State of Iowa Department of Corrections

Policy and Procedures

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Chapter 5: OFFENDER PROGRAMS
Sub Chapter: ACADEMIC & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
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Subject: POST SECONDARY EDUCATION
CEA Standards: Pending
PREA Standards: N/A
Responsibility: Nick Lamb
Effective Date: May 2025
Authority:

1. PURPOSE

The committee makes the following policy recommendations based on the common goals of IDOC:

A. To deliver high quality and recognized accredited post-secondary programming to the incarcerated individuals of the IDOC.

B. To work collaboratively between the IDOC and contracted adult education partners to deliver approved classes and programs in IDOC facilities comparable with adult education opportunities in the community.

C. To ensure that post-secondary programming is offered in accordance with the established operational policies and guidelines of both IDOC.

D. To provide programs and services which link to community reentry considered in light of future employment opportunities.

E. To utilize best practices and data collection for program decision making and evaluation.

F. To provide education staff with up-to-date and relevant professional development opportunities to support the delivery of high-quality programming.

2. POLICY

It is the policy of the IDOC to provide incarcerated individuals with educational, re-entry life skills and vocational opportunities to function responsibly in society upon release.

3. DEFINITIONS - As used in this document:

A. Academic Education Plan - Collectively the following

1. A formal, organized program of instruction to provide basic skills and learning opportunities related to obtaining knowledge from literacy through post-secondary (doesn't exclude vocational or technical courses/CTE); and

2. Documents created for each student indicating current levels of achievement, as determined by the student's performance or approved standardized tests (CASA) and HiSET examinations, and other instructional plans developed by appropriate education staff.

B. Academic Program - A pre-college program or post-secondary program.

C. ADA - The Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA's purpose is to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and to provide enforceable standards addressing discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to state and local governments' programs and services.

D. Career and Technical Education - A formal, organized program of instruction designed to provide practical, mechanical, vocational/technical skills and learning concepts.

E. Correspondence Course – A distance education course completed through U.S. mail, and most often, at the student's own expense.

F. CTE - Career and Technical Education.

G. Education Program - Either an Academic Program or CTE Program.

H. Evidence-Based Practices - The objective, balanced, and responsible use of current research and the best available data to guide policy and practice decisions, such that outcomes are improved. This includes:

   1. Focusing on approaches demonstrated to be effective through empirical research rather than through anecdote or professional experience alone;

   2. Ongoing, critical review of research literature to determine what information is credible, and what policies and practices would be most effective given the best available evidence; and

   3. Rigorous quality assurance and evaluation to ensure that evidence-based practices are replicated with fidelity, and that new practices are evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

I. GED - The diploma issued for successfully completing the general educational development test and is the equivalent to a high school diploma.

J. High School Diploma - An official document issued by a State Board of Education accredited school recognized as a high school diploma of the state.

K. HSEC - High school equivalency certificate, which is received after completing an HSEC Program indicating the educational achievement of high school equivalency learning in the areas of writing skills, social studies, science, reading skills, and math, equivalent to completion of a high school diploma

L. HSEC Program - A formal, organized program of educational instruction for students who have not yet earned an HSEC or a High School Diploma.

M. IEP - Individualized Education Plan.

N. Individualized Education Plan - A written statement for a student with a disability eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The written statement must outline special education services, accommodations, goals, and objectives to be implemented to assist the student with a disability to make progress in Academic Education or CTE programs.

O. IDEA - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA is the federal law that supports special education and related service programming for children and youth with disabilities. IDEA ensures students with a disability are provided with free appropriate public education tailored to their individual needs. The Act was previously known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act from 1975 to 1990.

P. LWOP -Life without parole.

Q. Memorandum of Understanding - An agreement between two or more parties in a formal document that is not legally binding, but signals the willingness of parties to move forward with a contract and provides a way for parties to express they can agree to proceed with their mutual goals.

R. MOU - Memorandum of Understanding.

S. National Reporting Systems - An outcome-based reporting system for State-administered, federally funded adult education programs.

T. NRS - National Reporting Systems.

U. Reasonable Accommodation - A modification or adjustment to a task, the environment, or the way things are usually done to allow individuals with disabilities to access services in an equitable manner, pursuant to the ADA.

V. Special Education - Specially designed services that meet the requirements of federal law as reflected in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and which are appropriate to the student's needs, conducted at public expense, conducted in the least restrictive environment, adhere to the Department of Education standards, and are provided in conformity with the student's IEP.

W. CASAS - Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System.

X. Classification Committee - Committee of individuals at a correctional facility that has been appointed by the Department of Corrections or the correctional facility's governing body for the purposes of determining whether a student must be transferred from the correctional facility.

4. PROCEDURES

A. Responsibilities to Administer Programs

1. The Iowa Department of Corrections Post Secondary Coordinator of Education shall be responsible for oversight of the post-secondary programming in correctional facilities.

2. Each post-secondary institution administering any Education Program within any Iowa Department of Corrections correctional facility is responsible for maintaining its own curriculum. The post-secondary institution must execute a MOU with the IDOC to serve the respective correctional facility. Upon agreeing to a MOU, any post-secondary institution administering an Education Program shall share with the IDOC information regarding class offerings and schedules for the Education Program. If a post-secondary institution intends to adjust any class offerings or schedules after entering a MOU, the post-secondary institution shall notify the IDOC to any such adjustment.

3. The Post Secondary Coordinator of Education shall ensure that a MOU between the higher education program and the correctional facility is reviewed and revised, either by someone appointed by the Director of Education or by the relevant post-secondary institution, at least once every three years.

4. Pathway Navigators (PN), under the supervision of the IDOC Post Secondary Coordinator, within each facility will maintain educational data in accordance with IDOC annual report requirements.

5. Disability Services

   Post-secondary institutions will provide reasonable accommodations to meet ADA requirements for post-secondary students and coordinate these services through their respective Offices of Disability Services on their campus.

B. Post-Secondary Programs

1. Post-Secondary programming refers to post-secondary-level courses provided to incarcerated individuals who have received a GED, HSED or equivalent High School Diploma, either in person or remotely, by an external provider or are eligible for post-secondary-level instruction under Ability to Benefit policy.

2. Post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigators shall submit a list of all textbook and class materials to be distributed to students 20 days before the semester start to the facility Treatment Director. The materials will be reviewed and approved by the correctional facility at least 10 days prior to the

start of the semester and may be brought into the facility for student distribution.

3. Each student will receive an instructional materials receipt at the time of issuance of materials. These materials will have been reviewed and approved by the correctional facility Treatment Director and are approved for use and possession by the incarcerated individual for the duration of the semester. Materials listed on the instructional materials receipt shall not be considered part of the maximum books/personal property for the incarcerated individual.

4. Post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigators will provide the Iowa Department of Corrections Treatment Director and classification committee at the facility with a list of students enrolled in classes each semester, with semester dates, at the respective correctional facility. Classification committees will strive to ensure that these incarcerated individuals are not transferred during the semester. If a registered student is to be considered for transfer, the post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigator shall be contacted and consulted in the decision to assure that semester completion options are considered.

5. IDOC transfer decisions will make consideration of incarcerated individual's enrollment status and program completion. Whenever possible, student educational program completion shall be an important factor in transfer decisions. Post-secondary institutions' staff and pathway navigators will be informed and involved in these considerations.

6. Post-secondary institutions in IDOC shall develop and maintain program articulation agreements with all institutions offering programs in IDOC. These agreements shall define transfer of credits and pathways to program completion.

C. Tuition/Financial Aid

1. The Post Secondary Coordinator of Education, or any individual authorized to negotiate MOUs on behalf of the Department of Corrections for any individual correctional facility, shall use reasonable best efforts to ensure that MOUs entered into with any post-secondary institution will ensure that post-secondary students shall qualify for in-state residency tuition by nature of incarceration within the state.

2. Incarcerated individuals in correctional facilities may apply for financial aid through grant programs. Post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigators in each facility shall assist students in correctional facilities with applications for financial aid. College staff/pathway navigators shall use best

efforts to ensure each student applies for all financial aid for which they are eligible.

D. Correspondence and Asynchronous Courses

1. Institutions providing Post-Secondary Programs shall provide face-to-face instruction whenever possible. Institutions providing Post-Secondary Programs may only offer Correspondence Courses if there are no better alternatives.

2. IDOC correctional facilities shall allow students in correctional facilities to apply for and participate in Correspondence Courses. However, administrators will use best efforts to ensure the correction facility offers in-person options for Post-Secondary Programs.

3. Post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigators at correctional facilities shall notify any resident of a correctional facility requesting permission to participate in a Correspondence Course of any available similar Education Program that provides an opportunity for face-to-face learning.

E. Access to Post-Secondary Facilities While in a Correctional Facility and Upon Release

The Post Secondary Coordinator of Education, or any individual authorized to negotiate MOUs on behalf of the Department of Corrections for any individual correctional facility, shall use reasonable best efforts to ensure that MOUs entered into with any post-secondary institutions provide that:

1. The post-secondary institution cannot prohibit any student who was formerly in a correctional facility from attending the institution in-person upon release; and

2. Post-secondary students formerly in correctional facilities are permitted to live in post-secondary institutions housing and have access to all post-secondary institutions facilities within formal release and legal restrictions and in accordance with post-secondary institutions housing policy for all students.

F. CTE Programs

1. CTE Programs shall be offered with the option of post-secondary institutions credit whenever possible. The IDOC Post Secondary Coordinator of Education will develop pathways with post-secondary institutions to provide credit CTE programs.

2. An incarcerated individual shall be eligible for a CTE Program upon receipt, or proof of prior receipt, of a certificate of completion of a High School Equivalency Program, an HSED or High School Diploma, or Ability to Benefit status.

3. A CTE Program shall include classes or institutional/community-based work experience or some combination thereof; and offer its students the opportunity to earn academic credit that may be allocated toward to an associate's or bachelor's degree, or be linked directly to high-demand, high-wage employment in their area of reentry.

4. Participation in a CTE Program does not prohibit a student from simultaneously participating in an Academic Program. Students in correctional facilities shall have the ability to remain in both a CTE Program and an Academic Program.

5. Upon completion of a CTE Program and satisfaction of certification requirements, a student in a correctional facility will receive a certification by the post-secondary institutions and/or the state/national certification entity in the given area.

G. Admission and Attendance

Eligibility

1. Each correctional facility shall make Education Programs available to all residents of correctional facilities; and

2. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, subject to any statutory requirements, IDOC incarcerated individuals cannot be disqualified from participating in any education programming by nature of their sentence, unless the program leads to certification or employment where licensure cannot be obtained due to the nature of the sentence.

H. Admission Procedures

Post-secondary institutions and the IDOC shall work together to ensure that programming is adapted to meet the educational needs of incarcerated individuals at the following security/incarceration levels:

1. Students with Specific Needs: Individuals with a disability whose IEP team identifies them as a priority for placement, individuals eligible for Title I funding, and students with a specific criminogenic need.

2. Short-Term Sentences: Individuals with short-term remaining sentences. Short-term sentences may range from one to five years.

3. Mid-Term Sentences: Individuals with mid-term remaining sentences. Mid-term sentences may range from five to fifteen years.

4. Long-Term Sentences: Individuals with long-term remaining sentences. Long-term sentences may range from fifteen to any number of years less than a life sentence.

5. Life Sentences: Individuals who are serving life sentences.

I. Assessment Procedures

1. Each post-secondary institution shall be responsible for adopting an admissions process for identifying and selecting incarcerated individuals for admission to post-secondary institutions to include incarcerated individuals in all the following:

   a. Students with Specific Needs: Individuals with a disability whose IEP team identifies them as a priority for placement, individuals eligible for Title I funding, and students with a specific criminogenic need.

   b. Short-Term Sentences: Individuals with short-term remaining sentences Short-term sentences may range from one to five years.

   c. Mid-Term Sentences: Individuals with mid-term remaining sentences. Mid-term sentences may range from five to fifteen years.

   d. Long-Term Sentences: Individuals with long-term remaining sentences. Long-term sentences may range from fifteen to any number of years less than a life sentence.

   e. Life: Individuals who are serving life sentences.

2. Post-secondary institutions will use the IDOC screening policy to enroll students in correctional facility programs. All incarcerated individuals will receive timely written notification of post-secondary institution admission decisions from the respective institution.

3. If necessary, the pathway navigator shall arrange for a new resident of a correctional facility to undergo the academic assessment required to be placed into an Education Program, which must take place soon as possible upon a new resident of a correctional facility's arrival.

4. The pathway navigator in each correctional facility shall be responsible for making students aware of all educational opportunities available at the facility.

J. Student Expectations

1. Students shall adhere to all institution rules and regulations.

2. Students shall maintain regular attendance and participation in class.

3. Students shall maintain grades in accordance with post-secondary institution standards for enrollment.

K. Post-Secondary Institutions IDOC Assignment

1. The IDOC shall not remove students from post-secondary unless there is a mitigating security issue. If this occurs, IDOC will notify the respective post-secondary institution staff and pathway navigator of the security removal within 48 hours of the removal.

2. The IDOC may remove a student from post-secondary institution assignments if the student receives a major discipline report during a semester. The removal will depend on the severity of the behavior and security risk as determined by the classification committee and college partner. If removal is deemed necessary, students will have to sit out one cohort or semester before reenrolling.

3. The IDOC shall not remove post-secondary students during a semester for institutional transfer unless there is a mitigating security issue. Should an emergency transfer be required within semester, the IDOC and the post-secondary institutions shall work together to enable the student to complete via distance education.

L. Access to Technology

1. The IDOC recognizes the need for technology to support post-secondary institutions. The following are goals to establish this resource for all students enrolled in post-secondary institutions.

2. Post-secondary students will be provided IDOC approved technology access to services comparable to main campus students to complete educational programs. This includes:

   a. Access to on-line courses and academic support materials which have been reviewed and approved by the IDOC for correctional delivery;

b. Each post-secondary participant (student) could receive a computer or tablet if the College plans on using this technology for the semester. Students will have access to a computer lab daily; and

c. Each post-secondary participant (student) could receive a computer or tablet access to basic software necessary for post-secondary institutions instruction, to include:

1) Word Processing

2) Database program

3) Spreadsheet program

4) Presentation program

3. Each post-secondary incarcerated individual college student shall be able to securely save and access post-secondary institutions papers and projects on a computer, tablet or drive for the duration of the semester in which they are enrolled.

4. Post-secondary students shall report IT issues to their respective post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigator. The post-secondary institutions staff and pathway navigator will report the issue to IDOC IT. IDOC will respond to the IT Ticket within 48 hours of receipt.

M. Post-Secondary Institutions/Satellite Campuses

1. The IDOC and post-secondary institution partners shall work together to create a community among students enrolled in correctional facilities.

2. To the extent possible, correctional facilities shall house students enrolled in post-secondary programming together, to create a physical community of post-secondary students.

3. Wherever possible, the IDOC may house students together and provide that students have similar schedules, which creates a campus-like environment for those enrolled in post-secondary programming.

4. The respective post-secondary institutions shall provide students in post-secondary housing units with IDOC approved student support services and IDOC approved student activities that are comparable with campus student life and housing.

N. Communication of Educational Offerings

1. The IDOC correctional facility and post-secondary institution shall work together to develop a program overview of post-secondary programming at the respective facility. This overview shall be published and made available to all incarcerated individuals in the facility.

2. The post-secondary program offerings shall be presented in all orientation presentations at IDOC as part of any new incarcerated individual orientation process.

3. The post-secondary institutions shall develop a site-specific student handbook and make the handbook available to all students and prospective students at the correctional facility.

4. The post-secondary institutions handbook shall include Equal Educational Opportunity and Student with Disabilities policies and rights.

5. The post-secondary institutions handbook will be reviewed, revised, and approved annually by the IDOC Director of Education and IDOC Post-Secondary Education Coordinator. The IDOC review will consist of a review of the Standard Student Handbook.