

Guidelines for Dual Credit Programs & Courses

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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.

- **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.

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- **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. To recruit quality candidates as your department liaison, funding will be required to either award extra contractual pay or course release.
- **Qualifications of high school instructors:** While many high school instructors have a master's in education, very few will have a graduate degree in the subject matter discipline. The program will need to decide what qualifications are required. Some require a master's in the discipline or a master's degree in any discipline plus 18 credit hours in the discipline. Many colleges do not require much graduate training in the discipline, relying on their 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. 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

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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 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](#).

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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.

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

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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](#).

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.

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

Additional Documents:

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

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