## Frameworks for Bachelor’s Degrees in the Washington Community and Technical College System

History and Supporting Legislation

The authority to offer Applied Baccalaureate Degrees was made permanent in 2010 ([SSB 6355](https://app.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2009-10/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6355-S.SL.pdf)). These degrees are intended to:

* Serve professional and technical degree-holding students who have limited access to bachelor’s degree programs after completing their associate of applied science degree or its equivalent.
* Provide opportunities for working adults who are place-bound to a specific geographic region and want to earn a baccalaureate degree.
* Fill skills and credentials gaps and needs in specific occupations, particularly specific professional and technical fields requiring applied knowledge and skills.

The authority to offer Bachelor of Science in Computer Science Degrees is limited to Computer Science and was approved in 2021 ([SSB 5401](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5401&Initiative=false&Year=2021)). These degrees are intended to:

* Fill a gap in options available for students because it is not offered by a public four-year institution of higher education in the college's geographic area or if there is a shortage of programs demanded by industry and workforce.

The [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](https://nwccu.org/tools-resources/glossary/#:~:text=An%20undergraduate%20degree%20normally%20representing,a%20more%20applied%20educational%20orientation.) (NWCCU) defines a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Arts but is silent on the Bachelor of Applied Science:

* Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.S.). An undergraduate degree normally representing about four years (120 semester or 180 quarter units) of college study, or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience. The B.A. degree implies a more liberal education orientation and the B.S. degree implies a more applied educational orientation.

Key Degree similarities and differences

A review of BAS and BS degrees in community and technical colleges outside of Washington state provided insight to how these various degree types have been implemented in other systems. Specifically:

* BS and BAS degrees offered within the same institution generally had the same core general education requirements.
* BS degrees generally had more science and math components than BAS degrees, but these additional requirements were contained within the major credits, not as an addition to the required core general education.
* The math and science content in BS degrees varies widely based on discipline.
* BAS degrees were generally designed to build on a technical associate degree whereas BS degrees were designed as a four-year, freshman entry pathway with transfer in options.

Proposed framework for Washington CTC BACHELOR’S degrees in Technical fielDs

Bachelor of Applied Science Degrees will continue to serve as the primary transfer destination for students completing Associate of Applied Science (AAS) and Associate of Applied Science – Transfer (AAS-T) degrees.

* These BAS programs will be closely tied to workforce entry and will build on the technical competencies that students learn during the completion of their associate degrees.
* Each BAS program will be focused on a particular occupation and/or narrow set of related occupations (ex. Cybersecurity, Information Management, Data Analytics, etc.).
* Each BAS program will meet the general education requirements required by the SBCTC ([General Education Requirements](https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/programs-services/bachelors/RecommendationforGenEdRequirementsforBASJuly2015.pdf)).

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science degrees will provide opportunities for either a four-year, freshman entry pathway or as a transfer destination for students completing the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA), Associate in Computer Science DTA/MRP, and Associate in Science-Transfer (AS-T)-Based Major Related Programs –Track 2.

* The BS programs will prepare students for both entry into the workforce and for admittance to graduate school.
* The first- and second-year coursework will be more general in nature than the narrowly focused AAS and AAS-T degrees that are the foundation of BAS degrees.
* The BS programs will prepare students for a wide variety of jobs in the computer science field and degree outcomes should include the underlying theory that guides application in practice.
* Each BS program will meet the general education requirements required by the SBCTC ([General Education Requirements](https://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/programs-services/bachelors/RecommendationforGenEdRequirementsforBASJuly2015.pdf)); additional math and science courses that are appropriate to meet learning outcomes may be added as degree requirements.

Next steps

* The Washington CTC System has a proven track record of creating BAS programs that create opportunities for students to continue their technical education in specific fields; this work should continue, and new BAS programs developed to meet changing industry needs.
* The transfer degrees that will serve as the transfer pathways for the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science should be revised with the following goals in mind:
  + Create flexible pathways for students that do not require students to make definitive decisions about their transfer destination at the beginning of their educational pathway. Coursework included in these degrees should prepare students for entry into computer science programs at any institution (CTC, public or private BI) that signs on to the agreement. Institutions with entrance requirements that are not compatible with a statewide degree could instead provide advising guides for an existing transfer degree.
  + Center equity in the development of new degrees and pathways. Consider barriers that have historically excluded students from these degrees. Provide rationale for course selection. Courses essential for success in industry should be included while excluding courses that create barriers but do not contribute to outcomes essential to employment and admission to graduate school.