

## Credit Flexibility

### Overview

Original Ohio law requires each school district and community school to adopt policy which complies with the state plan to award units of high school credit based upon a demonstration of subject area competency or learning expectations.

See ORC 3313.603 (J) (2) or 3314.03 (A) (11) (f)

New for:

- 2017-2018 Each school district and community school shall update local policy to permit students enrolled in seventh and eighth grade to meet curriculum requirements based on subject area competency.
- 2018-2019 Each district and community school shall review any policy it has adopted regarding the demonstration of subject area competency to identify ways to incorporate work-based learning experiences, internships and cooperative education into the policy to increase student engagement and opportunities to earn units of high school credit.

### What is Credit Flexibility

Credit Flexibility is the customizing of educational delivery to the learning styles and interests of individual students. Students show what they know and move on to higher-order content they are ready to learn and have not yet mastered. They learn subject matter and earn course credit in ways not limited solely to “seat time” or the walls of a school building. They customize aspects of their learning around their interests and needs, which might include flexible schedules and a choice of modalities (e.g., online learning, work-based learning and community-based projects), as well as options to pursue niche interest areas, combine subjects and graduate early.

### The Carnegie Unit – Credits

A unit of measure that was introduced at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to standardize time of learning based on an assumption of a uniform progression of learning. The Carnegie unit is often referred to as credits or just units.

In Ohio, the Carnegie unit assigned for a course is determined by the amount of time a seat time course is scheduled. The ratio is 1 Carnegie unit per 120 hours of classroom instruction for typical courses, or 1 Carnegie unit per 150 hours of laboratory class instruction, or 1 Carnegie unit for 240 hours of physical education. Partial Carnegie units are permitted to be assigned.

Ohio awards Carnegie units based upon the demonstration of the learning expectations of a course, not on the time spent in a course. This is what allows Credit Flexibility to exist.

### Benefits of Credit Flexibility

Credit Flexibility has benefits for students, parents, business and schools:

- Personalizes learning by accommodating learning styles, paces and interests
- Recognizes importance of student engagement and ownership
- Focuses on performance versus time; it's not how the student learns but what the student demonstrates
- Promotes integration of learning
- Matches pacing to learning capacity
- Recognizes learning occurs outside of pre-determined classes

### Examples of Credit Flexibility

Credit Flexibility reaches beyond earning traditional course credit to allowing credit to be earned toward graduation curriculum requirements through experiences meaningful to individual students.

- Traditional coursework: distance learning, online learning, after-school programs
- Educational Options: testing out, educational travel, independent study, internships, community service, work-based learning
- Career Technical blend: program credit, academic credit, work experience
- Individualized learning to fill gaps in learning based on assessed performance

### Testing Out

Students may utilize Credit Flexibility as a means to earn credit in a course without taking and/or completing the course. Districts are required to have Testing Out options for local courses.

Testing Out:

- shall be accessible to all students
- shall be applied equitably to all students
- may be specific to a course
- identifies the learning expectations reflecting the knowledge and skills for each course
- may include performances or products
- may use the results of Ohio End-of-Course State tests, AP or IB tests
- defines the criteria for awarding credit and/or grades
- results should not conclude in negative consequences for students
- may result in the writing of a Credit Flex plan to complete the gaps shown in the assessment

## District Policy

Each school district and community school must have Board adopted policy on Educational Options including Credit Flexibility which allows demonstration of learning on an on-going basis. Policy must follow the State guidance:

- Permits all grade 7 through high school students access to Credit Flexibility
  - Seventh and eighth grade students may replace grade level curriculum requirements
  - Any student who has progressed through the curriculum to the high school level may earn credit toward graduation through Credit Flexibility
- Places no limits on the courses or number of courses or credits earned through Credit Flexibility
- Establishes a procedure and timeline that is flexible to accommodate unpredicted opportunities and does not discourage using Credit Flexibility
- Establishes an appeals process
- Allows students to work on the learning during the school year, school day, vacation days, before or after school hours; counts as attendance for comparable school class period(s) toward full time enrollment
- Treats the credits earned through Credit Flexibility the same as for the comparable seat time credits: recording, weighting, GPA
- Permits credits to be used toward graduation
- Allows partial and simultaneous credit – academic and career tech, more than one content area, secondary and post-secondary
- May accept credit awarded by other districts or educational providers including online
- Provides for students who transfer districts, who do not complete plan, who plan to graduate early
- Allows partial and simultaneous credit – academic and career tech, more than one content area, secondary and post-secondary
- Participation in Credit Flexibility should not result in negative consequences for the student

## Eligibility

Students in all public and chartered non-public schools must be provided access to Credit Flexibility.

- All students in grades 7 and 8 may replace a required curriculum class
- Any student who has progressed through the curriculum to the high school level may earn credit through Credit Flexibility
- All high school students may replace a course or earn credit in one or more content areas with a Credit Flexibility plan
- All courses and credits are eligible to be satisfied through Credit Flexibility

## The Process

Credit Flexibility should be able to be accessed easily and with a minimum of effort on both the student, parents and staff. Cooperation between the student and the school is essential.

Communicated yearly to all students in grades 6-12

- Reasonable time frame to apply and for approval to allow for opportunities
- May be initiated by student or district
- Approval should occur unless there are significant omissions or violations of policy or inability to come to agreement
- If a plan is denied, deficiencies should be addressed
- Periodic progress checks by district staff

## The Plan

The Credit Flexibility plan documents the learning to be demonstrated and the criteria for the evaluation of that learning. The actual learning is the responsibility of the student, whereas the evaluation of the learning is the responsibility of the appropriate school staff. The plan serves as a record of the established agreements. The plan may only be modified if all parties agree.

- Student name
- Plan title
- District course title or graduation requirement being met
- Brief description of the activities, materials and course requirements (provides the clarity as to the responsibilities of the student and school, such as: registration and course fee, books, computer, during and/or outside of school day)
- Learning Expectations or Standards to be demonstrated (if the course is district pre-approved then only a statement of the district approved syllabus is necessary)
- Evaluative criteria and methods for determining grade and credit (if AP or EOC, then it is allowable to require/use the AP exam or EOC test results)
- Name of the credentialed educator(s) who will evaluate the learning
- Credit to be awarded
- Weighted or not weighted (this needs to match what the student would receive if the actual district course is taken or a comparable level course even in a different content area)
- Anticipated start and end dates
- Signatures and dates of: superintendent or designated district employee, student, parent for student under the age of 18, credentialed teacher (name of the school employee who is monitoring progress)
- Any other information required by district policy

## Recording Credit Flexibility

Credit Flexibility is not a privilege but a means of individualizing a student's learning. Student participation and ensuing earned credit shall be treated the same as credit offered through the school to all students.

- Must be recorded the same on transcript as comparable credit earned through a seat time course
  - Weighting
  - GPA
  - Class Standing

## Common Questions

How is HQT applied to Credit Flexibility?

The educator(s) reviewing the learning must include a credentialed teacher

The learning portion does not require a credentialed educator

Can End-of-Course test results be used to validate learning?

Yes, the results of state tests may be used wholly or partially as evidence of learning.

The district should designate in the plan the points required to earn credit and if a grade will be awarded. These criteria should be applied fairly to all students with the same course request.

Can districts charge students a fee for using credit flex?

Yes, but only if the fee is:

- Charged the same as for all other students
- Clearly for activities outside the regular instructional programs

Can districts charge students a fee for materials and supplies used for credit flex coursework?

Generally, it is permitted in accordance with local policies on fees for materials and other supplies used in the traditional classroom setting

How will credit flexibility affect class standing (valedictorian placement)?

Credits will be reported in the same way that seat time credit is recorded

- GPA/class standing should not affect
- If a district has a weighted system for GPA based on the rigor, credit flex plan can be designed to meet the same rigor

Can Credit Flexibility be used for completing course requirements or gaps in learning?

YES. Credit Flexibility allows the flexibility to designate the learning needed to recover credits, to complete courses not finished for whatever reason, or to fulfill learning based upon a local assessment, including placement procedures. The key is to use the learning expectations required of all students and usually articulated in a course of study.

If you have additional questions regarding Credit Flexibility, please contact:

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