

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Direction de la formation continue et du soutien

ATTESTATION OF COLLEGE STUDIES (ACS)

**GUIDELINES FOR DEFINING THE SCOPE OF OCCUPATIONS
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PROGRAMS**

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Introduction

Local programs leading to an Attestation of College Studies (ACS) form a segment of the vocational and technical training programs offered in Québec. As such, these programs are developed according to the principles of the competency-based approach. In broad terms, this approach is a process for designing programs that involves analyzing the tasks of a trade or occupation, transforming those tasks into competencies and defining them as objectives.

Technical training programs are aimed at providing students with the competencies they need to enter the job market, practise a trade or occupation and continue to develop their occupational skills throughout their careers. They are also aimed at meeting the need for a skilled work force.¹ Local programs leading to an AEC follow the same basic principle.

To support colleges in their process of developing programs leading to an ACS, the Direction de la formation continue et du soutien of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport is providing some guidelines that will assist them in defining the occupations for which they wish to offer short-term training and help them to respond rapidly to the needs of the job market.

¹ Québec, MEQ, Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue, *Élaboration des programmes d'études techniques – Guide de conception et de production d'un programme* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), 1.

Definition of an Occupation

The definition of an occupation must include at least the following elements:

- A corpus of shared knowledge
- Agreed-upon standards of practice
- An occupational organization that represents it

An occupation is a set of tasks focused on an aim and on goals that are specific to an area of occupational activity.

In this respect, an ACS should cover a coherent set of tasks having the following characteristics:

- They are associated with the exercise of well-defined roles.
- They involve clearly defined occupational duties.
- They contribute to shaping the occupational identity of the employee.

Occupations and the ACS

In developing local programs leading to an ACS, the first step is to define the scope of the occupation for which the college wishes to offer short-term training.

Note that the *College Education Regulations* link programs of study leading to an ACS to “any area of training specific to a program of technical studies leading to a Diploma of College Studies” (s. 16). In light of this, it is useful to examine the categories of occupation for which ACSs can be defined (see example in appendix):

- **Sub-occupation:** A sub-category of the main occupation covered by a DCS, this occupation is less complex but it shares some of the same goals. The occupation may be defined in terms of a particular clientele, a restricted area of operation, specific products or results, or niche activities, etc. Eg.: Special Care Counselling in Nunavik (ACS) / Special Care Counselling (DCS root program).
- **Related occupation:** This occupation is different from the main occupation covered by the DCS. However, it may share some of the same aims and have certain other elements in common: fields of knowledge, expected products or results, methods, techniques, procedures, etc. For example, Transition à l’agriculture biologique (AEC) [not currently offered] / Farm Management and Technology (DCS root program).
- **Occupation leading to a specialization:** This is a more complex occupation than the one presented in the corresponding DCS program. It includes exclusive occupational responsibilities that give access to higher qualifications. This occupation has the same aims as the main occupation, but represents a more specialized branch of that occupation. For example: Perfectionnement en techniques d’orthèses orthopédiques (AEC) / Techniques d’orthèses et de prothèses orthopédiques (DEC root program) [These programs are not offered in English.]
- **Emerging occupation:** This is a new occupation responding to new needs or new niche activities that existing training programs cannot serve, or can only serve in part. Example: Développement des produits des terroirs du Québec (AEC) / Tourism; Technologie de la transformation des aliments (DCS root programs) [Only the Tourism program is offered in English.]

Note that local programs leading to an ACS are different from customized training programs. However, they can be considered part of initial training or continuing education and training. See below the definitions that support this distinction.

Initial Vocational Training

A training option leading to the practice of a main occupation and giving access to the job market. This type of training is generally offered in the context of a province-wide program developed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport or by the school system. These programs are generally intended for the Québec population as a whole.

Continuing Vocational Education and Training

Formal or informal training activities enabling adults to enrich their occupational practices, focused on the acquisition of new knowledge, new competencies, the extension of acquired competencies and their upgrading. Continuing education and training, both vocational and technical, help workers to adapt to new contexts, retrain them to gain access to new occupations and prepare them to occupy positions of higher complexity and responsibility.

Customized Training

Training activities offered in the context of a local program, generally developed in a school setting and meeting the specific needs of workers in a given company.

In order to support a decision concerning the relevance of developing training programs leading to an ACS, it is best to review some of the principles governing the development of college programs, whether they lead to the granting of a Diploma of College Studies (DCS) or an Attestation of College Studies (ACS).

General Principles

- To respond to the real needs of the job market
- To offer training that provides qualifications (leading to a diploma or certificate) and is transferable (academic recognition)
- To develop quality programs of study using the competency-based approach
- To harmonize programs of study with the existing technical training available
- To take into account the supply of existing technical training and possible training paths by analyzing the programs of study offered at the secondary level (vocational training) and at the university level.

**EXAMPLES OF OCCUPATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH
ATTESTATIONS OF COLLEGE STUDIES (ACS)**

Food Services and Tourism Sector			
Diploma of College Studies (DCS)		Attestation of College Studies (ACS)	
Titles of root programs	Main occupation titles	Program titles	Name of occupation
Tourism (3 specializations)	Tourism professional	International marketing of Québec tourism	Occupation leading to a specialization
		Tour group coordination	Related occupation
Adventure Tourism	Adventure tourism professional	Aboriginal guiding in adventure tourism	Sub-occupation
		Creation and management of tourism businesses	Emerging occupation