

Frequently Asked Questions about Early College Credit

For High School Students Enrolled in Credit-Bearing Courses

Are high school students allowed to use credit-bearing college courses as an alternative way of fulfilling graduation requirements?

Yes, there are two ways to use credit-bearing college courses to fulfill graduation requirements. This FAQ addresses both options. The first is through dual enrollment in both high school and college courses. Consistent with local school system policies and procedures, and with the prior approval of the local superintendent of schools, credit toward high school graduation may be given for courses offered by accredited colleges. Students are encouraged to meet with their counselor prior to enrolling in credit-bearing college courses to receive appropriate guidance. See COMAR 13A.03.02.11 Alternatives For Structuring Programs.

The second way is through early admission to college. Graduation requirements may be fulfilled through the Early College Admission Program or the Early Admission to Approved Vocational, Technical or Other Postsecondary School Program as described in COMAR 13A.03.02.10 Alternatives to Four Year Enrollment Requirement. See also COMAR 13A.03.02.05 Other Provisions for Earning Credit.

Dual Enrollment:

How does Maryland define a dual enrollment student?

Dual enrollment is an opportunity for high school students to take credit-bearing courses that count toward earning both a high school diploma and a college degree. There is no general definition of dual enrollment in Maryland statute or regulation. However, the statutory provisions governing the Dual Enrollment Grant program define a “dually enrolled student” as a student who is dually enrolled in a secondary school in this State and in an institution of higher education in this State. See Education Article, § 18-14A-01(a). Further, the regulations of the Maryland Higher Education Commission define “dual enrollment student” in the context of community colleges to mean “a secondary student who is enrolled in college courses and receives both high school and college credit for the courses completed.”) COMAR 13B.07.01.02B(10).

Under what conditions are local school systems and institutions of higher education each allowed to count high school students who are dually enrolled in credit-bearing college courses in their Full Time Equivalent (FTE) calculations?

Provided that all the other requirements for enrollment eligibility (e.g. age, attendance, etc.) are met, a student will be considered one full FTE in the local education agency if the student is enrolled in a total of four courses for the year at either the high school or the institution of higher education regardless of the proportion of the load being taken at either institution as long as at least one course is taken in high school. See COMAR 13A.02.06.03 State Financial Assistance Under the Foundation Program. For a student taking fewer than four credit-bearing courses, a local education agency may count that student as a ¼ full time equivalent for each course taken carrying one unit of credit or fraction of a unit as long as at least one course is taken in high school. See COMAR 13A.02.06.03(A)(7).

If the high school student is enrolled in a credit-bearing course at an institution of higher education, the student will be included in the institution’s FTE calculation like any other student enrolled in a credit-bearing course.

Are students responsible for paying the full cost of tuition to attend college while still in high school?

In Maryland, many institutions of higher education offer high school students some form of a tuition waiver as an incentive to begin taking college courses while still in high school. Students are encouraged to contact the college admissions office to seek further information.



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If high school students receive a tuition waiver, can they still be counted in the college's FTE?

Yes, the Maryland Higher Education Commission counts dually enrolled students who receive a tuition waiver in the community college's FTE according to the Policy on Tuition Waivers Eligible Under the John A. Cade State Aid to Community Colleges (MHEC, June 2003). See also COMAR 13B.07.02.01C(2).

Are high school students who are enrolled in credit-bearing college courses able to apply for grants, scholarships, and loans?

High school students who are enrolled in credit-bearing college courses are not eligible to apply for federal student loans or generally for state scholarships. There is a Dual Enrollment Grant Program. See Education Article, §§ 18-14A-01 – 14A-04. The program is for Maryland residents who are dually enrolled and who demonstrate financial need. However, this grant fund currently has no funding. Dually enrolled students also are eligible for the Part-time Grant. See Education Article, §§ 18-1401 – 1402. This grant is for Maryland residents who attend college part-time and demonstrate financial need. Institutions may use up to 10 percent of the part-time grant funds for dually enrolled students.

It is often assumed that college admissions officers look more favorably on high school students' transcripts if they have a weighted grade point average (GPA) and most college courses do not provide weighted grades. What are the advantages to taking credit-bearing college courses while in high school?

College admissions officers look at students' potential capacity to perform college level work. Taking and passing one or more credit-bearing college courses while still in high school is one way to demonstrate students' readiness for college-level work and to give them a head-start on college completion. Dual enrollment courses are actual college courses—rather than college-like or college level—and usually result in students' progress being recorded on an actual college transcript from a postsecondary institution.

Early College Admissions:

Do students have to be at least 18 years of age in order to enroll in credit-bearing college courses?

No. Public institutions of higher education are permitted to accept students who have completed seventh grade and who have obtained a certain score on a nationally accepted college entrance examination. See Education Article, § 15-101 (b). Some colleges have established their own minimum age requirements for students who want to take credit-bearing courses through early college or dual enrollment, so students should contact the admissions office before submitting an application.

Under what conditions can high school students participate in an early college admission program?

In recognition that four-year enrollment in a public high school may not serve the best interests of some students, early college options are available based on meeting conditions outlined in COMAR 13A.03.02.10 - Alternatives to 4-Year Enrollment.



For more information visit:

Maryland State Department of Education

<http://msde.state.md.us/w/EarlyCollegeCreditFAQ2013.pdf>

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Maryland Association of Community Colleges

http://www.mdacc.org/PDFs/WhatsNew/FAQs_About_Early_College_Credit.pdf

http://www.mdacc.org/early_college_access.html

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Maryland Higher Education Commission

<http://www.mhec.state.md.us/preparing/index.asp>

<http://www.mhec.state.md.us/higherEd/HEInventory.asp>

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