

PCC Focus Awards Overview

A Focus award is recognition of a student's achievement in a particular lower division collegiate interest area.

Focus awards are a way for students to deepen their knowledge of a particular subject area. Students take courses that address a topic, theme, or geographical area from different perspectives. Such a cluster of courses can also demonstrate a student's area of interest to a transfer institution. The focus award may give transfer students a head start on a major. Focus awards boost retention by encouraging students to develop relationships with faculty in the interest area that extend beyond a single course.

Focus awards do not have the profile or the official sanction of the state. They are not processed through the graduation office and do not appear on a student's transcript. They do, however, enhance a student's learning and demonstrate an interest and commitment on the part of the student. Faculty find that they can write much stronger letters of recommendation for students who have completed a focus award. Currently, there are focus awards in Peace and Conflict Studies, Creative Writing, Journalism, Women's Studies, Asian Studies, and Health Studies.

Development of Focus Awards

Focus Award development is a faculty-driven process and has three broad developmental phases. In the initial phase, interested faculty gather and examine the relationship of their courses to one another. If there is a critical mass of courses, they consider defining one or more clusters of courses students could complete to earn focus award.

In the next phase, faculty seek administrative support for the Focus award. Administrative support includes, but is not limited to: administering the logistics of the Focus Award (when students are ready to have their work recognized, they go to the division office. Their transcript is reviewed. A student who has met the requirements is then given a Focus Award proclamation, documenting their accomplishment), assisting faculty in addressing the guidelines listed below, and providing financial support for brochures or other advertising/marketing ideas.

In the final phase, the faculty group presents the Focus Award to the EAC Degrees and Certificates Committee.

Upon successful completion of the internal review process, the Focus Award is placed in the following year's catalog.

Focus Award Guidelines

1. Focus Awards are developed and maintained by full-time faculty. Faculty identify courses addressing a theme or geographical area and lay out possible combinations of courses students can complete to earn the award. Faculty take the lead in advising students pursuing the award, as well as meeting on a regular basis to review courses to be used for meeting award requirements, and review requests to add or delete courses to the list.
2. Focus Awards have a minimum of 12 credits
3. Required courses should complement AAOT, AS, and/or OTM criteria.
4. Discussions and agreements must be secured between PCC and one or more of PCC's transfer institutions as to the purpose and function of the focus award. The Focus award needs to connect with a major at one or more of PCC's transfer institutions. Ideally, students would have specific contact

information at the transfer institution where they could pursue their interest. PCC faculty should not only review course requirements with 4-year colleagues but should also explore ways in which students can be “handed off” to the major program there and seek specific scholarship opportunities

5. Courses required may be taken at more than one PCC location and/or are offered by several modalities.

6. Written material describing the Focus award must clearly state that this is not a certificate or degree and is thus not officially sanctioned by the state. It also identifies an Administrative office (s) for student contact, program award tracking and conferring.

7. Proposals for new Focus Awards are submitted to the Degrees and Certificates Committee of the EAC for review.