
Policy on Dual Enrollment Programs

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to institutions and evaluation teams about the Commission's expectations regarding dual enrollment programs. Dual enrollment programs, also known as concurrent enrollment programs or dual credit programs, allow high school students to enroll in courses for which college credit is offered. Because college credit is awarded for these courses, the Commission expects that dual enrollment programs will be implemented in a manner consistent with its Standards and policies, including the Policy on Credits and Degrees.

The Commission acknowledges the benefits of dual enrollment programs. As outlined in a February 2013 study commissioned by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, *Dual Credit in U.S. Higher Education: A Study of State Policy and Quality Assurance Practices*,¹ perceived benefits of dual enrollment programs include enhancing and diversifying high school curricula; increasing access to higher education; improving high school and college relationships; and shortening time to degree and lowering the cost of college. However, the report also identified potential drawbacks or "pitfalls" of dual enrollment programs, including inadequate maintenance of academic rigor; inadequate instructor qualifications; failure to provide an authentic college experience; and uncertainty of course transferability.

Institutions considering dual enrollment programs are encouraged to review the standards of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). While the Commission does not require institutions to secure accreditation from NACEP for its dual enrollment programs, NACEP's standards provide useful insight into best practices for dual enrollment programs in the areas of curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation. Further information is available at www.nacep.org.

Commission review of dual enrollment programs

If an institution's dual enrollment program involves only courses that are part of its established curriculum and that are taught by faculty employed by the institution, whether on the main campus, at the high school, or online, or taught by high school faculty who are selected, supervised, and evaluated by the institution, no prior approval by the Commission is required.

If an institution offers dual enrollment courses taught by high school faculty who are not selected, supervised, and evaluated by the institution, then the arrangement must be reviewed by the Commission as a substantive change prior to implementation. This is in keeping with the Policy on Substantive Change which states that "engaging another organization (as by contract) to provide direct instructional services" is a change requiring prior Commission approval.

¹ The study is available at

<https://www.hlcommission.org/Publications/dual-credit-programs-and-courses.html>

If students can earn 50% or more of the credits towards a certificate or degree program through dual enrollment courses that are offered at a high school, then the high school becomes an off-campus instructional location that must be approved by the Commission, consistent with the Policy on Off-Campus Programming.

As is the case with all credit-bearing activities, dual enrollment programs should be discussed in the institution's decennial self-study and the fifth-year interim report in the section on *The Academic Program*.

Guidelines for preparing substantive change proposals for dual enrollment programs:

Institutions preparing substantive change proposals for dual enrollment programs should refer to the Policy on Contractual Arrangements Involving Courses and Programs as well as the Policy on Substantive Change. A copy of the contract(s) with the high school(s) should be included with the proposal.

In their reports, institutions should demonstrate how, through the proposed dual enrollment program(s), the institution will continue to fulfill each of the nine Standards:

1. Mission and Purposes: Provide evidence that the dual enrollment programming is consistent and compatible with the institution's mission and purposes. Include a statement on the objectives of the proposed dual enrollment programming. (Note Standard 1.1)

2. Planning and Evaluation: Describe the institution's planning for the dual enrollment program(s), including how the administration, faculty, governing board and, as appropriate, external groups such as advisory boards, were involved. Describe the provisions the institution has in place to assure the evaluation and improvement of its dual enrollment programming. (Note Standards 2.1, 2.7)

3. Organization and Governance: Describe how the dual enrollment programming will be situated in the institution's organization, including the role of the chief academic officer and the faculty in overseeing the dual enrollment program(s). Discuss how the institution's academic unit will exercise appropriate oversight over the dual enrollment program(s), ensuring both the rigor of the courses and the quality of the instruction. (Note Standards 3.14, 3.15)

4. The Academic Program: Specify which courses will be offered through the dual enrollment program and how they are selected and approved by the institution. The role of the institution's academic governance in the course selection and approval process should be clearly identified. Indicate how the institution will ensure that the courses and instruction offered at the dual enrollment location(s) maintain the same academic standards as those offered on the main campus and that student achievement will be equivalent to that on the main campus. Delineate the learning outcomes for courses offered through the dual enrollment program and demonstrate that the outcomes are appropriate for a course for which collegiate-level credit will be awarded. Specify the level of proficiency with information resources expected of dual enrollment students. Clarify whether students enrolled in dual enrollment courses will earn high school and college credit or just college credit and whether there are any limits on the number of credits earned through dual enrollment that can be applied towards a degree from the institution. Indicate how faculty and students will be informed of the institution's academic integrity policies and how those policies will be applied in dual enrollment courses. (Note Standards 4.5, 4.10, 4.12, 4.36, 4.44, 4.46, 4.47)

5. Students: Identify who is eligible to enroll in dual enrollment courses and the criteria, if any, with regard to academic standing (e.g., Junior or Senior status) and/or academic preparation (e.g., GPA or writing proficiency). The institution should demonstrate how it will assure that those enrolled in dual enrollment courses are prepared to undertake collegiate-level work. Describe how students will be recruited; describe how the institution will maintain appropriate oversight of recruitment materials and enrollment decisions. Describe the processes for students to register for and withdraw from dual enrollment courses. Provide evidence of the institution's capacity to assure that dual enrollment students will have adequate access to student services. (Note Standards 5.4, 5.6, 5.9)

6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship: Identify who will teach the dual enrollment courses, what qualifications are required, and how dual enrollment faculty will be selected, supervised and evaluated. Include a list of faculty, including their qualifications, for the proposed course(s) and/or institutional criteria for faculty qualifications and methods of recruitment and appointment. Note any instances in which a dual enrollment faculty member does not meet the institution's usual criteria for faculty qualifications and explain how the institution has determined that the individual is qualified to teach the dual enrollment course. Discuss the effect of the dual enrollment program(s) on the current allocation of faculty time. If the institution's faculty will serve as "mentors" or "faculty of record" to high school faculty teaching dual enrollment courses, describe those arrangements and how faculty will be selected and compensated for these responsibilities and how the arrangement ensures an appropriate level of student achievement. (Note Standards 6.2, 6.4, 6.7, 6.10, 6.15, 6.16, 6.17)

7. Institutional Resources: Specify all financial arrangements associated with the dual enrollment program, including the amount of tuition and fees to be charged, how revenue will be shared between the high school(s) and the institution, and who supplies textbooks and other educational resources. Provide evidence of the institution's financial capacity to administer the dual enrollment program(s). Discuss how the institution's governing board has considered the financial aspects of the planned dual enrollment programming. Specify where the dual enrollment courses will be offered and, if offered at a location away from the main campus (e.g., at a high school or career center), indicate how the instructional resources (e.g., laboratories, studios, specialized computer software) needed for the course(s) will be provided. Indicate how the institution will ensure that students enrolled in dual enrollment courses have access to collegiate-level resources and how they will receive appropriate training and support in the use of those resources. (Note Standards 7.6, 7.13, 7.15, 7.21, 7.22)

8. Educational Effectiveness: Describe how student learning will be assessed and how the institution will ensure student achievement is equivalent to that of students on the main campus. Indicate how the institution will use assessment results for improvement. (Note Standards 8.2, 8.5, 8.6, 8.8).

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure: Discuss how the institution has reviewed the Commission's standards on integrity and its own policies and procedures on integrity to ensure the appropriate consideration of any relevant issues. Provide evidence that the institution has obtained any necessary state approval and other legal operating authority for its dual enrollment program(s). Include a copy of the approval as an appendix. Provide information about how the dual enrollment programming will be described in official institutional print and electronic publications. Discuss how the institution will ensure that students and prospective students understand the learning opportunities available through dual enrollment. Discuss the information the institution will provide concerning the

applicability of dual enrollment credits to certificates and degrees offered by the institution as well as the possible limitations on transfer of dual enrollment credits to other institutions of higher education. (Note Standards 9.4, 9.7, 9.12)

Submission of the Proposal

An electronic copy of the proposal, including all appendices (single, searchable pdf file) should be submitted to the Commission through the NECHE Institution Portal.

March 2014

Editorial Revisions June 2015, July 2016, April 2021, August 2021