

Handout Template for Outreach and Welcome to Parents and Students

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

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

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

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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 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

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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.
- **[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

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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 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.

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- **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 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

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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 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

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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.

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

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- **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
- 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

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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

Additional Documents:

- Guidelines for Dual Credit: Key Definitions
- Guidelines for Dual Credit: What Should Administrators Know?
- Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs and Courses: What Should Instructors Know?

Please access the other three documents [here](#).