

Degrees and Awards Policy

Gadsden State Community College awards associate degrees, certificates, and short-term certificates.

An instructional program is defined as a combination of courses and experiences that is designed to accomplish a predetermined objective or set of allied objectives such as preparation for advanced study, qualification for an occupation or range of occupations, or simply the increase of knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, Gadsden State is authorized to certify the successful completion of prescribed courses of study in each instructional program through the awarding of the following degrees and certificates:

The **Associate in Science Degree (AS)** An undergraduate award signifying successful completion of a prescribed course of study (60 to 64 semester credit hours) designed for students planning to transfer to a senior institution to pursue a baccalaureate degree in the sciences or a specialized professional field. Only colleges accredited by SACSCOC are authorized to award this degree.

The **Associate in Arts Degree (AA)** An undergraduate award signifying successful completion of a prescribed course of study (60 to 64 semester credit hours) designed for students planning to transfer to a senior institution to pursue a baccalaureate degree in the liberal arts. Only colleges accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) are authorized to award this degree.

The **Associate in Applied Science Degree (AAS)** An undergraduate award signifying successful completion of a prescribed course of study (60 to 76 semester credit hours) that offers specialization in a technical, business, or semi-professional field qualifying the student for employment upon graduation while providing the possibility for transfer of some credit to a senior institution. Only colleges accredited by SACSCOC are authorized to award this degree.

The **Certificate Award (CER)** - An undergraduate award (less than a degree) signifying the successful completion of a prescribed course of study (30 to 60 semester hours) that provides the student with a specialized set of skills for employment or professional advancement. Certificates are not designed for transfer to a senior institution. All colleges are authorized to award certificates.

The **Short-Term Certificate Award (STC)** An undergraduate award signifying the successful completion of a prescribed course of study (9 to 29 semester credit hours) equipping the student with a focused set of skills for an entry-level position in business and industry. CTE Short-term certificates are not designed for transfer to a senior institution. All colleges are authorized to award short-term certificates.

Requirements for Degrees and Certificates

Colleges must offer degree programs that reflect coherent courses of study that are compatible with their own missions, that are based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education, and that include general education components ensuring a breadth of knowledge that promotes intellectual inquiry and critical thinking. Thus, each degree must consist of coursework from each of the following five areas as defined by the Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC):

- **Area I: Written Composition.** Study in this area ensures effective written communication skills, which are essential in a literate society.
- **Area II: Humanities and Fine Arts.** Study in the humanities addresses the ability to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in literature, philosophy, religion, and the arts, and is fundamental to general education. In addition to literature, disciplines in the humanities and fine arts include, but are not limited to, area/ ethnic studies, philosophy, religious studies, foreign languages, art and art history, music and music history, theatre, and dance.
- **Area III: Natural Sciences and Mathematics.** Study in the natural sciences and mathematics emphasizes the scientific method and quantitative reasoning. Disciplines in the natural sciences, include, but are not limited to, astronomy, biology, chemistry, earth science, geology, physical geography, physics, and physical science.
- **Area IV: History, Social, and Behavioral Sciences.** Study in history and the social and behavioral sciences deals primarily with the study of human behavior, social and political structures, and economics.

Disciplines other than history in this area include, but are not limited to, anthropology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology.

- **Area V: Pre-Professional, Major, and Elective Courses.** Area V is designated for courses appropriate to the degree/major requirements of the individual student.

Students completing courses that have been approved for transfer by the AGSC and are appropriate to their major and/or degree program may transfer these courses with credit applicable to their degree program among two-year and four-year colleges and universities.