

Framework for Programs of Instruction

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Bold title in Table of Contents denotes that the section has been revised.

Purpose and Application

The delivery of programs of instruction is the core business of colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario. As defined in [O. Reg. 34/03](#) under the [Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#), a program of instruction means a group of related courses leading to a diploma, certificate, or other document awarded by the college.

The Act identifies the colleges' objects or mandate to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, postsecondary education and training that:

- assists individuals in finding and keeping employment;
- meets the needs of employers and the changing work environment: and,
- supports the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities.

This binding policy directive applies to all colleges of applied arts and technology and defines expectations for all programs of instruction offered by colleges regardless of the funding source. The binding policy directive does not apply to ministry-funded apprenticeship programs, except for the postsecondary component of the co-op diploma apprenticeship program.

The binding policy directive comes into effect on April 1, 2003, with the following exceptions. To meet publication deadlines and provide students with due notice, the [Credentials Framework](#) (see Appendix A) will become effective with students successfully completing programs of instruction as of September 1, 2004. On the advice of the college system that time and resources were needed to establish and implement effective structures related to a self-regulating mechanism, the self-regulating mechanism, including a board of governors approval of programs of instruction, became effective February 1, 2005.

The [Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000](#) provides the authority for colleges of applied arts and technology to apply for ministerial consent to offer applied degrees subject to the terms and conditions established under the legislation and by the Minister.

For further information regarding this binding policy directive, click on the Contact link to consult with the appropriate [ministry contact](#), listed in the Contacts section on the web site.

Principles

- Colleges play a major role in the achievement of economic prosperity in the province of Ontario through the provision of programs of instruction that prepare graduates to meet the needs of the workplace, the economy, and society.
- A college is best positioned to determine the programs of instruction it should offer based on its own strategic direction and the needs of its community. A college is also best positioned to ensure the ongoing relevance and quality of its programs of instruction.
- Credentials awarded in the college system must be credible and meaningful for, and understood by, students, employers, and the general public.
- A college's decision making processes can be made more effective by enabling students, external stakeholders, and college staff to provide advice on matters relating to the development, establishment, delivery, and review of its programs of instruction.

Glossary

Co-op diploma apprenticeship program: a program of instruction that combines the elements of an Ontario College Diploma and an apprenticeship trade program and leads to the awarding of an Ontario College Diploma and a Certificate of Qualification for a specific trade. This integrated program includes both in-school training as well as on-the-job training based on ministry-approved standards.

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR): a process that uses a variety of tools to help learners reflect on, identify, articulate, and demonstrate past learning. Prior learning can be acquired through study, work, and other life experiences that are not recognized through formal transfer of credit mechanisms.

- **Challenge process:** a method of assessment, other than portfolio assessment, developed and evaluated by subject-expert faculty to measure an individual's learning achievement against course learning outcomes. The process measures demonstrated learning through a variety of written and non-written evaluation methods for the purpose of awarding credit without requiring enrolment in a course.
- **Portfolio assessment:** a method of assessment that involves the evaluation of an organized collection of materials developed by a learner that records learning achievements and relates them to personal, educational, or occupational goals,

in this case, achievement of stated learning outcomes of college courses or programs.

Program of instruction: a group of related courses leading to a diploma, certificate, or other document awarded by the board of governors.

Program standard: a document produced by the ministry that sets out the essential learning that a student must achieve before being deemed ready to graduate. A program standard applies to all programs of instruction in an identified category regardless of the funding source and, for most programs, consists of a vocational standard, a generic skills standard, and general education requirements. Prior to graduation, students must achieve all three parts of the program standard.

Binding Policy Directive

A. Authority to Approve Programs

The board of governors of a college is to approve programs of instruction, consistent with [Section D](#) below, to achieve a comprehensive program of career-oriented postsecondary education and training offered by the college, consistent with the college's mandate and overall strategic direction, the economic and social needs of its local and diverse communities, and government directions and priorities.

B. Credentials Awarded for Successful Completion of Programs of Instruction

A college is to award credentials at the successful completion of programs of instruction consistent with the attached Credentials Framework (see [Appendix A](#)).

C. Advisory Committees

The board of governors is to ensure that an advisory committee for each program of instruction or cluster of related programs offered at the college is established and is made up of a cross-section of persons external to the college who have a direct interest in and a diversity of experience and expertise related to the particular occupational area addressed by the program. The board of governors is to establish in by-law the structure, terms of reference, and procedures for program advisory committees.

D. Programs of Instruction

- I. All programs of instruction with similar outcomes and credentials are to have the same title.
- II. Programs of instruction are to include, along with the vocational outcomes relevant to the particular industry, field of study, business, or profession, the applicable outcomes for essential employability skills and general education as outlined in the Credentials Framework in [Appendix A](#), and further expanded in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#).
- III. When a college chooses to deliver a program of instruction for which a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities [program standard](#) exists, the program must meet all the requirements of the [program standard](#).
- IV. Colleges are to establish a system-wide credentials validation service that will provide reasonable assurance that all postsecondary programs of instruction leading to one of the following credentials – Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, or Ontario College Graduate Certificate (or the French-language equivalent) – offered by the colleges, regardless of funding source, conform to the Credentials Framework and are consistent with accepted college system nomenclature/program titling principles.
- V. Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is to be made available for as many credit courses as possible in programs of instruction in which enrolment is eligible for funding through the general purpose operating grant. If a credit course is to be excluded from PLAR, the reasons and considerations should be clearly documented for the student. Information on the PLAR process is to be made available to the public in the college central admissions publication and posted on the college's web site.
- VI. Colleges are to have protocols in place for students regarding grading, advancement, and dispute resolution. These protocols must be clearly articulated and provided to all students and college staff by posting the protocols on the college web site and by allowing people who do not have Internet access to obtain a copy of the protocols.

E. Applied Degrees

Pursuant to the [Post-secondary Choice and Excellence Act, 2000](#), colleges may offer applied degrees as authorized by consent of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and consistent with the Act and any terms and conditions stipulated in the consent letter up to the level of activity authorized by the Minister.

F. Quality Assurance

- I. Colleges are to establish mechanisms for the review of their programs of instruction to ensure ongoing quality, relevancy, and currency. A college's policy on quality assurance for programs of instruction is to be publicly available.
- II. Colleges may elect to seek program accreditation from external accrediting bodies.

Summary of Responsibilities

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology

The board of governors is responsible for:

- Approving the programs of instruction a college will offer.
- Ensuring that programs of instruction are developed and implemented consistent with [provincial standards](#) where they exist.
- Ensuring that all new and modified postsecondary programs of instruction leading to one of the following credentials – Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, or Ontario College Graduate Certificate (or the French-language equivalent) – receive system-wide validation that the programs of instruction conform to the Credentials Framework and are consistent with accepted college system nomenclature/program titling principles.
- Ensuring that credentials awarded to students on successful completion of their respective programs of instruction are consistent with the Credentials Framework.
- Ensuring that program advisory committees are established.

- Ensuring that protocols for grading, advancement, and dispute resolution are established and publicly communicated.
- Ensuring that programs of instruction offered by the college are reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

The ministry is responsible for:

- Working with the college system in monitoring the programs of instruction offered in the system to ensure that the mandate of the system is fulfilled.
- Maintaining the Credentials Framework, including the generic employability skills and general education policy, in consultation with the colleges.
- Developing, reviewing, and approving [program standards](#) in consultation with the colleges and external stakeholders.

Appendix A: Credentials Framework

A college is to award credentials at the successful completion of programs of instruction consistent with the Credentials Framework detailed on the following pages.

3.0 Programs
Framework for Programs of Instruction
Minister's Binding Policy Directive

This framework represents the *minimum* provincial requirement for credentials to be awarded and applies to all programs of instruction, regardless of funding source.

	Non-Credit	Certificate	Ontario College Certificate ▼	Ontario College Diploma ▼	Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼	Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼	Applied Degree
1. Scope of Curriculum Outcomes: Breadth and Depth							
1.1 Complexity of Knowledge and Vocational Outcomes	Locally determined	Complexity of knowledge may focus on preparing graduates to begin postsecondary studies or may focus on targeted vocationally specific skills.	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards , where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge would prepare graduates to perform in a range of varied activities or knowledge application situations where the range of contexts in which the choice of actions required is usually clear, and complexity in the	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards , where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge cover the planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skill and knowledge application across a broad range of technical and/or administrative requirements; coordination; and	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards , where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge involve analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution, and evaluation across a broad range of technical and/or management functions. Opportunities may exist for new/additional applications of technical, creative,	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards , where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge would enhance the ability of graduates to perform a more specialized range of activities, most of which would be complex or non-routine. Leadership and guidance may be involved when organizing self or others, as well as when contributing	Degree level standards established by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) are applied by PEQAB when it makes recommendations to the Minister under the authority of the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000.

3.0 Programs
Framework for Programs of Instruction
Minister's Binding Policy Directive

	<i>Non-Credit</i>	<i>Certificate</i>	<i>Ontario College Certificate ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Diploma ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼</i>	<i>Applied Degree</i>
			<p>range of options to be applied is limited. Complexity of knowledge prepares graduate for further postsecondary studies. Performance of a prescribed range of functions involving known routines and procedures and some accountability for the quality of outcomes.</p> <p>Applications may include some complex or non-routine activities involving individual responsibility or autonomy and/or collaboration with</p>	<p>evaluation. Performance of a range of skills, with associated knowledge, showing substantial depth in some areas where judgment is required in the planning and selecting of appropriate equipment, services, or techniques for self and others.</p> <p>Applications involve participation in the development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and</p>	<p>or conceptual knowledge to practical and/or real world situations. Performance of a significant range of skills associated with fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts in relation to either varied or highly specific functions. Contributions to the development of a broad plan, budget, or strategy are involved, as is accountability for self and others in achieving the outcomes for a team.</p> <p>Applications of skill and knowledge involve significant judgment in the planning, design, and technical leadership and/or guidance functions</p>	<p>to technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature. Performance of a prescribed range of skilled operations that includes the requirement to evaluate and analyze current practices and develop new criteria, and may include the provision of some leadership and guidance to others in the application and planning of skills.</p> <p>Applications may involve some complex or non-routine activities involving individual responsibility or autonomy and/or leadership and</p>	

3.0 Programs
Framework for Programs of Instruction
Minister's Binding Policy Directive

	<i>Non-Credit</i>	<i>Certificate</i>	<i>Ontario College Certificate ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Diploma ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼</i>	<i>Applied Degree</i>
			others as part of a group or team.	autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organizing others. Applications may include participation in teams, including teams concerned with planning and evaluation functions. Group or team coordination may be involved.	related to products, services, operations, or procedures. The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary, with most weighting placed on depth.	guidance for others as part of a team or group. The qualification may involve broadening the skills individuals have already gained in a postsecondary program of instruction, or developing vocational knowledge and skills in a new professional area.	
			▼ Portions of the above section are reproduced by kind permission of the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Australia.				

3.0 Programs
Framework for Programs of Instruction
Minister's Binding Policy Directive

	Non-Credit	Certificate	Ontario College Certificate ▼	Ontario College Diploma ▼	Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼	Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼	Applied Degree
<i>1.2 Essential Employability Skills</i>		Locally determined	Graduates have achieved the basic fundamental, personal management, and teamwork skills to get, keep, and progress in a job-of-choice, or to enter further postsecondary studies. There is an appropriate depth of achievement, consistent with the essential employability skills learning outcomes, identified for this level of credential.	Graduates have achieved the basic fundamental, personal management, and teamwork skills to get, keep, and progress in a job-of-choice. There is an appropriate depth of achievement, consistent with the essential employability skills learning outcomes, identified for these levels of credentials.		Locally determined	

3.0 Programs
Framework for Programs of Instruction
Minister's Binding Policy Directive

	Non-Credit	Certificate	Ontario College Certificate ▼	Ontario College Diploma ▼	Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼	Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼	Applied Degree
1.3 General Education		Locally determined	Locally determined, however it is desirable that graduates at this level will have been engaged in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study, especially in programs of instruction intended to lead to further postsecondary study in a related field.	Consistent with the general education policy for colleges of applied arts and technology, graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically involve students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely from vocational learning opportunities. This learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.		Locally determined	
2. Typical Duration for Completion		<p>Specific design, delivery, and duration of curriculum is locally determined and may vary among programs and disciplines, recognizing that some colleges may use a system other than hours (e.g., credits) to determine program completion.</p> <p>It is understood that a range of hours may apply to the achievement of program learning outcomes leading to any particular credential.</p> <p>This framework outlines the typical duration of a program at this level for students entering with the minimum admission requirements.</p>					

3.0 Programs
Framework for Programs of Instruction
Minister's Binding Policy Directive

	Non-Credit	Certificate	Ontario College Certificate ▼	Ontario College Diploma ▼	Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼	Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼	Applied Degree
		Locally determined	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 2 academic semesters or approximately 600 to 700 equivalent instructional hours.	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 4 academic semesters or approximately 1200 to 1400 equivalent instructional hours.	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 6 academic semesters or approximately 1800 to 2100 equivalent instructional hours.	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 2 academic semesters or approximately 600 to 700 equivalent instructional hours.	
3. Admission Requirements	Locally determined	Locally determined	Admission requirements are established in O. Reg. 34/03 and Minister's Binding Policy Directive on Admissions Criteria.			Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, Degree, or equivalent	
4. Name of Credential	Locally determined, excluding the use of the words contained in any provincially approved	Certificate Certificat	Ontario College Certificate Certificat d'études collégiales de l'Ontario	Ontario College Diploma Diplôme d'études collégiales de l'Ontario	Ontario College Advanced Diploma Diplôme d'études collégiales de l'Ontario – niveau avancé	Ontario College Graduate Certificate Certificat post-diplôme de l'Ontario	

	<i>Non-Credit</i>	<i>Certificate</i>	<i>Ontario College Certificate ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Diploma ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Advanced Diploma ▼</i>	<i>Ontario College Graduate Certificate ▼</i>	<i>Applied Degree</i>
	<i>credential titles. May use such terminology as Attestation, Award, Statement, etc.</i>						

Appendix B: Essential Employability Skills

Context

“Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student’s program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living, and for lifelong learning.¹”

The teaching and attainment of these Essential Employability Skills (EES) for students in, and graduates from, Ontario’s colleges of applied arts and technology are anchored in a set of three fundamental assumptions:

- These skills are important for every adult to function successfully in society today.
- Our colleges are well equipped and well positioned to prepare graduates with these skills.
- These skills are equally valuable for all graduates, regardless of the level of their credential, whether they pursue a career path, or they pursue further education.

Skill Categories

To capture these skills, the following six categories define the essential areas where graduates must demonstrate skills and knowledge.

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Information Management
- Interpersonal
- Personal

¹ As defined by the ACCC /HRDC EES committee July, '03

Application / Implementation

In each of the six skill categories, there are a number of defining skills, or sub skills, identified to further articulate the requisite skills identified in the main skill categories. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the skill categories, the defining skills within the categories, and learning outcomes to be achieved by graduates from all postsecondary programs of instruction that lead to an Ontario College credential.

EES may be embedded in General Education or vocational courses, or developed through discrete courses. However these skills are developed, all graduates with Ontario College credentials must be able to reliably demonstrate the essential skills required in each of the six categories.

Skill Category	Defining Skills Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	Learning Outcomes: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading • writing • speaking • listening • presenting • visual literacy 	<p>Communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.</p> <p>Respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.</p>
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning • analyzing and using numerical data • conceptualizing 	Execute mathematical operations accurately.
Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysing • synthesising 	<p>Apply a systematic approach to solve problems.</p> <p>Use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.</p>

Skill Category	Defining Skills Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	Learning Outcomes: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluating • decision making • creative and innovative thinking 	
Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering and managing information • selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project • computer literacy • internet skills 	<p>Locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.</p> <p>Analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.</p>
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team work • relationship management • conflict resolution • leadership • networking 	<p>Show respect for diverse opinions, values belief systems, and contributions of others.</p> <p>Interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.</p>

Skill Category	Defining Skills Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	Learning Outcomes: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing self • managing change and being flexible and adaptable • engaging in reflective practices • demonstrating personal responsibility 	<p>Manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.</p> <p>Take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences.</p>

Appendix C: General Education Requirement

Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and, who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens student's generic skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and / or societal importance.

Themes

The following themes will be used to provide direction to colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfil the General Education requirement for programs of instructions:

- Arts in Society
- Civic Life
- Social and Cultural Understanding
- Personal Understanding
- Science and Technology

Appendix C1 that follows provides statements of rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each theme. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall goals of General Education.

Courses

It is understood that the discrete courses developed and offered to deliver General Education will include measurable outcomes that provide evidence of student achievement. Typically, students' achievement is demonstrated by their ability to apply

these specific learning experiences to a broader understanding of the themes under study.

Requirement

The General Education requirement for programs of instruction is stipulated in the Credentials Framework ([Appendix A](#) in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction).

While the inclusion of General Education is locally determined for programs of instruction leading to either a college certificate or an Ontario College Certificate, it is recommended that graduates of the Ontario College Certificate programs have been engaged in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study.

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study, and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 – 5 courses offered and designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities (courses).

These learning opportunities would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes. Further clarification is provided in Appendix C2 Questions and Answers related to the implementation of the general education policy in programs of instructions in colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario.

Appendix C1: Themes for Courses Developed to Provide General Education

Theme 1. Arts In Society

Rationale:

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

Theme 2. Civic Life

Rationale:

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, and Canada's place in the international community.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

Theme 3. Social and Cultural Understanding

Rationale:

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content:

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics.

Theme 4. Personal Understanding

Rationale:

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

Content:

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

Theme 5. Science And Technology

Rationale:

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this

area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic, and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This development and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content:

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing), and assorted computer-related technologies, should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.

Appendix C2: Questions and Answers

The following series of Questions and Answers is offered as an attempt to provide clarity of understanding and ease of implementation of the General Education requirement for programs of instruction offered by colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario and leading to one of the following credentials: Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, or Ontario College Advanced Diploma. It is not presented as an exhaustive list.

1. Why is there a new general education policy?

Under the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction, released effective April 1, 2003 to support the [Ontario Colleges Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#), certain initial changes to the previous policy were noted. Specifically, the policy changes were noted as:

- in Ontario College Certificate (one-year) programs there is an expression of the desirability that students have exposure to general education that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study, along with the removal of the requirement for one 45-hour course per semester; and,
- in Ontario College Diploma and Ontario College Advanced Diploma (two-year and three-year) programs, while maintaining the requirement for some discretely designed general education learning opportunities (i.e., 3 – 5 courses), the requirement for one 45-hour course per semester is removed.

This was an initial step in the re-articulation of the requirement on General Education. At the same time the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities undertook to work cooperatively with the Coordinating Committee of Vice-Presidents, Academic to further update the general education requirement in light of the Credentials Framework, by updating and re-articulating the goals and objectives originally established in 1994.

2. What is different under the new general education policy?

There is a re-articulation of the purpose and goals of General Education in colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario.

There is a change (from 8 to 5) in the number of broad goal areas, now described as themes, to assist colleges in the development, identification, and delivery of courses designed to fulfil the General Education requirement.

There is no longer a mandated time requirement (i.e., one 45-hour course per semester) attached to courses used to deliver General Education.

As noted above, there is a change in the requirement of having courses of a prescribed number of hours throughout a program of instruction. In programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Certificate (a program that would be considered as a one-year post-secondary program), there is room for a college to determine, locally, whether or not to have discrete courses in their programs.

In programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, the requirement is to have students engage in 3-5 discrete courses in an area of study that is outside their chosen vocational field of study.

3. The credentials framework says that for general education in Ontario college diploma and Ontario college advanced diploma programs, "... this will typically involve students taking 3-5 courses (or the equivalent)...". What does this mean?

In some colleges student progress is expressed through an accumulation of 'credits' rather than 'courses'. There is no standard measure for 'credits' as used in this context. As a result, a college is expected to provide students with learning opportunities outside their chosen field of vocational study that would be equivalent to 3 – 5 courses. For example, if a college expressed successful completion of a course as being worth 3 credits, a student would have to accumulate a total of 9 to 15 credits to meet the 'equivalent of 3-5 courses'.

4. Does a college have to have one course delivering general education in each semester, or could they be 'clustered'?

The requirement is that students are engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study. The requirement for this to be done in 3-5 courses applies to the entire program of study. As such, the courses developed to deliver General Education may be offered at any point throughout the program of instruction.

5. Can either discipline-specific or interdisciplinary courses be used to deliver general education?

As with the previous policy, courses and their learning outcomes may be drawn from either a specific discipline, or from across disciplines. Courses developed or used to deliver General Education provide a vehicle for an increased depth of understanding of a broad topic area, and are not intended to develop proficiency in specific applied skills.

For example, a course developed under the theme of Arts in Society may include experimentation with painting in order to provide students with a firsthand experience with the challenges and accomplishments of the artist under study, and not primarily for the purpose of developing painting skills.

6. How many of the five themes must be addressed through courses developed to deliver general education?

Students are to be exposed to at least one discipline outside their main field of study so as to increase their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. Although students are encouraged to develop life-long learning habits and pursue areas of interest, of equal importance is the need to expand those areas. In order to achieve an appropriate level of breadth, students are encouraged to select courses in more than one theme. The achievement of breadth is dependent on colleges having sufficient offerings and the students being able and required to take advantage of them.