



## Proposed Standards for Reduced Credit Applied Bachelor's Degree

DEAC is proposing a new category of degree program for a reduced-credit, 90-semester-hour applied bachelor's degree in recognition of evolving trends in higher education and the growing emphasis on flexible, competency-based, and workforce-aligned degree pathways. As institutions seek to create more streamlined programs that maintain academic integrity while reducing time to completion and cost for students, the 90-credit bachelor's degree is emerging as a viable model. This approach aligns with practices increasingly adopted within higher education accreditation, where accrediting bodies are developing standards that accommodate innovation without compromising academic rigor. DEAC's proposal ensures that institutions offering such programs continue to meet high standards for learning outcomes, program viability, and institutional accountability.

The proposed addition to Standard V is shown in red, underlined font.

### A. General Program Requirements

*The institution's programs are aligned with its mission. Program content, student learning outcomes, and standards of student performance are appropriate to the academic discipline and level of the credential conferred. Entry and completion requirements for each program are clearly defined and consistent with commonly accepted program expectations for awarding the credential. Program length for degree programs must adhere to the following minimum standards:*

1. Associate degree – minimum 60 semester hours or equivalent.
2. Applied Bachelor's degree – minimum of 90 semester hours or equivalent.
3. Bachelor's degree – minimum 120 semester hours or equivalent.
4. Master's degree – minimum 30 semester hours or equivalent beyond the bachelor's degree.
5. First Professional degree (at any level) – minimum 50 semester hours or equivalent beyond the bachelor's degree.
6. Applied doctorate – minimum 48 semester hours or equivalent beyond the master's degree.
7. Research doctorate – minimum 60 semester hours or equivalent beyond the master's degree.

Additionally, a new definition for an "Applied Bachelor's Degree" would be added to the Glossary located in the appendix:

Applied Bachelor's Degree

An undergraduate degree program that emphasizes practical learning that is designed to prepare students for immediate entry into specific career fields. Applied Bachelor's Degree programs require between 90 and 120 credits. The program name of any Applied Bachelor's Degree programs must be clearly designated as such, e.g. "Applied Bachelor of Science" or "Bachelor of Applied Arts". Applied Bachelor's Degree programs must meet both industry-based expectations and state requirements and must clearly communicate their intended career pathways to prospective students.

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