

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

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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 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](#).

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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 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

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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.

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

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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. No one wants a student to start college in academic probation.

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. When parents get involved, discuss it 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.

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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
- **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.

Additional Documents:

- Guidelines for Dual Credit: Key Definitions
- Guidelines for Dual Credit: What Should Administrators Know?
- Handout Templates for Outreach and Welcome to Parents

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