

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

4.A.1. ISU conducts academic program reviews every seven years per [Board Policy](#). Program reviews evaluate status, effectiveness and progress, and identify future directions, needs, and priorities. As such, they are closely connected to strategic planning, resource allocation and other decision-making at all levels. All programs should address the following core criteria in their self-study and review process: Mission, Program Quality, including curriculum and assessment of student learning, and Preparing for the Future.

Each review begins with selection of an external review team from peer institutions. The team conducts a site-visit, consults with faculty, staff, students, and administrators on the program's plans and processes of the program. Reviews typically include all facets of the program, organized in terms of the land-grant mission (teaching, research and extension). Programs prepare a self-study document and a subsequent response to the review team recommendations. These documents, as well as proposed action plans, are submitted to the Dean and Senior Vice President and Provost (SVPP). The SVPP provides coordination, guidance and accountability to ensure that reviews are conducted as expected by policy; the office maintains a [schedule of reviews by college](#) and provides a summary report ([see sample](#)) of each review to the Board.

At the midpoint cycle of each seven-year review cycle, programs submit an internal report to the SVPP that outlines progress on action items, any major changes within the program, etc. To further emphasize student outcomes in the review process, starting in 2015-2016, programs will submit a review of their student learning outcomes and outcomes assessment as a part of the mid-cycle review. This additional component will assist departments in evaluating their outcomes, plans, and student success measures in advance of the next scheduled visit.

ISU extends the concept of program reviews to academic support units. The Library, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Institutional Research, Study Abroad, and others have periodic external reviews similar to that of academic programs.

4.A.2. The review and approval process for the development of new courses includes a review of the number of credits awarded. The Registrar maintains a [list, approved by Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, of appropriate credit ranges](#) for various categories of courses, including internships, research experiences, etc.

Credit by Examination

ISU policy grants academic credit by examination through national testing programs. Credit is awarded primarily for introductory classes in mathematics, natural, physical and social sciences, and the liberal arts. Programs accepted include the Advanced Placement (AP) Program, International Baccalaureate (IB) Examinations, departmental examinations, and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Policies and procedures for awarding these credits are detailed under the *Academics* tab of the Admissions website.

Military Credit

Credit for military courses is granted according to guidelines in the American Council on Education's (ACE's) *Guide to Credit for Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*. ISU accepts military credit that comes in at the vocational certificate, lower division baccalaureate, or upper division baccalaureate levels.

Departmental Test-Out Credit

Individual departments offer examinations to provide test-out credit for students who have proficiency in an area without prior college credit from another institution. As an example, the English Department provides an opportunity at the beginning of each semester for students to 'test out' of English 250. The exam content and level of proficiency needed to receive credit are managed by faculty within the department.

4.A.3. The Catalog provides ISU's transfer credit policy under the Transfer Admission and Transfer Credits tabs in the [Admissions](#) section. The initial evaluation of transfer courses is managed by specially trained transfer staff in the Admissions and Registrar's offices. Courses from regionally accredited institutions (or from international institutions with the appropriate standing in the country's educational/government system) are reviewed by these staff members, including a detailed review of the course description information from the transfer institution's catalog. Using guidelines established by academic departments, if it is determined that the transfer course is substantially the same as an ISU course, a direct transfer equivalency will be established. Courses that have no direct equivalent are coded as a transfer course at the appropriate level (e.g. 100 level, 200 level). An adviser or student can also request a review of a transfer course from the ISU academic department most closely aligned to the discipline of the transfer course. That departmental review engages faculty/staff in the department and a review of the syllabus and additional material provided by the student. ISU publishes [course equivalency guides](#) for its major transfer institutions.

In addition to course-level transfer, ISU maintains a variety of articulation agreements and transfer

plans. The majority of these transfer plans are with Iowa's 15 community colleges. [Public Connections I](#), an agreement between the three public universities and Iowa community colleges, outlines agreements on the acceptance of Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees and other statewide agreements. ISU also maintains articulation agreements and transfer plans at the program and institution level. In developing these plans, ISU and community college faculty review courses to ensure that expectations of content and rigor are equivalent.

As specified in the Catalog, ISU will accept a maximum of 16 credits of career and technical (vo-tech) credits and a maximum of 65 credits total from two-year institutions.

4.A.4. As documented in the Faculty Handbook, faculty within the academic department maintain the responsibility for [curriculum](#) and expectations for [student learning outcomes](#). The [course approval process](#), which originates from faculty in the academic department, specifies course content, level/rigor (e.g. 100 level), credits, and any prerequisite requirements. Assignment of faculty to teach courses is managed by leadership within the academic department. Faculty qualification requirements are outlined in criteria 3.C.2.

Access to learning resources is collaboratively managed across the university. Learning technologies (such as Blackboard) are managed centrally; departments maintain the authority to offer help rooms, special study sessions, etc.; and the Division of Student Affairs provides academic support such as tutoring and supplemental instruction.

ISU does not offer dual credit courses within high schools. ISU does allow qualified high school students to enroll as non-degree seeking students in regular ISU courses (alongside current undergraduate students) through the state's Post-Secondary Enrollment Option of the Senior Year Plus program.

4.A.5. ISU [maintains specialized accreditations in 46 programs through 21 different accrediting bodies](#). For example, ABET accredits 12 programs in the College of Engineering. The College of Design has set the expectation that all programs will be accredited; currently they have accreditation with the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the National Architecture Accrediting Board, the Planning Accreditation Board, and the Council for Interior Design Association. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business provides internationally recognized accreditation for business and accounting programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Teacher preparation programs are accredited by the Iowa Department of Education. As general practice, if an accrediting agency exists for an academic program, the academic department/program is expected to pursue accreditation.

4.A.6. ISU Career Services is a network of college-based and other career offices focused on providing a broad range of career development and search services for students. The college-based career services offices collect information on what students do after graduation, compile a variety department- and college-specific data, and provide data for an [annual institutional 6-month post-graduation status report](#). Data is collected for graduates at all degree levels, with 95% being employed or continuing their education six-months after graduation from ISU.

Quality Initiative

For its Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative, ISU has been working the past two years to develop commonality across the university on the data collection and reporting on initial post graduation success, and increase the use of this data for program improvement. Using post-graduation information to facilitate informed academic program improvements has occurred inconsistently across the University in the past. In addition there are challenges, inefficiencies, and survey fatigue resulting from the duplication of data collection by departments, colleges, and ISU Foundation. This project will continue to evolve over the next 1-2 years.

Sources

- 15-16 Catalog - Admissions Section
- 2013-2014 Post Graduation Career Services Report
- Acad Program Review Sample BOR Report
- Academic Program Review College Schedules
- Academic Program Review Policy - Board Policy Manual
- Accreditations Listing
- Course Approval Process
- Course Equivalency Guide Sample - DMAACC
- Definition of Instruction Types on Course Catalog File
- Faculty Handbook - Chapter 10.7.2 - Student Outcomes
- Faculty Handbook - Chapter 10.8 - Development of Courses and Curricula
- Public Connections I