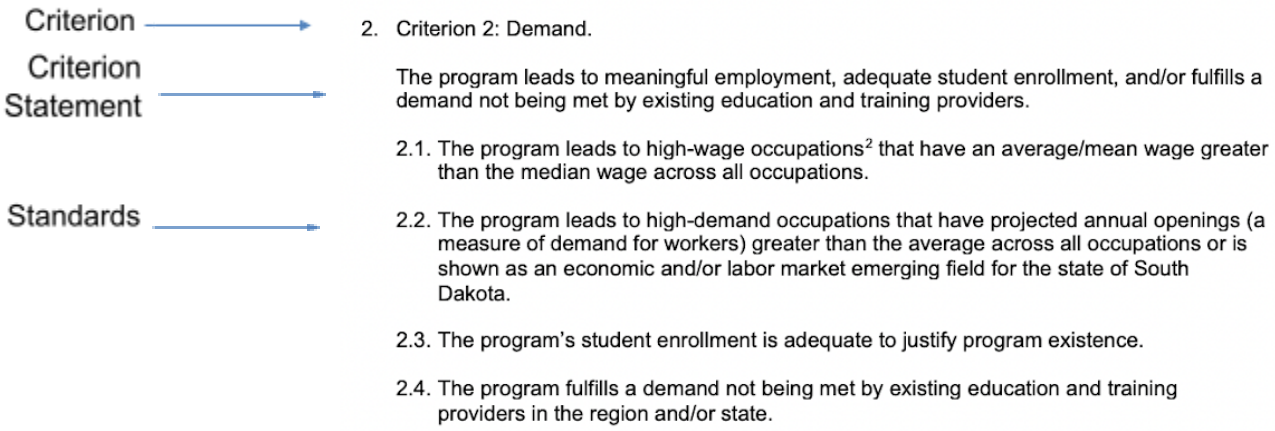
SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION
BP 303.1 - PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REVIEW CRITERIA
INFORMATIONAL GUIDANCE

NOTE: This document serves as supplementary and informational guidance to BP 303.1 – Program Approval and Review Criteria. Accordingly, this document was not submitted to the SDBOTE for approval.

KEY TERMS

1. Criterion: A principle by which the credential should be evaluated.
2. Criterion Statement: A summary of the criterion.
3. Standard: A level of attainment that is used as a measure, norm, or model in evaluations. Under each criterion, standards provide more tangible benchmarks.



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CRITERIA GUIDELINES

- **No single standard is a disqualifier.** Recognizing the diversity of academic programs as well as the industries and communities the technical colleges serve, the criteria provide a framework to evaluate new and existing academic programs. Accordingly, a program not meeting a specific standard or multiple standards does not mean a program cannot or should not be approved; however, it does prompt campus leaders to address such areas. Programs should be reviewed in their totality. For example, a Medical Assistant Diploma program may not meet Standards 2.1. and 2.2. but may position a student for efficient advancement along a career and training pathway, as reflected in Criterion 4.

- **Transparency.** A primary objective of the criteria is to make transparent decisions about quality removed from any one program. The criteria shift conversations around quality from "This program is high quality because 'X,' 'Y,' and 'Z'" to "The program is high quality because it meets the established criteria and standards."

- **Continuity in criteria for both program approval and reviews.** Existing programs are held to the same criteria as new programs. While the current program review is not structured around the criteria, to borrow language from the Higher Learning Commission, these criteria and standards could be considered "assumed practices."

- **Neutral to local policies and procedures.** The criteria do not prescribe specific local policies and procedures; rather, the criteria reaffirm the System's shared governance model. Locally, the technical colleges make policy and procedure decisions that best meet the needs of their students, programs, and institutional circumstances.

- **Striking a balance between generalization and specialization.** Recognizing the diversity of student intentions, academic programs, the industries those programs prepare graduates for, and institutional contexts, the criteria aim to balance both generalization and specialization.

- **Regular revisiting and updating.** The ongoing refinement of the criteria and standards will be necessary to ensure their use and relevance in assuring quality academic programs.

- **An imperfect and incomplete view of quality.** The scope of the criteria focuses first on defining what outcomes are produced by a quality credential (Criterion 1, 2, 4) and the inputs necessary to produce that quality credential (3, 5). Quality, however, is integrated and interdependent. It is nearly impossible to define what constitutes a quality credential without recognizing the pathway, institution, system, state, regional, and federal policies, processes, and systems supporting it.