Graduation Requirements

PROGRAMS OF INSTRUCTION

The Lone Star College System offers courses and programs to suit the needs of individual students. In keeping with the mission of a community college, the system offers university-parallel or transfer courses, workforce or career programs, and continuing education courses for lifelong learning opportunities.

While individual courses are available in a variety of subjects and fields of study, students should follow their program of study to facilitate the completion of their educational goal. Students are responsible for taking courses in the proper sequence and at the proper level as well as determining the applicability of a particular course to their educational objectives. Regardless of transferability policies and agreements, students intending to transfer to a college or university should check on course and/or program transferability with that institution so that they make the best educational choices for them individually.

Students who fulfill the requirements of such programs of study may attain one or more of the following degrees or certificates:

**Associate of Arts Degree (AA)** – A collegiate degree related to the baccalaureate degree. This is not a degree with a declared major; rather it is a program of first and second year courses that will generally transfer to a four-year college or university. Refer to LoneStar.edu/aa-requirements.

**Associate of Science Degree (AS)** – A collegiate degree related to the baccalaureate degree. This is not a degree with a declared major; rather it is a program of first and second year courses that will generally transfer to a four-year college or university. Refer to LoneStar.edu/as-requirements.

**Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT)** – A collegiate degree that will satisfy the lower division requirements for a bachelor’s degree leading to initial teacher certification. Refer to LoneStar.edu/teaching-aa.

**Associate of Applied Science Degree (AAS)** – A degree in a workforce field for students who wish to begin a career after completing this program of study. Refer to LoneStar.edu/programs.

**Core Curriculum** – Through the general education core curriculum, students gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse global world; and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning. All students seeking an undergraduate degree must complete this curriculum in the state of Texas before receiving their degree. Completion of core curriculum requirements is a significant educational milestone. Lone Star College acknowledges students’ efforts by placing “core complete” on their transcripts and issuing commendations in recognition of this accomplishment toward the AA or AS degree. To receive an associate degree a student must also complete the remaining AA or AS requirements.

**Field of Study** – A curriculum that will satisfy the lower division requirements for a bachelor’s degree in a specific academic area at a general academic teaching institution. The student shall receive full academic credit toward the degree program for the block of courses transferred which will meet that institution’s lower division requirements for the degree program in the field of
study into which the student transfers. Refer to LoneStar.edu/degrees-certificates.

Certificate – A program of study that varies in length and is designed to prepare the student for occupational employment. The certificate is awarded upon completion of specific courses that have been industry validated and sequenced for the purpose of developing and upgrading skills in an occupation. Refer to LoneStar.edu/degrees-certificates.

Area of Concentration – A program that combines either the associate of arts or associate of science degree with an emphasis in a specific academic discipline. Transferability for area of concentration courses should be checked with the transfer university. Refer to LoneStar.edu/concentration-intl-studies.

Questions regarding course sequence and degree objectives should be referred to the appropriate faculty, advisor or counseling office.

LSCS Core Curriculum
The core curriculum is designed to empower students with foundational knowledge and transferable skills guided by a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement. It prepares students for academic excellence and careers through progressively higher-level studies in the areas of critical thinking, communication, empirical and quantitative skills, teamwork, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Embedded in the core curriculum is a firm belief that educated members of society must possess a broad base of experience and general knowledge to balance the narrow focus of degree and vocational requirements. Students taking the core curriculum develop important individual traits and skills that are critical for their future careers and personal development. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved a 42 semester credit hour (SCH) core curriculum for all undergraduate students in Texas, including a following statement of purpose, six core objectives, and foundational component areas, to be implemented in Fall 2014.

Statement of Purpose
Through the core curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning.

Core Objectives
• Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
• Communication Skills – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
• Empirical and Quantitative Skills – to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.
• Teamwork – to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.
• Personal Responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
• Social Responsibility – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Foundational Component Areas
• Communication – (6 SCH) Courses in this category focus on developing ideas and expressing them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering understanding, and building the skills needed to communicate persuasively. Courses involve the command of oral,
aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.

- Mathematics – (3 SCH) Courses in this category focus on quantitative literacy in logic, patterns and relationships. Courses involve the understanding of key mathematical concepts and the application of appropriate quantitative tools to everyday experience.

- Life and Physical Sciences – (6 SCH) Courses in this category focus on describing, explaining and predicting natural phenomena using the scientific method. Courses involve the understanding of interactions among natural phenomena and the implications of scientific principles on the physical world and on human experiences.

- Language, Philosophy & Culture – (3 SCH) Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

- Creative Arts – (3 SCH) Courses in this category focus on the appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination. Courses involve the synthesis and interpretation of artistic expression and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art.

- American History – (6 SCH) Courses in this category focus on the consideration of past events and ideas relative to the United States, with the option of including Texas History for a portion of this component area. Courses involve the interaction among individuals, communities, states, the nation, and the world, considering how these interactions have contributed to the development of the United States and its global role.
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- Government/Political Science – (6 SCH)
  Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas. Courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.

- Social and Behavioral Sciences – (3 SCH)
  Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

- Component Area Option – (6 SCH)
  a. A minimum of 3 SCH must meet the definition and corresponding Core Objectives specified in one of the foundational component areas;
  b. As an option for up to 3 semester credit hours of the Component Area Option, an institution may select course(s) that:
     - Meet(s) the definition specified for one or more of the foundational component areas;
     - Include(s) a minimum of 3 Core Objectives, including Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, and one of the remaining Core Objectives of the institution's choice.

Demonstration of Mastery

Each professor will select strategies and activities that foster the development and mastery of the six core objectives. Strategies may include book reviews, article reviews, chapter reviews, writing assignments, role playing, question groups, role reversal, free association discussion, group presentations, Socratic method, group projects, individual projects, case studies, open-ended essay exams, interviews, panel discussions, team problem solving, group tests, organizing data, group investigations, self-assignments, discussion leaders, team evaluations, and critical panels.

General Associate Degree Requirements

Within five years of initial enrollment in credit courses at LSCS, a student may graduate according to the catalog degree requirements in effect at the time of first enrollment or any subsequent catalog degree requirements provided the degree, the program, and requisite courses are still being offered. Course prerequisite changes need to be followed. If a student fails to complete within five years all degree requirements of the catalog in effect at the time of initial enrollment, the student will be required to graduate under a catalog not older than five years. The five year initial enrollment period for specialized admissions programs begins upon acceptance into the program. Exception to this requirement may be approved in extenuating circumstances by the instructional vice president.

Students whose first year of enrollment in credit courses is prior to fall 1993 may graduate according to requirements in effect at that time provided the degree, the program, and requisite courses are still being offered.

Completion of associate degrees requires the following:

1. At least 60 semester hours of earned credit, 25 percent of which must be courses taken at LSCS and apply to the degree. Courses transferred from regionally-accredited institutions will be evaluated and applied to degree requirements if:
   a. At least a grade of “D” was earned.
   b. The cumulative GPA of the transfer courses applied to the degree or certificate must be at least a 2.0.
c. AAS graduates may be required to demonstrate skills/proficiencies in the discipline.

2. Satisfaction of core competency requirements.

3. At least a 2.0 cumulative GPA for LSCS courses applying toward their degree requirements.

4. A cumulative 2.0 GPA on all credit courses earned at LSCS (graduation GPA).

5. Students are encouraged to complete formal application for graduation on or before the announced deadline. Note: Students will be awarded their degree upon completion of all degree requirements.

6. All transcripts on file and all financial obligations to the college complete, including all records cleared in the library.

**Associate of Applied Science Degree**

The associate of applied science degree is issued to students who complete a college-level workforce education curriculum. This degree is designed to prepare students for employment in a specific career. It is issued to students who successfully fulfill the general requirements, in addition to the specific technical or workforce curriculum for each program and the general education core requirements listed below.

Students pursuing an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree will automatically be awarded related certificate(s) that lead to the degree as the requirements for the certificate(s) are completed. Students pursuing a certificate will also be awarded any related credential that leads to the requirements for that certificate as the requirements for that certificate are completed.

**Requirements**

The general education block for each program must contain a minimum of 15 college credit hours.

1. The general education block for each program must include ENGL 1301.

2. The general education block for each program must contain at least one course from each of the following categories:
   - Math/Natural Sciences
   - Social/Behavioral Sciences
• Humanities/Fine Arts
• General Education Core Requirement

3. Furthermore, graduates must meet the computer literacy, math and oral communication competencies.

Earning Additional Associate Degrees

A student who has received an associate degree from LSCS or any other regionally-accredited institution of higher education may obtain an additional associate degree in another area. However, students should seek appropriate academic advising before initiating the pursuit of another associate degree. This provision is subject to the following stipulations:

1. For each additional associate degree, a minimum of 18 semester credit hours must be completed at LSCS. These credit hours may not repeat credit applied to a previous degree and must apply to the additional degree.
2. All courses required by any specific program must be completed.

Certificate Programs and General Requirements

Certificates are awarded upon the completion of specific courses that have been industry-validated and sequenced for the purpose of developing and upgrading skills in an occupation. The programs vary in length and are designed to prepare the student for employment. Students will receive their certificate from the LSCS college authorized to offer the total certificate program at which he/she has completed the greatest number of technical program credit hours applicable to the degree or certificate. To be awarded a certificate from LSCS, a student must:

1. Fulfill all the course requirements for a certificate program, completing at least 50 percent of coursework at LSCS.
2. Earn a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 in all courses required for the certificate.
3. Students are encouraged to complete formal application for graduation on or before the announced deadline. Note:
Students will be awarded their certificate upon completion of all degree requirements.

If pursuing an Enhanced Skills Certificate, students must complete the related LSCS associate degree simultaneously.

Students desiring an Advanced Technical Certificate must complete a related associate or bachelor’s degree prior to enrollment.

All associate degrees, certificates over 42 credit hours, and post AAS certificates require completion of TSI requirements.

Students pursuing an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree will automatically be awarded related certificate(s) that lead to the degree as the requirements for the certificate(s) are completed. Students pursuing a certificate will also be awarded any related credential that leads to the requirements for that certificate as the requirements for that certificate are completed.

Students must complete 50 percent of the credits of a credit certificate program or at least 25 percent of an associate degree with Lone Star College System credit courses to meet graduation requirements.

Grades

Graduation

Students will be awarded a LSCS diploma when they graduate from one of the six LSCS colleges in accordance with the following criteria:

Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) Degrees – Students will graduate from the LSCS college where he/she has completed the greatest number of credit hours applicable to the degree.

Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree and Certificates – Students will graduate from the LSCS College authorized to offer the total degree program or certificate at which they have completed the greatest number of technical program credit hours applicable to the degree or certificate. Nursing students will graduate from the college where they successfully complete the capstone course for the program.

Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) — Students will graduate from the LSCS College authorized to offer the total degree program or certificate at which they have completed the greatest number of program credit hours applicable to the degree or certificate.

Annual commencement exercises are held at the close of the spring semester. Students who complete all degree or certificate requirements or who are candidates for graduation are invited to participate in the college commencement exercise. An application for graduation should be submitted prior to the semester that all course work is completed.

AA, AS, AAT Transferability

Requirements for a baccalaureate degree in any given major are set by the university granting that degree. Students who wish to receive an associate of arts degree or an associate of science degree from LSCS must incorporate the degree requirements previously listed with those of the college/university of their choice. To minimize problems with transferability of courses, students should make their choice of a college or university as soon as possible and obtain a catalog from that institution. A faculty advisor or counselor should be consulted and a degree plan developed to ensure progress toward the student’s educational goal. A student who enrolls in 30 or more credit hours above the baccalaureate degree plan may have to pay out-of-state tuition rates for the excess hours.

Graduation Through Reverse Transfer

Reverse transfer provides an avenue for obtaining an associate degree after transferring to an university. Reverse transfer establishes policies and procedures for credits earned at universities to be transferred to LSCS and applied toward associate degrees.

For additional information, go to our website at LoneStar.edu/joint-admissions.