



Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas

KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS
AO-K Handbook
2021

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I. Introduction

Accelerating Opportunity: Kansas (AO-K) is an integrated education and training (IET) model delivered in partnership between adult education programs and career technical education programs. AO-K is designed to help students complete career pathways, earn industry-recognized credentials, and begin their careers. Career pathways are approved career technical education (CTE) programs at Kansas's public community and technical colleges where:

- CTE courses are team taught with a basic skills instructor
- Pathways are a minimum of 12 hours in a high-demand or high-wage occupation
- Institutions provide wraparound support services
- Supplemental instruction is provided

Nationally, IET programs such as AO-K have been proven to help students earn more credit hours, complete programs, and succeed where they may have otherwise struggled.

This handbook serves as a guide for institutions and practitioners in Kansas who wish to implement the AO-K model on their campuses and support their students working toward earning CTE credentials and degrees.

II. Student Qualifications

This section will detail student qualifications and other requirements for the AO-K model.

Qualifications

AO-K is designed to support low-skilled students in their chosen AO-K pathway. To determine student eligibility, institutions must use the following criteria:

- A) The student qualifies for adult education; and
 - 1) The student does not have a high school diploma, or is an English language learner, or;
 - 2) The student tests into the adult education range using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) 11&12 in reading, math, or language.
 - a. Reading <617, or;
 - b. Math <657, or;
 - c. Language <631.
- B) The student is adequately prepared to succeed in an AO-K pathway. KBOR recommends students only be placed into an AO-K pathway if they score above a 500 in reading, 495 in math, and 510 in language. Programs may place lower-scoring students into an AO-K pathway based on the assessment of the adult education program, but this should only be done with the approval and documentation of the adult education director.

Note: While the AO-K model is designed to help underprepared students succeed, AO-K students do not require their own course sections. KBOR encourages the implementation of the AO-K model into all classes, where appropriate, regardless of the presence of students who do not qualify for adult education. Although present in the classroom, these students would not be entered as adult education students in the Adult Education Student Information System (AESIS).

Requirements

Students enrolled in an AO-K pathway must maintain concurrent enrollment in supplemental adult education courses, where applicable. This may include enrollment in distance education and other adult education resources provided by local programs. Care must be taken to ensure the students' educational development.

III. AO-K Pathways

AO-K Pathways must be a minimum of twelve (12) credit hours. With the exception of Healthcare, all pathways must be a currently approved exit point for an existing CTE program.

Career Pathway Requirements

Institutions seeking AO-K Pathway approval must submit a pathway application, providing additional information on the co-taught courses, adult education activities, workforce preparation activities, occupational training, and support services provided to pathway participants.

The current career pathway application can be found in Appendix A.

IV. AO-K Instruction

Curriculum Requirements

To properly implement the AO-K instructional model, CTE and adult education instructors must work together to develop a common set of learning objectives for co-taught courses within each AO-K pathway. These objectives should describe the integration of adult education content into the CTE classroom and how the team-teaching team will deliver the content to students.

In addition to the course syllabus, each common set of learning objectives should answer the following three questions:

- 1) What specific adult education and literacy content is taught during the course?
- 2) What specific workforce preparation activities are included in the AO-K program?
- 3) What occupational training is included in the AO-K program?

For an example, please refer to the AO-K Career Pathway application in Appendix A.

Team Teaching Models

Team teaching is where two or more teachers work together to plan, conduct, and evaluate the integrated outcomes, curriculum, learning activities, and assessments for the same group of learners. Based on information by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), Kansas promotes the use of one of the six research-based team-teaching models listed below.

Traditional Team Teaching

Teachers actively share instruction of all students.

Collaborative Teaching

Teachers exchange and discuss ideas and theories in front of learners.

Complementary/Supportive Team Teaching

One teacher teaches the content; the other provides follow-up activities.

Parallel Instruction

Teachers teach the same material to different groups.

Differentiated Split Class

Each teacher teaches a group based on their learning needs.

Monitoring Teacher

One teacher instructs while the other monitors student understanding.

The team-teaching model used when implementing the AO-K model may vary based on class, content, or student variables. More information on the different team teaching models, and their implementation, can be found [here](#), or during the periodic team teacher trainings hosted by KBOR staff.

V. Career Navigation

Career navigation is an important aspect of the AO-K model. Career navigation services provide additional supports to students outside of the classroom that remove barriers to participation and completion.

State standards for career navigators can be found [here](#).

VI. High School Equivalency (HSE)

Some AO-K students may already have a high school diploma. Those that do not, should work toward earning their HSE while enrolled in their AO-K Pathway. In Kansas, adult students have two options for earning their HSE, the GED and the Kansas Pathway to Career. Those options are detailed below.

GED

The primary option for students in Kansas to earn their HSE is through the GED. The GED consists of four tests that a student must pass, after which they will have their Kansas State High School Diploma issued. More GED information can be found [here](#).

Kansas Pathway to Career (SB199)

[The Kansas Pathway to Career](#) is a new HSE option that uses completion of an AO-K Pathway as part of the HSE criteria. For a list of participating institutions and qualifying AO-K Pathways, please refer to the [Approved Credentials and Pathways list dated 8-30-2019](#).

In addition to completing their designated AO-K Pathway, students must meet the additional criteria outlined on the [Kansas Pathway to Career Checklist](#). Once the student has completed all of the established criteria, the adult education program must submit a completed Kansas Pathway to Career Checklist, supporting documentation, and a \$25 payment to the designated Kansas Board of Regents staff member. Upon receipt of the required documentation, KBOR staff will verify and approve the student's application, and a Kansas State High School Diploma and transcript will be issued to the student by the Kansas Board of Regents' chosen vendor.

VII. Funding

This section provides an overview of the funding available for both students and institutions. The first part, Student Funding, focuses on the funding available to students to pay for the college courses in their selected AO-K pathway. The second section, State Funded Tuition Reimbursement, provides information on tuition reimbursement programs that reimburse institutions for students who take qualifying courses. The third part, Institutional Funding, focuses on the funding available to individual institutions to pay the additional instructional costs incurred when implementing the AO-K model.

Student Funding

Federal Financial Aid

Students who already have a high school diploma, but still qualify for adult education, may use federal financial aid to pay for the courses in their selected AO-K Pathway, where applicable. These students should follow the normal financial aid process at the institution, with the support of adult education or other Career Navigator resources.

Ability to Benefit

Institutions may grant an ability to benefit exception to AO-K students without a high school diploma who are otherwise Pell-eligible. The ability to benefit process allows qualifying students to use their Pell grant for tiered or non-tiered courses, as well as other expenses in their selected AO-K Pathway. The ability to benefit process may vary by institution, and local programs should discuss with their financial aid office to determine how to best access this funding stream.

State Funded Tuition Reimbursement

AO-K Proviso

The AO-K Proviso is a funding stream that funds tiered courses for AO-K students who do not have a high school diploma. Tuition for these courses is waived by the institution, which then submits for reimbursement during the KHEDS special collection process.

The AO-K Proviso will pay tuition for students up through the end of the term in which the student passes the GED or obtains high school equivalency. For example, if an AO-K student enrolled in spring welding courses passes their final GED test in March, the AO-K proviso will pay for tiered courses through the end of the spring semester. If an AO-K student continues on after they finish the GED process, institutions should assist the student with filling out the FAFSA so they can use federal financial aid to finish their studies.

AO-K TANF

The AO-K TANF Scholarship is a partnership between the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Kansas Board of Regents. The AO-K TANF Scholarship pays for both tiered and non-tiered AO-K courses for TANF eligible students. Qualifying students must fill out a scholarship application, signed by a DCF caseworker, that is then approved by KBOR staff. As with the AO-K Proviso, institutions will waive tuition and fees, and then submit for AO-K TANF reimbursement during the special collection process. KBOR will send the expenditures to DCF, which will then pay the institution directly.

Institutional Funding

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Grant

Implementing the AO-K model requires adding a second instructor to team teach selected CTE courses, increasing instructional costs. While there are often competing priorities for instructor time, team teaching in an IET program is an allowable and encouraged activity for adult education instructors. Institutions and their adult education programs should carefully assess the benefits provided to students using the AO-K model and whether current resources can be reorganized to allow current instructional staff to fill the needs of the AO-K team teacher.

GED Accelerator

GED Accelerator provides institutional incentive funding for adult education participants without a high school diploma who are concurrently enrolled in a CTE program. This incentive applies not only to AO-K

students, but to any adult education student enrolled in a CTE program at a public Kansas community or technical college.

The incentives available under the GED Accelerator are:

- \$1,000 for the first industry-recognized credential earned by qualifying participants
- \$500 when a qualifying participant passes all four GED test modules
- \$170 when a qualifying participant takes all four GED test modules.

VIII. Data

Adult Education Student Information System (AESIS)

AESIS is the student information system that contains all student demographic, attendance, testing, and outcome data for each Kansas adult education participant. AESIS was developed to facilitate federal reporting and accurately track student participant data. As all AO-K students qualify for adult education, their information must be entered into AESIS based on the guidelines in the AESIS manual. However, careful attention must be paid to the additional data requirements of AO-K as defined below.

Student Data

Student demographic, testing, attendance, and outcome data for all qualified AO-K students must be entered into AESIS. In addition to the general adult education data, programs must take care to mark the student as “AO-K” in the **Student Info** tab and fill out the appropriate information under the **AO-K** tab. More detailed information can be found in the [AESIS Manual](#).

Hours of attendance

Hours of attendance must be recorded and entered into AESIS for all qualified AO-K students. Students may demonstrate attendance in a number of ways, including but not limited to:

- 1) CTE class time in which a team teacher is present
- 2) Out of class tutoring
- 3) Supplemental adult education classes
- 4) Distance education including clock time on Aztec/Burlington English or proxy hours using Learner Mastery or Teacher Verification (please see the [Adult Education Assessment Policy](#))

Measurable Skill Gain (MSG)

There are three ways by which an AO-K student might demonstrate an MSG. There is no preference as to how a student earns an MSG.

Exit from Adult Education and Subsequent Postsecondary Enrollment

An MSG is recorded once a current AO-K student officially exits adult education but continues their enrollment in postsecondary education. The MSG only counts if the subsequent postsecondary enrollment occurs within the same fiscal year as the exit from adult education.

Obtaining High School Equivalency

For AO-K students without a high school diploma, an MSG is recorded for the student once they obtain their high school equivalency.

Post-testing

AO-K students may be post-tested using the TABE assessment once they have accumulated the requisite number of attendance hours required by the Kansas Adult Education Assessment Policy.

Kansas Higher Education Data System (KHEDS)

KHEDS is the portal through which public postsecondary institutions in Kansas submit student data, business training and enrichment information, program inventory, course inventory, and courses within programs. Information entered into KHEDS supports informed decision-making and funding determinations through the collection, analysis, and reporting of Kansas postsecondary education data.

Special Collection

For detailed information on the KHEDS special collection, please refer to the [KHEDS manual](#). The purpose of this section is to provide information about the data verification process between AESIS and KHEDS when submitting for AO-K Proviso, AO-K TANF, and GED Accelerator funding.

Social Security Number (SSN)

The most important aspect when submitting for funding through the AO-K Proviso, AO-K TANF, or the GED Accelerator is that students' social security numbers match in both AESIS and KHEDS. The SSN match is the basis for all data verification checks, and if the numbers do not match, no funding will be awarded.

For students who have provided an SSN, institutions should check to ensure that no data entry or typographical errors have occurred in either system.

For students who do not provide an SSN, adult education programs will assign a proxy SSN that begins with the letter A (A**-**-****). Edits are in place that will allow the postsecondary institution to submit the same number in the special collection documents, allowing for the match process between the two data systems to successfully run.

Fiscal Year/Academic Year

Given the special collection and academic year collection cycles, it is possible that a student who was enrolled in AO-K would appear in one fiscal year in AESIS but be reported in the KHEDS special collection during the subsequent fiscal year. This typically occurs when a student enrolls in summer courses that are not reported until the AY collection in October.

In these cases, adult education programs should roll the AO-K student from one fiscal year to the next with an entry date of 07/01 of the current fiscal year. The student must be given no (0) hours of attendance and does not need to have test scores entered. This will allow the verification between AESIS and KHEDS to successfully run, and funding to be awarded.

Appendix A

A separate AO-K Application form should be completed and approved for each AO-K Pathway. Please direct any questions to:

Erin Guardiola, Project Coordinator, eguardiola@ksbor.org, (785) 430-4278.

1. Institutional Information			
College Name:	<i>Castle Black Institute of Technology</i>	ABE Center Name:	<i>Castle Black Adult Education Center</i>
AO-K Coordinator:	<i>Jon Snow</i>		
Name, Title	<i>Lord Commander</i>		
Phone, E-mail	<i>(555) 462-7669</i>		
	<i>Lrdcmdr998@cbit.edu</i>		

2. New AO-K Program Information			
Pathway Name:	<i>Welding</i>	**Pathway CIP Code:	<i>48.0508</i>
Start Date:	<i>01/01/2020</i>	KHEDS Program Code:	<i>WELDA</i>
*Award Level/Credit Hours:	<i>Cert A</i>		
Industry-recognized credential(s) obtained through this pathway:	<i>AWS - 1F, 2F, 1G</i>		
Using the KS Labor Data, https://klic.dol.ks.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx , find the KS labor data for each occupation.			
Occupation Title:	Long-term Demand:	Median Wage:	
<i>welders, cutters, solderers, and brazer</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>\$40,320</i>	

*Award Levels: SAPP 1-15 credit hours. Cert A 16-29 credit hours. Cert B 30-44 credit hours. Cert C 45-59 credit hours. AAS 60-68 credit hours.

**If you are unsure of the CIP code or KHEDS program code, please contact the person responsible for data at the institution.

3. Pathway Entrance Criteria			
a. Skill Level -- National Reporting System (NRS) Level			
Lowest Level Required:			
3			
b. TABE Assessment Score		Minimum Score Required for Entrance into Pathway (Note single or multiple test areas as applicable to the Pathway.)	
	Math	Reading	Language

4. Identify all pathway courses		
Course ID	Course Title	Credit Hours
WELD0100	Welding Safety/OSHA 30	2
WELD0105	Welding Blueprints	3
WELD110	Cutting Processes	3
WELD0120	SMAW	3
WELD0130	GMAW	3
WELD0140	GTAW	3
WELD201	OXY Fuel Welding	1
BUSN0250	Obtaining Employment	1
Total:		19

Please add rows as needed.

5. Identify co-taught pathway courses ***			
Course ID	Course Title	Credit Hours	Adult Education Content
WELD0100	Welding Safety/OSHA30	2	<i>Insert Standards Here</i>
WELD0105	Welding Blueprints	3	<i>Insert Standards Here</i>
BUSN0250	Obtaining Employment	1	<i>Insert Standards Here</i>
<i>*Add rows as needed</i>			

*****Please attach course syllabi and common set of learning objectives for each co-taught course(s) in the pathway:**

In addition to the course syllabus, each common set of learning objectives should answer the following three questions:

- 1) What specific adult education and literacy content is taught during the program?

The co-instruction provided in the AO-K Welding Cert A program at the Castle Black Institute of Technology focuses on building student reading, writing, communication, and basic math skills. Those skills specifically align with the standards listed in table 5 above.

- 2) What specific workforce preparation activities* are included in the AO-K program?

The AO-K Welding Cert A program includes sections on researching, applying, and obtaining employment. Additionally, the program includes integrated academic content focused on reading, writing, communication, and math skills needed to obtain employment and succeed as a welder.

* Workforce Preparation Activities: activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment.

3) What occupational training* is included in the AO-K program?

The AO-K Welding Cert A provides students with the welding, safety, and occupational skills necessary to obtain entry-level employment as a welder with proficiency in basic welding position and types.

* Occupational Training - An organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels. Local areas must give priority consideration to training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area. Such training must:

- 1) Be outcome-oriented and focused on an occupational goal specified in the individual service strategy;
- 2) Be of sufficient duration to impart the skills needed to meet the occupational goal; and
- 3) Lead to the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential.

