

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

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What is dual credit?

To discuss dual credit programming, courses, and instruction, we will begin with discussing terminology. Many people will use the term, dual enrollment, as a catch-all term that covers different types of programs that connect high school students to college courses. However, these programs may be functionally distinct, with different issues for administrators, instructors, and students.

To distinguish between these programs, we use the terms:

- **Dual credit (DC)** is when a college course can be taken by a high school student to obtain credit towards degrees in both high school and college.
- **Dual enrollment (DE)** is a college course taught in a college, whether online or onsite, by college instructors, which a high school student takes to obtain credit towards degrees in both high school and college.
- **Concurrent enrollment (CE)** is a college course taught in high schools by high school instructors, which a high school student takes to obtain credit towards degrees in both high school and college.
 - [National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships \(NACEP\)](#)

Most of the courses offered for DC, will be introductory and general education courses, and depending on major, general education requirements, and credit transfer policy, some courses taken for DC may not be applied towards a degree at the college the student attends.

What should administrators know?

Dual Credit Differences

Many colleges have had programming for dual enrollment for decades, whether it is support for faculty, students, and high schools or creating specific programming for dual enrollment (DE) students. Increasingly, concurrent enrollment (CE) has become a larger share of dual credit programming, time, and effort. Because it requires significant coordination and intentional planning to [create a quality CE program](#), we will discuss basic things that administrators should know about setting up CE programs.

Basic CE Program Design

There are at least four levels of administrators to be aware of when creating a CE program.

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

- **College-wide CE program administrators:** Where this "office" is housed will differ between colleges, but its main task will be to organize recruitment of high schools and instructors into the program, recruit department faculty liaisons, set program policy with other program stakeholders, gather and assess program outcomes, and organize program wide onboarding, conferences, and trainings.
- **Department faculty liaisons:** Department faculty liaisons may be responsible for approving instructor hires, in coordination with department chairs and others. Their primary role is to provide oversight so that their department courses maintain the rigor expected of the department. Responsibilities may include conducting onboarding, routine meetings, and teaching observations, developing and maintaining master courses, troubleshooting a variety of course, student, and HR issues, evaluating instructor retention, and supervising professional development. Due to the nature of coordinating with and supervising high school instructors, an ideal department faculty liaison should have some knowledge of teaching and learning best practices and experience conducting teaching observations.
- **High school district administrators:** CE program administrators will need to organize the program with high school districts, keeping in mind costs not covered, such as paying for course materials. The high school districts may need to designate an office or liaison within its dual credit programming towards CE programming.
- **High school administrators:** CE program administrators will need to organize with and sometimes recruit high schools. High schools will likely need to designate a CE liaison to help recruit instructors, coordinate course offerings, and, in some cases, identify funding sources to pay for course materials.

A few basic programmatic issues to be aware of:

- **States and districts have different policies and funding:** If you are reviewing this guide, your state has likely already established funding and policy guidelines to start your CE program.
- **Compensation for department faculty liaisons:** The work of a faculty liaison will often be extra contractual and significantly time consuming relative to typical department service work. Depending on your state or college, liaison work may be considered service and is not compensated. To recruit quality candidates as your department liaison, you should strongly consider compensation as extra contractual pay or as course release.
- **Qualifications of high school instructors:** Qualifications to teach CE courses may be set by the college's accreditation body, but if not, the program will need to decide what qualifications are required. While some CE

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

instructors may have a master's in education, very few will have a graduate degree in the subject matter discipline. Some colleges may require a master's in the discipline or a master's degree in any discipline plus 18 credit hours in the discipline. Some colleges may not require much graduate training in the discipline, relying on instructors' experience teaching AP government courses, assessing formal high school teaching evaluations and letters of recommendation, and relying on department faculty liaisons to provide effective oversight. If they aren't set by the accrediting body, the program will need to have clear guidelines for qualifications, stipend pay, participation in professional development, and retention, including procedures for firing or removing an instructor, if necessary.

- **Compensation for high school instructors:** While teaching a college course comes with a few perks instructors enjoy, such as holding students to greater rigor standards, high school instructors may need to be compensated to encourage recruitment and ongoing professional development. Additional perks could include course stipends, professional development stipends, and reduced graduate course costs, particularly to encourage obtaining 18 credit hours or a master's degree in the discipline. Stipends and retention can be tied to completion of professional development and maintaining rigor standards.
- **Different semester timing:** The high school and college semesters do not typically align, which presents opportunities and challenges. Since the high school semester tends to start earlier, instructors can use a couple of its extra weeks to make sure students are onboarded correctly and to address gaps in college readiness. Struggling students can be assessed early so that it may be possible to transfer them to another high school course and drop the college course, possibly without a withdrawal in the transcript. The high school semester may last longer than the college, so leeway must be given to allow for instructors to post grades without needing to submit official grade changes to the registrar's office.
- **Significant coordination:** CE programs require significant coordination and recruitment across many different levels of state and local governments and institutions. Some programs may have significant geographic reach, which will require significant resources to coordinate effectively across all stakeholders. This includes the coordination of underage student enrollment into college courses through high school administrators, students, and their parents, which may result in last-minute registration of students in the first week of the high school semester.
- **Incomplete funding:** While states or school districts may have set aside funding for high school students to enroll in the college courses at a reduced price, the funding may not cover course materials, the revenue received by

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

the college will be significantly lower than normal course enrollment fees, and the students may not matriculate to your college.

- **Student recruitment:** After creating a CE program, it may be useful to give it a name and advertise to encourage recruitment. This will have a cost, but recruited high schools will also advertise to their students. At some point in the process students will need to be made aware of the difference in college versus high school rigor, so that they can prepare for the commitment before they enroll into the course.
- **Support systems:** There is a difference between a DE and CE student. DE students are typically more integrated into the college experience, are more likely to be on campus, and will have easier access to campus resources. CE students are college students and will need access to many of the same college resources that any other student needs, including academic advising geared specifically towards dual credit students and access to the myriad of other resources a part-time student has free access to. This may require an increase in online access to resources.

Creating Supportive Relationships

A best practice for concurrent enrollment programs is to create a formal faculty support structure for high school instructors teaching college courses. Institutions should not assume that a meaningful relationship between the college and the high school instructor will develop on its own. Instead, programs should intentionally build structures that connect CE instructors to the institution, the discipline, and the expectations of college-level teaching. For broader context on the challenges of working across the high school and college systems, see [We're Caught in Between Two Systems](#) and [Strengthening Dual Enrollment Partnerships](#).

This support structure should include at least four components:

- Universal onboarding
- Discipline-specific onboarding with an established faculty liaison
- Regular site visits and collegial mentorship
- Recurring professional development.

Together, these practices create a coherent support system and align with the larger expectations for CE programs described in the [NACEP National Standards for Quality](#). Universal onboarding connects instructors to the institution.

Discipline-specific onboarding connects them to the department and courses. Site visits maintain communication and provide structured opportunities for support and quality assurance, and ongoing professional development sustains the relationship over time.

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

Universal onboarding

All new CE instructors should complete a mandatory and universal onboarding process. This onboarding may be housed in an early college office, teaching and learning center, academic affairs office, or other unit responsible for dual credit administration. The purpose is to introduce instructors to the institution's policies, deadlines, student support services, learning management systems, academic integrity expectations, accommodations processes, assessment procedures, grade submission, and communication channels. Universal onboarding helps ensure that every instructor receives consistent information about the institution regardless of discipline. (See [example topics in an onboarding Canvas course](#). Note that the example uses the term, dual credit, instead of concurrent enrollment.)

While mandatory universal onboarding is important to acclimate new high school instructors to college expectations and resources, the CE program should also have an annual back-to-school conference or meeting to discuss changes to the program, successes, and ongoing challenges before the new high school semester starts. If conducted on campus, the annual meeting may be the only opportunity to have college administrators, department faculty liaisons, and high school instructors in the same space during the school year.

Discipline-specific onboarding

New CE instructors should also complete discipline-specific onboarding with a designated faculty liaison. Institutional onboarding alone cannot address the disciplinary expectations of a college political science course. The faculty liaison can help the CE instructor understand course learning outcomes, appropriate texts or OER materials, define expectations for college-level rigor, assessment methods, grading standards, and discuss how the course differs from high school civics coursework. The faculty liaison should also help DE instructors complete and understand college requirements and processes like correctly submitting properly formatted syllabi for archiving, participating in general education outcomes assessment, and assuring timely and accurate grade submission and course scheduling. (See [Initial Course-Specific Training for Concurrent Enrollment Instructors](#))

While oversight is a role of the faculty liaison, their relationship with the high school instructors should be collegial rather than solely supervisory. High school instructors bring significant pedagogical expertise and knowledge of their students while college faculty bring disciplinary expertise and familiarity with college-level expectations. For a useful discussion of the overlap between secondary and postsecondary teaching, see [A Venn Diagram of Secondary-Postsecondary Teaching and Learning](#). Also, review an example of the [topics covered in a discipline-specific onboarding course](#).

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

Regular site visits and collegial mentorship

Political science departments/programs should conduct regular site visits for CE instructors led by the faculty liaison. These visits should be framed as opportunities for support, communication, and quality assurance rather than as inspections. A promising model is to conduct annual visits during a new CE instructor's first three years and then move to a three-year cycle for experienced instructors, with additional visits available when support is needed or concerns arise.

Prior to the start of the semester or during the site visit, the faculty liaison should review the syllabus and master course and discuss obtaining course materials, LMS and technology use, the prior year's student feedback, updates to department or college-specific policy, and professional development and resource needs. During the site visit, the liaison should observe the learning environment, assess college-level rigor and pedagogy effectiveness, and discuss goals for future improvement. (See examples of a [CE site visit form](#) and a [CE teaching observation form](#))

Professional development

Institutions should provide recurring professional development for dual credit instructors. [Annual gatherings, conferences, workshops, or discipline-specific meetings](#) help prevent CE instructors from becoming isolated from the college and discipline-specific department. These events can also build community among high school instructors, full-time faculty, and the rest of the college.

Professional development should include both general teaching topics and discipline-specific conversations about political science content, controversial issue discussion, civic engagement, media literacy, generative AI, assessment, and student readiness.

Incentives may need to be facilitated to encourage faculty liaisons and instructors to co-create, organize, and participate in professional development programming.

What should instructors know?

For Dual Enrollment Instructors

The following are issues to consider when you have dual enrollment (DE) students in your classroom. For those that teach general education courses, like Introduction to American Government, you may have both DE students and first-semester or first-year students. Some of the issues and solutions mentioned below will benefit most students in your lower level general education courses, whether they are or are not DE students, so adjusting your pedagogy or course design to help DE students

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

will help many of your first-generation students, first-year students, and students who are much older than average.

DE Students are different

Your DE students will likely be younger than the other students in your course. Unlike students that have decided to and experienced, however briefly, the transition from high school to adulthood to college, your DE students have not had the same experience. They will likely be unaware of what it takes to be a successful college student, having the expectations given them within their high school academic culture. One of the first things you can do to help your DE students is to identify who they are and contact them to mention that you are available to help them navigate college resources and offer to meet with them during your student office hours to discuss any questions they may have about being successful in your course and in college.

Reduced College Readiness

While your college may offer first-year college success seminars to students, DE students may not have completed a first year experience or have been taught the knowledge and skills needed for college success. Your DE students may still be developing their reading literacy skills, writing readiness skills, and academic discussion skills. As you design your course for DE students, think about how you can integrate [Skills for College Readiness](#) into your course design and assessments. You can find college success topics, sources, and handouts in the [College Success Lesson Guide for CE Instructors](#) and [Literacy Strategies for College Readiness](#).

Institutionalized Bad Habits

Depending on the academic requirements or culture in your DE students' high school or school district, your DE students may have developed bad academic habits that will limit their college success. For example, high school policy may allow students to turn in late work at any time, make up summative assessments at any time, or receive a minimum failing grade for not turning in work at all. The collegiate expectations in regards to late and make-up work should be clarified in your syllabus and be consistently applied to all students. You may need to mention policy differences a couple times in the first few weeks of the semester, particularly in the fall semester.

Differences in Age and Maturity

Your DE students will likely be underage, and in some cases, be as young as 12 years old. Keep in mind that your underage DE students may have a different level

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

of maturity from your adult students. There may be a few issues that could arise due to differences in maturity.

- First, parents may ask about a student's progress, so you'll need to know your school's procedure in regards to FERPA waivers and how to find out if the student has signed a waiver. You may need to ask the student to attend your student office hours so that you can discuss FERPA and the waiver procedure.
- Second, the classroom culture may change with the number of underage students. With few students, there may be trepidation to participate fully in the classroom, and with many DE students in a classroom, there can be awkwardness when [asking underage students to discuss sensitive topics](#). Using a mixture of pedagogy to encourage engagement and foster the feeling of a safe environment, such as those aimed at [engaging shy students](#), can help ease trepidation, and [typical "hot topic" discussion strategies](#) can foster an environment that will reduce awkwardness, whether it comes from very young students or the much older students in your classroom.
- Third, there will be a range of life experiences that we can attempt to draw upon to foster learning, even from our younger students. However, a classroom with a wide variance in student age, with a mix of high school and much older students, particularly veterans, can lead to a divide in the classroom based on life experience. Keep this in mind as you design class activities that draw upon students' life experiences. Both ends of the age spectrum may hesitate to contribute due to the belief that others wouldn't be able to understand their perspective, or particularly for the younger student, they may hesitate because they feel they don't have much to contribute relative to the older students. Pedagogy that engages in writing and processing of thoughts before pairing and sharing can encourage effective participation.
- Fourth, DE students present the challenge that they are the vanguard of the next generation. Every new generation of students is slightly different from the last. As instructors, we attempt to find ways to connect examples, material, and pedagogy to new students' lived experiences and cultures. It has become increasingly more important to include [social-emotional learning](#) in our pedagogy and find ways to [mix younger students' technological comfort](#) with their anxiety of in-person interaction and find ways to safely build the grit needed for students to succeed. Practicing the mix of technology with in-person interaction would help your older students develop both skills, as well. Additional challenges of DE and future students will likely include in-person verbal discussion, whether in small groups or the full class, and reduced focus and attention, particularly in a verbal-only lecture environment. Setting expectations for discussion early, practicing discussion in each class

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

session, and having patience, particularly early in the semester, will train interpersonal skills and using modern pedagogy practices of [segmenting 10 minutes of lecture with active learning, reflection, and debrief](#) will encourage focus and retention. Lastly, [reading, writing, media literacy](#), and [digital literacy](#), particularly office applications and artificial intelligence models and applications, become increasingly important skills to develop and practice in every class we teach (see [Literacy Strategies for College Readiness](#)).

Access to Support Services

Many DE students are encouraged to take online courses and may rarely, if ever, be on campus or may lack reliable transportation or the means to use public transportation. This will severely limit access to some of the most useful support services. For example, a student that may receive disability accommodations in their high school may not be aware of disability support services at your college or how to enroll into them. If your writing center, tutoring center, advising, library, student office hours, and other student support services do not offer an online component, students may not be able to utilize the resources they need to be successful. One way to help your DE students is to offer at least part of your student office hours in an online format. Additionally, your DE students may not be aware of the variety of support services offered by your college, so it may be useful to remind students of these resources and provide links to their websites in your LMS and syllabus and design assignments that use services with options that allow accomplishing the assignment with online services.

For Concurrent Enrollment Instructors

The concurrent enrollment (CE) instructor is likely to have already thought about and are currently navigating the challenges of teaching younger Gen Z and older Gen Alpha students. You can find tips about pedagogy in our guide [For Dual Enrollment Instructors](#). In addition to pedagogy professional development, there are other challenges that the CE instructor should consider.

It's a College Course

While the course you are teaching awards dual credit, it is first and foremost a college course. Because this is a college course, the course syllabus and policies should align with the policies and procedures of the college, including academic integrity. This can place a burden on the instructor who must align high school and college policies, like reporting academic misconduct to both institutions and giving disability accommodation according to both institutions. Where policies misalign, the college policy takes precedence, but discuss any issues with your faculty liaison. In

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

the end, everyone should want to adhere to policy and maintain rigor but also work in a student's best interests when unexpected circumstances arise.

It is important to note that a CE course will be different from an AP course. First, it will appear on a permanent transcript, whether the student passes or fails. Second, its acceptance for college credit is different from the AP exam. In some circumstances, like when a student completes their degree through your affiliated college or, sometimes, your state college system, completing CE courses may be better than completing AP courses, but if a student is attending a different college, particularly out of state, AP courses may have a more established procedure to award credit towards degree versus credit transfer from another college. Third, a CE course should holistically engage students in a variety of ways with a variety of pedagogy to accomplish its learning outcomes, whereas an AP course has a primary goal of teaching students to receive the highest exam score they can achieve. A CE government course, if done well, can accomplish the goals of fostering critical, analytical, and creative thinking and creating an active and engaged citizen.

Departments Expect Course Rigor

Most faculty in political science departments have an expectation that, if their courses are taught by high school instructors, courses should be taught with the same rigor as if it were taught by department faculty. When college faculty discuss rigor, it often includes appropriate subject matter content, college-level material, assessment, and grading.

Greater rigor standards may be challenging for high school students who may be accustomed to different standards, such as being able to turn in work at any time, receiving a minimum failing grade, or making up work at any time. Also, the reading, writing, and study load may be greater than the students are accustomed to. These issues are compounded by a generation of students who are eager to try new things but have anxiety when the work becomes difficult and haven't yet developed the resilience necessary for college success.

While you may have been given a master course for your LMS by your faculty liaison, you may have some freedom in course assignments and projects, lectures and activities, and rubrics and grading.

- **Class Participation:** For various reasons, even for your high school's records, you likely track attendance. If participation is part of the course grade, it should be assessed with a grade that varies among students based on their effort. The final participation grade distribution should reflect the variance in student engagement, with each week's participation grade being a reminder of the quality of engagement you expect. Keep in mind a floor for participation, where it encourages engagement but not punishes a student

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

who is attentive but not as vocally engaged as other students, but the grade should have a penalty for those students who are tardy, are not attentive, and use devices inappropriately. Ultimately, participation grading can include assignments like onsite quizzes, online discussion forums, onsite end-of-class reflections, simulation, discussion leaders, and other pedagogy that encourage engagement and content reflection.

- **Essays:** If you are allowed to design an essay assignment, the essay assignment should align with the course learning outcomes. It should help students to learn about or utilize the subject matter in the course. It should require the use of a citation method, like [APA](#), [Chicago Style](#), or [MLA](#). It should also require the use of at least one peer-reviewed source, in addition to other relevant sources for your assignment. A scaffolded assignment could include using the affiliated college library website to find the peer-reviewed source(s), writing a bibliography with the correct citation method, reviewing a draft with your affiliated college's online writing center or a meeting with a high school English instructor, draft submission, and final submission. Each step of the process should have variance in the grade based on quality of submission, and there should be a strict deadline and/or severe penalty for late submission.
- **Course Project:** Instead of simply an essay, you may want to implement a scaffolded course project, but any project should be aligned with the course learning outcomes and subject matter. It should ask students to utilize material from the course. This project should have a final deliverable and a written component. The written component could be a reflection essay, but it should still require a citation method and at least one peer-reviewed source that informed the course project. Each step of the process should have variance in the grade based on quality of submission, and there should be a strict deadline and/or severe penalty for late submission.
- **Skill Development:** [Reading, writing, media literacy](#), and [digital literacy](#), particularly office applications and artificial intelligence models and applications, become increasingly important skills to develop and practice in every class we teach (see [Literacy Strategies for College Readiness](#)).

Ultimately for college course rigor in a lower level or general education course, the department would want you to have variance in grading based on the quality and effort of your students, that there be a strict deadline and make-up policy given the college and department policy, that the course have an assignment that requires reading, utilizing, and writing about a peer-reviewed source with a citation method, and that assignments and projects align with course learning outcomes to instruct about or utilize the subject matter content in the course.

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

CE Courses Need College Success Content

In order for a CE course to be successful, it should [foster rigor, readiness, and relevance](#). A component that may get overlooked by the department, in its focus on rigor and subject matter content, will be readiness. To prepare a student for the rigor of the course, it is good practice to focus the first two weeks on college success topics and make sure that students are properly enrolled into the college and course and have access to the college LMS, textbooks, and other materials.

Since the high school semester tends to be longer than the college semester, there are a couple extra weeks that can be used at the start of the semester to make sure all students have proper access to all course content before working on the subject matter. Additionally, these weeks can be used to prepare students for rigor by [instructing about and practicing the skills needed for college success](#) (see [Literacy Strategies for College Readiness](#)).

Identify Failing Students Early

With multiple graded formative assignments in the first five weeks of the high school semester, you should be able to identify which students are struggling to keep up with the rigor of the course. You can then intervene to identify if the student will improve their commitment. If you determine, early enough in the semester, that the student will be unable to pass the course, ask your college administrator if it is possible to drop the student from the course and transcript if they are moved quickly into a different high school course. If so, it would be better for that student's longrun success than receiving a failing grade on a college transcript. With a timely intervention around the fifth week of the high school semester, most students can and will turn their grades around to receive a passing grade, but the best decision for a few students may be to place them in a different high school government course before they receive a permanent failing grade on their transcript. While some systems won't place a dual credit student on academic warning or probation, some schools may place the student on probation and terminate them from the dual credit program. In the end, no one wants a student to start college in academic probation with failing grades on their transcript.

Since a student failing the college course should mean that they are also failing the high school credit, you can discuss continuation with the student's parents, as long as the information you provide only concerns the high school grade and abides by [FERPA regulation](#) and any other applicable law. This typically means only discussing the student's current overall high school grade and not specific grades on assignments in the course or the college grade. When discussing what it would take for a failing student to succeed in the remainder of the course, you should discuss the rigor of the course and amount of work it will require in general terms, not specific requirements for the student/course. When parents get involved, discuss it

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

with your college and high school administrators to make sure you stay within FERPA requirements and other applicable laws. (See [FERPA and Parents](#))

FERPA and Parents

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) protects the privacy and records of college students, including your students. Colleges will have a procedure for a student to officially waive this right to allow a specific 3rd party designee, such as a parent, access to their educational records, and colleges will have different ways for an instructor to be notified of this waiver. You should identify these procedures.

Because this is a college course, very little about a student's grades or assignments should be discussed with a parent unless a student completes the procedure to allow a parent access to this information. None of this prevents a student from personally sharing any information about the course or their progress with their parents or another third party.

Because it is a dual credit course and high schools have different student rights policies, you may be able to discuss minimal information, such as the current high school grade and the student's general trajectory within the high school grade, but you should not talk about the student's specific grades on course assignments or the college course grade.

Ultimately, you should talk with your college and high school administrators because different laws may apply in your jurisdiction, so while FERPA will still apply, there may be different procedures for discussing and releasing student information to parents.

CE Students Have College Support

You are typically the point of contact for students and their parents about general college and program information. Elsewhere in this guide, you can identify a myriad of questions to ask about resources your particular CE program offers because yours may differ substantially from other programs. Because you should be encouraging your students to utilize college support services and include them in your assignments, as applicable, it will be helpful to know what resources your college students can access. Helping your students realize the fact that they are a college student can foster a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Depending on the number of credits a student is currently enrolled and college policy, CE students may have access to a range of free or reduced cost services.

- **Academic:** advising, college library and library system, career services, writing center, disability resource center

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

- **Social:** student prices (free or low cost) for sporting, music, and art events, homecoming, clubs and organizations,
- **Health:** care centers, psychological services, campus medical care, recreational services
- **Administrative:** college ID, campus tours, military and veterans services, parking

Your CE program may or may not offer specific academic advising for CE students, but you should mention to your students that they should talk with an academic advisor at least once each semester to make sure that they are taking courses that would help them towards their preferred degree, even if they are required to currently be enrolled as non-degree seeking. If a student doesn't know what major to pursue, students should still speak with academic advisors to make sure the courses they take will, at the least, count towards general education credit.

What should students and parents know?

While students enrolled in dual credit programs are still students at their high school, when they enter the college environment they become college students and are expected to act in a manner consistent with that level of education. There are some distinct [differences between high school and college](#) learning environments that a student should be aware of before enrolling in a dual credit program.

Students should carefully read about the expectations of a college student and the differences between the college and high school learning environment. Ask yourself the following questions and be honest with yourself about whether you are ready for the college environment or not.

Do I have [grit](#)?

College can be tough, and there will be times when things are hard. It is important for students to be able to persevere through those challenges and not just give up. College faculty want students to be successful, but they are not as likely as high school instructors to identify and reach out to students who are facing challenges. Colleges will often have resources such as learning centers, tutors (depending on the discipline and course), and access to counseling services to help students navigate tough times. While services are generally available to all students, many will be restricted to those that are enrolled into a minimum number of credits per semester. If you are enrolled in the minimum number of credits, the onus is on you to use those services

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

Am I self-motivated?

- **Consistently [studying](#):** In high school, students are often given study guides or other tools to figure out what to study. Instructors may also give incentives for students to study by offering credit for completing a study guide or a worksheet. These practices may not exist in college courses, as instructors are likely to expect students to know all assigned content for exams or other assessments. Therefore, you must be able to [study](#) without extrinsic motivation or explicit guidance. The reward for studying in college is the grade in the course and generally nothing more. If you are a student who needs more guidance (like worksheets, study guides, or explicit directions), a dual credit class may not be for you.
- **Meeting deadlines:** Deadlines in college are not flexible. While some faculty may give flexibility for extenuating circumstances, often requiring documentation, students are expected to adhere to deadlines. Unlike in high school where students may be able to turn in late work at any time, college instructors will either not accept late work at all or will have severe penalties associated with turning in late work. You need to carefully read the syllabus provided by the instructor and take note of the policies around late work as well as when assignments are due. Most importantly, if you need clarification about when something is due, ask!
- **[Attending class](#):** Much like in high school, attending class regularly is critically important in college. Much of your learning takes place during a class session, both within lecture as well as during discussion and other class activities. Students may think that being in college gives them the freedom to choose whether or not to attend class, and while this is true, students who do not regularly attend class are typically not as successful as those that do. The academic calendars for college and high school may not be aligned, but you will still be required to attend your college classes and submit college assignments even if your high school is on break.
- **[Asking for help](#):** A major difference between college and high school is that the burden of seeking help is on the student. In each course syllabus, your college professors will have scheduled times every week for student office hours. These are times set aside for students to ask for help, talk about course material, or just get to know your professors. Unlike in high school where the instructor may identify that you are struggling and may reach out to provide assistance, college students are expected to recognize when they are struggling and to get the help they need from college resources. To be successful, you should routinely check your grades and reach out to your professors and appropriate resources to find help!
- **[Online courses](#):** The option to take a class in an online environment is commonplace at most institutions of higher education. Asynchronous online

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

courses are classes in which there are no set session times. These courses require students to be completely self-directed. You must have effective time-management skills to complete all required course work, such as reading a text, watching pre-recorded videos, participating in discussion boards, and completing other types of assignments. The advantage to this type of course is that a student decides when and where they want to work, which can be very beneficial if a student has a lot of outside obligations such as high school classes, employment, or extra curricular activities. While there are no set session times, the coursework will often have strict deadlines (see Meeting deadlines). Students should be very honest with themselves about whether they can be disciplined and organized enough to complete work in an online environment when there is not a routine session or reduced interaction with the instructor. If you do not think you will be able to manage your time well, stay organized, meet deadlines, and be self-motivated, an online course may not be a good choice for you.

Have I developed the required skills?

While the following will give an overview of the most important skills you should begin developing before attending college, you should review the [List of Basic College Skills](#) that college instructors expect their students to have before taking their course. Read through the following and ask yourself if you are prepared to meet college expectations.

- **Critical Thinking:** College is not about memorization and regurgitation; college is about learning how to *think*. Instructors are not going to be interested in students restating what they read; rather, instructors want to know what students think about that material. Critical thinking is defined as "...a kind of thinking in which you question, analyse, interpret, evaluate and make a judgement about what you read, hear, say, or write" ([Monash University](#)). This kind of thinking requires more intellectual effort on the part of the student, a willingness to be uncomfortable that you may not always know the answer, and a willingness to ask questions. Asking a good question is another way to practice critical thinking. Exploring with your instructor and classmates to figure out an answer, if an answer exists, is what college is about. When you take a college course, you must be prepared to consume, analyze, critique, and discuss course content, rather than simply regurgitating content at a superficial level of analysis. This will require that you read, listen to, watch, or interact with the required materials at a deeper level than may have been required in high school, which will require significant reading, writing, discussion, and time-management skills and to respectfully discuss difficult topics.

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

- **Reading/Writing Skills**: The level of reading comprehension and writing expected in college are significantly higher than in high school. Students are expected to be able to read and comprehend college level (i.e. academic) books and other materials on their own without guidance from the instructor. Incoming college students are expected to write an academic paper that includes a claim, clear evidence to support that claim, and explanations of how that evidence supports the claim as well as using proper citations. While students will typically take general education composition courses in their first two years of college, they are still expected to be able to write an academic paper before they have not yet completed those composition courses. Some classes may not allow students to turn in drafts of their writing assignments or receive feedback on those drafts. Rather, students are expected to know how to go through drafting and revising a paper, know how to use the resources available at the college to help them with that process, and turn in only final products to the instructor. It is imperative that you take the initiative to seek out help from college resources, such as the writing center.
- **Reading/Discussion Skills**: Because college is about exploring what students think about topics, discussion is an essential part of every class, so you must be prepared to talk in small groups and openly with the whole class! Many classes will have participation as part of your course grade, and participation will require more than simply showing up for class. You are expected to actively and substantially participate in discussion, whether verbally or in an online forum. To be prepared for active discussion and class participation, you will be expected to come to class having read all assigned material for the day, be ready to talk about that material, and be actively engaged in class activities using that material.
- **Time management skills**: College classes are intense and require a lot more work outside of class meetings to study and prepare than high school. The general expectation in college is that for every hour you are in class (each credit hour), you should be spending two hours outside of class doing work for the course. This is why four classes per academic term is considered a full load as you will be working 36-40 hours a week on those four courses, which is equivalent to a full-time job. This work load will also require students to be able to prioritize tasks and decide what is the most important to what is the least important. Staying on top of when things are due in a course will help with this!
- **Respectful, mature conduct**: You are expected to deal with all course topics in a respectful manner because college instructors assume that they are teaching mature adults. Regardless of the age of students, instructors expect everyone in a class to be able to behave maturely in discussing topics such as sex, religion, drugs, inequality, and privilege among many other complex

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

topics. While you may find some topics to be uncomfortable or difficult to discuss, mature conversation means being able to use appropriate language to discuss serious topics without laughing or poking fun at others, and you will be expected to be able to acknowledge and respect a wide variety of perspectives that will be part of the conversation.

Is dual credit the right path for me?

Another important factor to consider when deciding whether to enroll in a dual credit program is the difference between a high school civics course, an Advanced Placement (AP) course, and various dual credit courses. These differences are important to consider depending on what the student's goal is for taking a particular course. It is important to consider your higher educational goals before deciding on and devoting time and energy to a particular path.

- **High school government and civics courses:** These high school courses will be taught by high school instructors at the level of rigor and expectations of a high school course. The class should count towards any high school graduation requirements but will not count for college credit.
- **Advanced Placement (AP) courses:** These courses are taught by high school instructors and are taught specifically to the College Board AP test that students will take at the end of the course. Students are often required to pay the AP exam fee, and there is no guarantee that the student will earn college credit as each higher education institution that a student may attend will have different standards for whether they will accept AP credits. Some schools may take a score of 3 on the AP exam while other schools may require a 4 or 5. Some schools do not accept AP credits at all. Further, the AP exam is a national exam, and AP scoring is based on who takes the exam each year so while a student may earn a 3 one year, had they taken the test the year prior or in the next year, they may have earned a 4. [The AP Credit Policy Search tool](#) has more information on what score is required to earn credit at each institution that accepts AP exams, as well as any limits on the number of credits a student can apply towards their college education from AP exams. In some cases, particularly when you will be attending a college out of state and not attending the college you take a dual credit course, the AP credit may be more easily applied than a college credit transfer, but it all depends on your major, the course being transferred, and the AP credit and college credit transfer policy of the college you plan to attend.
- **Dual credit courses:** Dual credit courses typically take two very different forms. One is concurrent enrollment (CE). CE courses are usually taught by high school instructors at the student's high school, but in some cases, they can be taught by college instructors at the high school. The second type of dual credit course is dual enrollment. These are regular college courses

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

taught by college instructors at the college or online but open to high school students to enroll for dual credit. All dual credit courses are expected to be taught at the level and rigor of any other college course. In a dual credit course, students will earn both high school and college credit for the course, and the grade earned in this class will impact both GPAs! Grades in the college class also become part of a student's permanent college transcript which can affect financial aid and scholarship opportunities in the future. In a dual credit course, there are no national exams that must be taken; the final grade in the course is based on multiple and varied assessments throughout the class. However, depending on your high school or state requirements, a concurrent enrollment course may require a state civics exam in addition to the normal college course requirements. It is important to investigate whether the college a student wishes to attend will directly accept the dual credit course for major credit or if it can only be applied as elective credit. In some cases, a course that would apply for a major in one college may not be accepted for major credit in another college. It is important to keep all syllabi of your dual credit courses in the event that you need to have a course evaluated for transfer credit.

Overall, you must decide what is best for your situation and higher education goals. Dual credit courses are great for students who plan to attend the college they are taking the courses from, as it will save money and reduce time towards graduation. In some cases, state policy may make it easy to transfer course credit within state, which makes dual credit an attractive option. However, if you plan to attend college out of state or your state doesn't make it easy to transfer credit between in-state colleges, AP credit may be more easy to count towards specific course credit, depending on the college AP policy, college credit transfer policy, and your major.

There are other benefits of dual credit over AP. One is that a dual credit course will rely less on receiving a great grade on one exam to have the course apply towards a degree. Another is that the dual credit course will focus less on preparing you to take one exam and more towards thinking critically about and discussing the course content, which can make taking the course more interesting and fun!

Can I cope with my parents being less directly involved?

College faculty and administrators are bound by the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) which legally prohibits instructors from talking with parents about their children's course progress. FERPA also prohibits instructors from even acknowledging that a student is enrolled in a course. Students in college courses must be proactive in talking with instructors about any concerns, questions, or other issues that they have with the course. They can discuss their courses with their

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

parents, and their parents can give them guidance. But, parents cannot expect to be the primary person communicating with instructors.

The degree to which instructors can talk with parents will depend on what kind of course a student is enrolled in. High school instructors teaching high school classes are not bound by FERPA, but a high school instructor teaching a college course is. In the case of dual credit concurrent enrollment, a high school instructor teaching a college course may be able to discuss the high school grade, but they will not be able to discuss specific assignment grades, the college course grade, or information about or progress in any of the course content, as those are protected by FERPA.

Most colleges will have a process in place that allows for parents to have access to their child's academic record and contact with instructors; most commonly the student will be required to sign a waiver granting parents access. You will need to contact the college to identify how to submit a waiver.

What are the advantages of dual credit courses?

While there are challenges associated with dual credit courses, there are also some advantages.

- **Cost savings:** Many dual credit programs are either free to high school students or are heavily subsidized by the state government or college, thus significantly reducing the cost of college courses.
- **Time savings:** Dual credit programs allow you to complete a portion of, if not all, general education requirements before graduating high school. While you are reducing time towards graduating college, the time savings can be used to engage in activities such as study abroad, add a minor or another major, or take fewer courses each semester so that you have extra time for employment, taking care of family, completing internships, leading student organizations, or taking care of your health.
- **College acceptance:** Because dual credit courses are college courses on a college transcript, admissions officers will review the courses you have completed and your transcript GPA when evaluating your college application. A good college transcript may be looked upon favorably.
- **Intellectual diversity and growth:** Colleges often have courses and programs that are not offered in high school, so dual credit classes are a good way to explore topics that you might never have had the opportunity to be exposed to otherwise. For students seeking a more rigorous learning experience, these college courses are a great way to challenge yourself during your junior and senior years of high school and prepare yourself to be a full-time college student.

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

What else do I need to know?

- **Uneven/ineffective guidance towards degree:** Not all college classes meet the requirements for high school graduation and may not apply towards a specific degree at the college. In high school, counselors are frequently reviewing student records to ensure a student is on track to meet high school graduation requirements. In college, while there are academic advisors who help students with their class choices, there may not be a requirement to meet with an advisor before registering or to undergo a degree audit. Thus, it is easier to take courses that may only apply to elective credit towards a degree, while there is limited space for elective credit. It is important that students regularly check in with their high school counselor and a college academic advisor to ensure that all the classes they are taking meet degree requirements at both schools
- **Unexpected costs:** While dual credit courses can be a cheap option to get started on your college degree, there may be additional costs. If you are taking a dual enrollment course on a college campus, you may incur extra costs in the form of transportation and parking expenses. Certain courses may require you to travel for a project, such as attending a city council meeting or visiting a museum. Other courses may require you to purchase specialized tools or require a lab fee. While many of these costs will be listed in the course catalogue and college course registration website, some courses, such as in the case of traveling to complete a course project, may not be mentioned in the registration website. Since your high school may be registering you into your dual credit courses, it is important to ask about any additional fees, devices, and tools that may be required to take the course. If you enroll yourself, you should know where additional costs may be listed in your registration system and be prepared to read the syllabus and ask about costs during the first week of the semester, while there is still time to transfer to a different course, if possible.

What are the Basic College Skills?

These are basic skills college instructors expect students to have before taking their courses.

1) Academic Readiness

- Reading and understanding a syllabus
- Tracking deadlines and due dates
- Breaking big assignments into smaller steps
- Taking usable notes from lecture or reading
- Preparing for a quiz or essay exam

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

Jeremy Bowling, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Perri Gardner, College of Southern Idaho; Erin Richards, Cascadia College

- Checking grades and feedback regularly
- Asking for help appropriately
- Using student office hours, tutorials, or support resources
- Managing time between high school and college expectations

2) Reading Literacy Skills

- Identifying the main argument of a textbook section, article, or excerpt
- Distinguishing fact, argument, evidence, and opinion
- Annotating a text for key ideas
- Summarizing reading in a few clear sentences
- Defining and using academic vocabulary in context
- Reading charts, graphs, polling data, and tables
- Creating and comparing primary sources to an explanation of that source

3) Writing Readiness Skills

- Writing a clear claim
- Supporting that claim with evidence
- Explaining how the evidence proves the point
- Paraphrasing rather than copying
- Quoting briefly and correctly when needed
- Organizing a short response logically
- Answering the question directly and fully
- Revising for clarity

4) Discussion and Thinking Skills

- Responding to a prompt with evidence
- Participating in discussion respectfully
- Distinguishing a personal opinion from a constitutional or political analysis
- Comparing two viewpoints
- Explaining cause and effect
- Applying a concept to a real-world scenario