

Dual Credit: Learn Once, Earn Twice



Released: 03/19/2018

What is dual credit?

An instructional arrangement where an academically qualified high school student enrolls in a college-level course and, upon successful course completion, concurrently earns both college credit and high school credit.

Dual credit opportunities allow high school students to explore various academic areas and introduce them to the rigor and expectations of college-level coursework. Students who are able to enroll in multiple dual credit courses may decrease the cost and time associated with completing a certificate or degree program. In comparison to their peers, dual credit students are more likely to earn a high school diploma, enroll in postsecondary education, hold higher grade point averages, and complete their degree on time.¹

What does dual credit look like in Illinois?

The community college system serves the largest majority of students for dual credit in Illinois. The most recent data from academic year 2015-2016 identify that over 100,000 students (duplicated count), enrolled in dual credit courses in the state, signifying continued growth. All 48 community colleges offered dual credit courses; however, type and quantity varied for each community college.

- A total of 10,740 dual credit courses were offered demonstrating an increase of 7.6 percent from the previous academic year.
- Offerings in transfer and career and technical education (CTE) dual credit continue to grow steadily. Transfer-level courses reflect 63 percent of all dual credit offerings while CTE represents the remaining 37 percent.
- The most frequently enrolled courses were: English and Writing (20%) and Mathematics (9%).²

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), through federal grant funding, has invested close to one million dollars to support local expansion, innovation, and quality of dual credit through its [Dual Credit Enhancement Grant](#).

How is dual credit administered?

Several models of administering dual credit have emerged in the last decade. The three main models are as follows:

- 1) course(s) offered at the high school, taught by the high school instructor
- 2) course(s) offered at the high school, taught by the college instructor (including online)
- 3) course(s) offered at the college, taught by the college instructor

¹ Cassidy, L. & Keating, K & Young, V. (2010). *Dual enrollment: Lessons learned on school-level implementation*. U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Smaller Learning Communities program. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/slc/finaldual.pdf>

² *Dual credit in the Illinois community college system*. (2016). Illinois Community College Board. Retrieved from https://www.iccb.org/iccb/wp-content/pdfs/reports/2016_DualCredit_Report.pdf

Funding and costs vary based on the models of administration. Colleges may charge full tuition and fees for dual credit courses, may waive all tuition and fees, or may offer courses at a discounted rate. A recent study found that nearly half of all community colleges charge tuition and/or fees for dual credit courses. The variation in funding models has been tied to access and equity issues for students.³

Who is qualified to teach dual credit?

The instructors for these courses shall be selected, employed and evaluated by the postsecondary institution. Qualified instructors must hold the appropriate credentials and demonstrated teaching competencies. The [ICCB Administrative Rules](#) (Section 1501.507 (11)) outlines these minimally acceptable standards.

For transfer courses, instructors must have either a) a master's degree in the course discipline or b) a master's degree in any discipline *in addition to* 18 graduate hours in the course discipline being taught. For career and technical education courses (i.e. welding, nursing), the ICCB expects the appropriate credential in the field (e.g. for welding, AWS certifications) and 2,000 hours of work experience (not teaching) in the field being taught.

It should also be noted that [The Dual Credit Quality Act](#) (P.A. 96-194) requires that dual credit instructors must “meet the same academic credential requirements as faculty teaching on campus...” but are not required to hold a teaching certification.

Who is qualified to enroll in dual credit?

High school students interested in dual credit must have appropriate academic qualifications, a high level of motivation, and adequate time to devote to studying a college-level course. The students' course selections shall be made in consultation with high school counselors and/or principals and are restricted to students who are able to demonstrate readiness for college-level work as determined by placement procedures consistent with those that would be used with college-level students. Students shall meet all college criteria and follow all college procedures for enrolling in courses.

This rule also means that unqualified students may NOT be in the same class as those taking the course for dual credit. However, so long as all students in the class meet the college-level requirements to enroll, they are not required to accept the dual credit.

How does accreditation affect dual credit?

The public community colleges in Illinois are regionally accredited through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). In order to maintain accreditation, colleges must closely follow HLC's standards, policies, and assumed practices, one of which concerns faculty qualifications for college credit-bearing coursework. Since dual credit courses are college-level, all applicable HLC rules and practices must be adhered to. Colleges may also voluntarily seek accreditation specific to their dual credit program through the [National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships](#) (NACEP). Several colleges in Illinois have attained or are currently seeking this accreditation. To assist dual credit programs in achieving excellence, Illinois is one of ten states with an active NACEP chapter (ILACEP). To learn more about what ILACEP has to offer, please visit their [webpage](#).

³ Taylor, J., Fisher, D., & Bragg, D. (2014, July). *Dual credit funding models in Illinois community colleges*. Champaign, IL: Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.