



Career and Technical Education Programs of Study

District of Columbia's Definition of Size, Scope and Quality

Local applications shall provide assurances that the eligible recipient will provide a career and technical education program that is of such size, scope and quality to bring about improvement in the quality of career and technical education programs Section 134)b)(6). Perkins funds are intended to support, or assist in developing programs of the following size, scope and quality:

Size:

- Program must include a State Recognized Program of Study containing a coherent sequence of courses

Scope:

- Courses must include rigorous, coherent CTE content aligned with challenging academic standards
- Links, or pathway maps, must exist between the secondary and postsecondary programs of study
- Offer the opportunity, where appropriate, for secondary students to acquire postsecondary credits, and
- Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Quality:

- Demonstrate the need for a CTE program or POS by presenting labor market data and economic development projections that indicate current or projected employment prospects in the program's occupational area.
- Program must incorporate State approved standards
- Use industry-recognized, rigorous CTE technical skill standards
- Submit to State approved evaluations, or assessments
- Use technical skills assessments (TSAs), where applicable, to measure student attainment of technical skills
- Provide professional skill development opportunities for administrators and faculty to foster CTE POS design, implementation, and improvement
- Establish or affiliate with a pre-established CTE Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) among business and industry, postsecondary, and other community stakeholders central to the CTE Program or POS's design, implementation, and improvement
- Develop articulation or dual enrollment agreements between the secondary and postsecondary schools.

Definition of Terms

1. Rigorous

Learning environments that are intended to be stimulating, engaging and supportive. In education, *rigor* is commonly applied to lessons that encourage students to question their assumptions and think deeply, rather than to lessons that merely demand memorization and information recall. For example, a fill-in-the-blank worksheet or multiple-choice test would not be considered rigorous by many educators. Although courses such as AP United States History are widely seen as rigorous because of the comparatively demanding workload or because the course culminates in a difficult test, a more expansive view of rigor would also encompass academic relevance and critical-thinking skills such as interpreting and analyzing historical data, making connections between historical periods and current events, using both primary and secondary sources to support an argument or position, and arriving at a novel interpretation of a historical event after conducting extensive research on the topic.

While some educators may equate *rigor* with *difficultly*, many educators would argue that academically rigorous learning experiences should be sufficiently and appropriately *challenging* for individual students or groups of students, not simply difficult. Advocates contend that appropriately rigorous learning experiences motivate students to learn more and learn it more deeply, while also giving them a sense of personal accomplishment when they overcome a learning challenge—whereas lessons that are simply “hard” will more likely lead to disengagement, frustration, and discouragement.

One common way in which educators do use *rigor* to mean *unyielding* or *rigid* is when they are referring to “rigorous” learning standards and high expectations—i.e., when they are calling for all students to be held to the same challenging academic standards and expectations. In this sense, *rigor* may be applied to educational situations in which students are not allowed to “coast” or “slide by” because standards, requirements, or expectations are low. In these cases, rigor is connected to the concept of educational equity, the belief that all students—regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, or disability—should pursue a challenging course of study that will prepare them for success in later life. For example, students of color, on average, tend to be disproportionately represented in lower-level classes with lower academic expectations (and possibly lower-quality teaching), which can give rise to achievement gaps or “cycles of low expectation” in which stereotypes about the academic performance of minorities are reinforced and perpetuated because minority students are held to lower academic standards or taught less than their peers (for a related discussion, see stereotype threat). Enrolling students of color in “rigorous” academic programs that hold them to high academic standards is one way that educators may attempt to close achievement gaps and disrupt the self-perpetuating nature of low expectations.

2. **Coherent** - The term **coherent curriculum**, or *aligned curriculum*, refers to an academic program that is (1) well organized and purposefully designed to facilitate learning, (2) free of academic gaps and needless repetitions, and (3) aligned across lessons, courses, subject areas, and grade levels (a curriculum, in the sense that the term is typically used by educators,

encompasses everything that teachers teach to students in a school or course, including the instructional materials and techniques they use).

3. **Challenging Academic Standards** - Learning standards are concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. Learning standards describe educational objectives—i.e., what students should have learned by the end of a course, grade level, or grade span. More specifically, in education, the term standards-based refers to systems of instruction, [assessment](#), grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating understanding or mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. In a school that uses standards-based approaches to educating students, learning standards determine the goals of a lesson or course, and teachers then determine how and what to teach students so they achieve the learning expectations described in the standards. Most standards-based approaches to educating students use state learning standards to determine academic expectations and define “proficiency” in a given course, subject area, or grade level. The general goal of standards-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential to success in school, higher education, careers, and adult life. ***In addition, see the definition of rigorous as it relates to challenging academic standards.***
4. **Postsecondary Credits** - the primary methods used to determine and document that students have met academic requirements on a postsecondary level. Credits are awarded upon completing and passing a course or required school program.

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5. **Industry-Recognized Credentials** - Following Perkins IV, states have been urged to use technical skill assessments aligned with industry-recognized standards to measure CTE students’ technical achievement. Industry-recognized credentials—a component of Perkins IV-mandated POS—offer a strategy for improving instruction and signaling that students have acquired a defined set of skills and knowledge.

The benefits of industry-recognized credentials are many: High school and postsecondary CTE programs that lead to associate degrees, certificates, and industry-recognized credentials can help young people find skilled employment and give them the option of later returning to school for a higher degree. CTE programs that earn industry certification receive high-quality curricula and professional development opportunities for their instructors. And employers benefit from a more highly skilled workforce with certifiable skills.

An education- and work-related credential can be defined as a verification of an individual’s qualification or competence issued by a third party with the relevant authority to issue such credentials (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). The term credential encompasses educational certificates, degrees, certifications, and government-issued licenses.

Certificate - Certificates are awarded upon the successful completion of a brief course of study, usually one year or less but at times longer, primarily in public or private two-year institutions of higher education, university extension programs or non-degree granting postsecondary

institutions like area career and technical education schools. Upon completion of a course of study, a certificate does not require any further action to retain.

Certification - Certifications indicate mastery of or competency in specific knowledge, skills or processes that can be measured against a set of accepted standards. These are not tied to a specific educational program, but are typically awarded through assessment and validation of skills in cooperation with a business, trade association or other industry group. After attaining a certification, individuals often must meet ongoing requirements to maintain the currency of the certification.

License - A license is legal permission, typically granted by a government agency, to allow an individual to perform certain regulated tasks or occupations. A license can be obtained by meeting certain requirements set forth by the licenser, usually by completing a course of education and/or assessments. Upon receipt of a license, ongoing requirements may be necessary to maintain the license.

Degree - An academic degree is an award or title conferred upon an individual for the completion of a program or courses of study over multiple years at postsecondary education institutions.

The term “industry-recognized,” used with respect to a credential, means a credential that—

A. is sought or accepted by employers within the industry or sector involved as a recognized, preferred, or required credential for recruitment, screening, hiring, retention or advancement purposes; and,

B. where appropriate, is endorsed by a nationally recognized trade association or organization representing a significant part of the industry or sector.

*As stated on The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) website -
www.acteonline.org*



Size, Scope, and Quality
Metrics

Indicator	No.	Description	LEA Meets	LEA Does Not Meet
Size	1.0	Program must include a State Recognized Program of Study containing a coherent sequence of courses		
Scope	2.0	Courses must include rigorous, coherent CTE content aligned with challenging academic standards		
	2.1	Links, or pathway maps, must exist between the secondary and postsecondary programs of study		
	2.2	Offer the opportunity, where appropriate, for secondary students to acquire postsecondary credits, and lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.		
Quality:	3.1	Demonstrate the need for a CTE program or POS by presenting labor market data and economic development projections that indicate current or projected employment prospects in the program's occupational area		
	3.2	Program must incorporate State approved standards		
	3.3	Use industry-recognized, rigorous CTE technical skill standards		
	3.4	Submit to State approved evaluations, or assessments		
	3.5	Use technical skills assessments (TSAs), where applicable, to measure student attainment of technical skills		
	3.6	Provide professional skill development opportunities for administrators and faculty to foster CTE POS design, implementation, and improvement		
	3.7	Establish a CTE Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) among business and industry,		

		postsecondary, and other community stakeholders central to the CTE Program or POS's design, implementation, and improvement		
	3.8	Develop articulation or dual enrollment agreements between the secondary and postsecondary schools.		