

Quality Assurance for Dual Credit Courses or Programs

Linked to HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and the findings of its dual credit study, the following five critical elements constitute the quality assurance for dual credit courses or programs:

1. Faculty credentials and qualifications, orientation and training (Criterion 3)

The institution requires the same level of credentials and qualifications for faculty in dual credit courses or programs that it does for its regular higher-education courses. Currently, this is the standard practice. HLC's dual credit study notes: "The most common of these provisions [about instructor eligibility] is that colleges and universities use the same standards in selecting instructors for dual credit courses as they do for courses offered on their own campuses" (p. 19). Additionally, faculty teaching in dual credit courses or programs are appropriately trained with proper orientation for teaching at the higher education level.

2. Rigor of courses or programs and curricular standards (Criterion 4)

The institution mandates the same level of rigor in dual credit courses or programs as it does for its regular higher-education courses or programs. Dual credit courses or programs meet the same curricular standards and undergo the same institutional approval processes as the institution's regular courses or programs.

3. Expectations for student learning and learning outcomes (Criterion 4)

Expectations for student learning and learning outcomes in dual credit courses or programs are consistent with the same courses or programs that the institution offers at the higher-education level.

4. Access to learning resources (Criteria 3 and 4)

Students as well as faculty in dual credit courses or programs have the same level of access

to learning resources (libraries, laboratories, databases, etc.) as the institution's students and faculty in the same higher-education courses or programs.

5. Institutional monitoring, oversight, and transparency (Criteria 2, 3 and 4)

The institution, specifically its academic departments and disciplinary faculty, exercises proper monitoring and oversight of its dual credit activity to ensure that dual credit courses or programs meet higher education standards. Finally, the institution informs students clearly and accurately whether courses taken for dual credit (i.e., at a high school via a community college) will transfer to other institutions, including four-year institutions.

Note: While student eligibility for dual credit courses or programs, transferability of such courses, and funding of such courses or programs are certainly identified in the study as areas of concern, these issues generally fall beyond the scope of regional accreditation. These issues, especially the question of funding, are generally under the purview of higher education governing entities at the state level or state legislatures or subject to institutional arrangements. This document, therefore, does not weigh in on these matters.

When Dual Credit Is Reviewed

Evaluation of dual credit activities will occur at least at the time of an institution's comprehensive evaluation but may also be a subject of examination at other times if dual credit courses or programs become a matter of concern at an institution.



Questions?

Please contact the institution's HLC staff liaison.