studies and surveys; and (4) potential impact of competition.
- Provide a narrative description of the expected benefits to participants. If the institution offers both certificate and OAD versions of the same program (e.g. programs at both levels focusing on the same or highly similar career fields), provide an analysis of the expected vocational outcomes of both programs.

STANDARD III – FINANCIAL CAPACITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The institution is fiscally sound and demonstrates ethical financial practices.

- B. **Financial Procedures:** The institution assesses its finances at adequate intervals, not less than quarterly. Written policies and procedures exist for proper financial controls and supervision of financial management staff. Tuition charges are applied fairly and consistently. Receipt of tuition payments and other monies is properly recorded and tracked. Cancellation and refund policies are written, fair, and equitable; are consistently administered; and comply with statutory, regulatory, and accreditation requirements. Qualified and capable individuals manage and evaluate the effectiveness of the financial operations and practices.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: Cancellation and refund policies and procedures are structured to reflect the periods for which students are

financially obligated to the institution, which will necessarily be less than the total enrollment period for OAD programs.

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Provide the institution's written cancellation and refund policy, procedures, and forms (e.g. refund calculation worksheets) specific to its OAD programs to demonstrate that such policies are oriented to the period of time over which students are financially obligated, rather than to the total period of enrollment.
- For what terms or periods of time are students financially obligated at any one point? How does the enrollment of students over multiple years affect student financial aid?

- C. Financial Assistance/Scholarships: The institution ensures that any student financial assistance programs, including federal and state financial aid programs, institutional scholarships, and externally funded scholarships, are responsibly administered, governed by written policies and procedures, and in full compliance with relevant statutes and regulations. All student financial assistance is awarded in a fair and equitable manner.**

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: Institutions offering OAD programs utilize procedures for administering and monitoring financial aid eligibility and disbursement that are appropriate to the length of the program.

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe any separate processes, distinct from those for non-degree programs, for purposes of determining continued student eligibility for financial aid disbursements relative to satisfactory academic progress (SAP).

STANDARD IV – CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The institution's curriculum design and instructional materials are up-to-date, educationally sound, and appropriate for the expected outcomes of the program/courses.

- A. Educational Goals and Objectives: The institution's programs and courses have appropriate educational goals and objectives. The curriculum content and learning experiences are preplanned and present a sound, systematic, and sequential educational methodology. Sufficient and appropriate knowledge and skill elements are included to meet the specific and measurable performance outcomes expected for the courses and programs.**

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: The institution has a curriculum for the occupational associate degree that includes both the general education courses and vocational courses necessary to meet the specific degree requirements. The general education components of the OAD programs(s) support the requirements of the vocational objectives both in scope and in number. The curriculum includes a course

numbering system that incorporates course sequencing, including prerequisites. The following policy guidelines govern occupational associate degrees:

- 1. All occupational degree programs must be two academic years in length and must be measured in quarter or semester credit hours, with each degree requiring a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. The programs are typically offered over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or equivalent.*
- 2. All occupational degree programs must include a minimum of 70% of the coursework directly related to the specific vocational objectives.*
- 3. A minimum of 15 semester credit hours or 22.5 quarter credit hours of general education courses must be included. Examples of general education courses include natural and physical sciences (mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, etc.); social and behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology, history, geography, economics, etc.); humanities and fine arts (English, written and oral communication, literature, foreign language, etc.).*

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- List each degree program and state the occupational and general objectives of the program, including the name of the credential that is awarded. Provide an overview of the program design (e.g. lecture, laboratory, externship/internship, interactive distance education). Note that all IDL programs must be separately approved by ACCET for this delivery method. Refer to ACCET Document 3.IDL – Interactive Distance Learning Template for specific field criteria for IDL courses/programs.
- Describe how the degree program(s) emphasizes the achievement of both vocational and general education objectives and describe how the general education coursework supports the achievement of the vocational objectives.
- Describe how the courses in the degree program are sequenced. Provide an explanation and example of the course numbering system, including a description of how course prerequisites are determined and published.
- Describe how the program's structure provides for an increasing level of difficulty in order to enhance a student's mastery of the required skill and educational elements.
- Utilizing Document 25.6 – Subject Hour Breakdown, provide a listing of all technical and general education courses that clearly delineates clock hours, credit hours, lecture hours, lab hours, and externship/internship hours to show compliance with the general requirements for OAD programs identified above.

B. Program/Instructional Materials: Program materials, including syllabi, lesson plans, instructional guides, and texts demonstrate the appropriate scope, sequence, and depth of each program or course in relation to the stated goals and objectives. Instructional materials, including supplementary textbooks, software, learning activities, visual aids,

electronic links, and other teaching tools support the goals and objectives. All materials are up-to-date, readily available, and facilitate positive learning outcomes.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: The use of relevant technology, research within the field, and reference materials is reflected in program materials.

Supplemental Question/Statement for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe how the institution ensures that the curriculum and corresponding instructional materials include reference to current technology, research, and reference materials. How does the institution ensure that students have access to relevant, current research, and reference materials?

STANDARD V – INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY AND RESOURCES

The institution utilizes appropriate and effective instructional methods and other resources to ensure sound instructional delivery, which may be provided through a variety of delivery modes, including traditional classroom/lab instruction, interactive distance learning, and blended instruction.

- A. Instructional Methods: Instructional methods encourage active and motivated responses from students. Written policies and procedures are in place to ensure that the curricula are followed and that there is consistency of application by all instructional staff. The instructional methodology is consistent with contemporary training industry standards and appropriate to the educational goals and curricular objectives, facilitates learning, and serves the individual learning needs and objectives of students. Instructional methods provide encouragement, challenges, and learning opportunities for all enrolled students, taking into consideration different learning abilities and styles, prior levels of achievement, and different learning modalities such as visual, audio, and kinesthetic.**

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: Program coursework includes research assignments that are relevant to the program's vocational and general education objectives. Appropriate student-teacher ratios must be maintained based on the subject matter and the teaching methodology.

Supplemental Question/Statement for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe how the research assignments within the coursework enhance the vocational and general education objectives of the program. Give examples of research projects assigned and incorporated in the syllabi to accomplish these objectives.
- What is the institution's student-to-teacher ratio for training in a lecture setting? What is the institution's student-to-teacher ratio for training in laboratory or clinical instruction?

- B. Learning Resources, Equipment, and Supplies: Learning resources support the goals and objectives of the programs offered by the institution. Adequate, appropriate, up-to-date,**

and functional equipment, learning resources, supplies, and furnishings are readily available for instructor and student use and for the effective delivery of institution's education and training.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: Adequate access to reference, research, and information resources, whether traditional or electronic, is provided. These resources and activities supplement the curriculum and instructional methodology. A library or comparable resource center must be maintained by the institution and accessible to students. The allocation of financial resources is commensurate with the scope and purpose of the library/resource center. Appropriate personnel maintain and monitor the resource holdings. Faculty input regarding the scope of the library/resource center is solicited and utilized.

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe the content of library/resource center, including on-line resources and other electronic media, and the means by which the institution provides students access to the library/resource center for their study and research activities.
- Explain the methods used to organize reference materials for easy retrieval and storage.
- What are the scheduled hours of operation of the library/resource center? Who manages the library/resource facility and who is responsible for assisting students and faculty during the hours of operation?
- Describe the financial resources available for supporting and maintaining the library/resource center.
- Describe the process that is employed by the institution when reviewing and improving the quality of the library/resource center and the library holdings (e.g. student use/trends, faculty usage and input, and input from industry and professional associations).

STANDARD VI – QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

The institution ensures that qualified instructors, under professional and capable direction, effectively deliver educational and training services.

- A. Qualifications of Instructional Personnel: Instructional personnel possess the appropriate combination of relevant educational credential(s), specialized training and/or certification, work experience, and demonstrated teaching and classroom management skills, which qualifies them for their training assignments. Instructional personnel meet all relevant accreditation, federal, state, local, and/or industry-specific requirements.**

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: Official transcripts are on file to support the qualifications of instructors assigned to general education courses. General

education faculty must hold, at minimum, a bachelor's degree with verifiable content expertise in the subject(s) they are assigned to teach.

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe the institution's minimum qualifications requirements for all faculty teaching the OAD program(s).
- What procedures are followed to collect and store official instructors' transcripts and/or licensing certification documentation?

B. Supervision of Instruction: Individuals with relevant education and experience in instructional delivery and management supervise instructional personnel. Supervisors of instructional personnel demonstrate good practice in the evaluation and direction of instructors. Regular classroom observations are conducted at least annually by qualified supervisors and, along with student and supervisory feedback, are documented and effectively utilized to enhance the quality of instruction.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: OAD programs must be supervised by a director of education/training who holds at least a baccalaureate degree and demonstrates the education, experience, and competence necessary to manage the instructional program and its faculty.

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Provide a position description for the director of education/training and include a copy of his or her resume and/or ACCET Document 6 – Faculty/Administrative Personnel Form.
- How does the institution determine the qualifications necessary for the director of education/training to perform all assigned duties, such as hiring and training qualified instructors, monitoring classroom activities, providing professional growth and in-service activities, and supporting the program revision processes?

STANDARD VII – ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT SERVICES

The institution recruits and enrolls only qualified students who can reasonably be expected to benefit from the education and training services and provides student services appropriate to their needs.

A. Recruitment: Informational and promotional materials, advertising, and representations made by or on behalf of the institution for recruiting purposes make only justifiable and provable claims regarding the courses, programs, costs, location(s), instructional personnel, student services, outcomes, and other benefits. All communications with prospective students are ethical, honest, and consistent with ACCET policies. The institution does not state or imply that employment, occupational advancement, and/or certification and licensing are guaranteed.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: *The name of the degree program(s) and the credential(s) awarded must be expressly stated in all information and promotional materials.*

Supplemental Question/Statement for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe how the institution's advertising and promotional materials, including the catalog and website, depicts the occupational nature of the institution's degree program(s) and the credential awarded.

B. Admissions/Enrollment: **The institution's written policies for admissions and enrollment are clearly stated, defined, and in compliance with statutory, regulatory, and accreditation requirements. Reliable and regular means are utilized to ensure that, prior to acceptance, all applicants are able to benefit from the education and training services, consistent with ACCET policies. The enrollment process, including any online process, is preplanned, effective, and regularly monitored by the institution to ensure its integrity.**

The written enrollment agreement, contract, or application, as applicable, is furnished to appropriate parties before any payment or obligation is made and clearly identifies the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of all parties. This document includes: (1) all costs stated in clear and explicit language, and (2) cancellation and refund policies that comply with statutory, regulatory, and accreditation requirements.

Specific Field Criteria for Occupational Associate Degrees: *The institution accepts only those students who have earned a high school diploma or a recognized equivalency certificate. Evidence of the high school diploma or equivalency certificate must be maintained in the student's record.*

Supplemental Questions/Statements for Occupational Associate Degrees:

- Describe the admissions policy for accepting students into the OAD program(s). How do the admissions requirements differ for OAD students as opposed to those students enrolling in certificate or diploma programs?
- What documentation is maintained in the student record to reflect the basis for the admission of each student? What procedures are followed in order to obtain evidence of high school or equivalency certificates?