

# Responses to CDHE's questions about GE Waivers for BAS Degrees

**Why it is important that a gtPathways waiver be granted for this program (address the nature of the degree relative to the profession, if applicable, including work pathways for students entering the program)?**

BAS degrees serve a fundamentally distinct purpose from traditional baccalaureate programs, focusing on practical, hands-on learning directly applicable to specific career fields. These degrees are designed to address critical workforce shortages in technical and applied fields while serving post-traditional students seeking career advancement. Through industry partnerships and under advisement from advisory boards, our curriculum responds rapidly to technological and methodological changes, ensuring immediate workplace relevance. The degrees build upon AAS foundations, creating clear pathways from technical education to advanced professional practice. Unlike traditional BA/BS programs, BAS degrees target working professionals who need specific technical competencies that employers consistently report difficulty finding. The waiver is essential to maintain this workforce-focused mission while ensuring students receive an education that maximizes their return on investment through direct career benefits.

**Which specific components of the gtPathways curriculum are requested to be waived or modified?**

We propose a hybrid approach to general education that maintains educational quality while maximizing career relevance.

- Following Model 1 (Integrated Competency Approach), colleges would embed essential gtPathways competencies within technical courses. For example, technical writing requirements would be satisfied through courses requiring industry-specific documentation techniques.
- Following Model 2 (Reduced and Targeted Requirement), colleges would require 15-18 credits of targeted general education courses that align with career pathways. This approach addresses the challenge that requiring 31 credits of traditional general education in a 120-credit program significantly reduces space for essential technical content. The specific modifications would vary by program but would ensure that mathematics, communication, and other core competencies are taught in ways that directly connect to professional practice such as math appropriate to the career path (e.g., Math for Clinical Calculations or Technical Math).

**How will the institution ensure that the program includes a “core of courses” that provide a general education through which “students demonstrate competency in reading, critical thinking, written communications, mathematics, and technology”, as articulated in Colorado Revised Statutes 23-1-125(3)? How will the general education provided respond to the 10 competencies of the gtPathways curriculum?**

Colleges address those classes by aligning the best general education (and sometimes gtPathways) courses to fit the degree. Our approach aligns with HLC's Assumed Practices while maintaining focus on career preparation. The core curriculum will ensure:

- Breadth of Learning: Including exposure to humanities, sciences, mathematics, and social sciences, contextualized for applied fields
- Intellectual Skills Development: Embedding critical thinking, communication, and quantitative reasoning within technical coursework
- Integration with Major: Ensuring general education complements and enhances technical specialization
- Assessment: Regular evaluation of general education outcomes for continuous improvement

All programs will maintain Colorado's proscribed competencies in reading, critical thinking, written communications, mathematics, and technology and HLC's minimum requirements while maximizing the relevance of these competencies to professional practice.

#### **4. What additional degree requirements, such as those associated with accreditation and licensure, make it impossible to include the full gtPathways in the program curriculum?**

Industry requirements and rapid technological evolution necessitate significant technical coursework that cannot be reduced without compromising program quality. The limited credit hours available in a 120-credit program, combined with specific technical competencies required by employers and industry accreditors, make it impossible to include 31 credits of traditional gtPathways courses while still meeting workforce development imperatives. Our industry partners consistently emphasize the need for graduates with immediately applicable skills, requiring us to maximize technical content while maintaining educational quality.

Accreditation (e.g. ACEN) and sometimes professional licensure requires specific courses that need to be included. Flexibility in general education will enable colleges to meet those requirement.

#### **5. How will the absence of a gtPathways waiver potentially harm students (if, for example, it extends the time to degree beyond four years, or results in certain critical courses being left out of a program)?**

Without this waiver, students would face several challenges:

- Extended time-to-degree due to additional general education requirements
- Reduced technical content necessary for career success
- Misalignment between educational requirements and industry needs
- Decreased return-on-investment as programs become less directly applicable to career advancement

- Potential barriers for working professionals who need specific technical skills rather than traditional academic coursework

With the waiver, colleges can ensure that the students are getting the needed general education courses and competencies without taking gtPathways courses better designed for transferable degrees.

**6. How will the institution ensure that the gtPathways waiver will not create barriers to student transfer?**

BAS degrees serve a distinct purpose from traditional BA/BS programs and are not designed to compete with transfer-focused degrees. These programs specifically target working professionals seeking career advancement who typically do not intend to transfer to traditional academic programs or pursue academic graduate degrees. The historical context of gtPathways, emerging from HB 01-1298 (2001), focused primarily on traditional academic transfers rather than applied baccalaureate degrees designed for workforce needs. Students entering these programs understand their career-focused nature, and the waiver enhances their ability to achieve their professional goals without unnecessary academic barriers.