

Preparatory Courses Update

Guidance Related to Hours and Criteria

Background

As defined in the Washington state Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program Standards, preparatory courses expand upon exploratory course characteristics. School district plans for the delivery of CTE must include demonstration that all preparatory courses offered by the district meet the requirements of [RCW 28A.700.030](#). Through the Course Approval and Program Approval process, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has the responsibility to ensure that school districts understand preparatory criteria for proper course selection and that submitted courses meet preparatory criteria. Questions have been submitted to OSPI related to the minimum hours of instruction required for approval of preparatory Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code courses. While instructional hour requirements are not specifically identified in the preparatory program standards, previous guidance included a minimum of 90 hours to meet preparatory criteria. This document provides further clarity related to the criteria, approval considerations, processes, and best practices related to preparatory courses.

Minimum Preparatory Criteria Reminder

All approved preparatory secondary CTE programs must meet the following minimum criteria:

- (1) Either:
 - (a) Lead to a certificate or credential that is state or nationally recognized by trades, industries, or other professional associations as necessary for employment or advancement in that field; or
 - (b) Allow students to earn dual credit for high school and college through Tech Prep (CTE Dual Credit), Advanced Placement (AP), or other agreements or programs;
- (2) Be comprised of a sequenced progression of multiple courses that are technically intensive and rigorous; and
- (3) Lead to workforce entry, state or nationally approved apprenticeships, or postsecondary education in a related field.

Approval Considerations

School districts offering CTE programs that include preparatory courses should ensure that course sequences are designed to be comprised of an aligned and logical progression of courses that advance in learning standards and competency development. These courses should lead to postsecondary options which include direct employment, apprenticeship, or additional education and training. Preparatory courses should either include or lead to an industry recognized certificate which is necessary for employment or advancement, or provide students access to earn dual credit through a dual credit program such as CTE Dual Credit.



Industry Certifications

- The state is developing an approved industry recognized certification (IRC) list for the secondary and postsecondary systems in partnership with multiple state partners. Until the state list is finalized, it is a local decision as to whether the course includes or leads to a certificate of value.
- Once the state list is published, school districts will evaluate their course offerings and may update certificates associated with programs. Certification opportunities will be included in CEDARS during the 20-21 school year at the course level, and valid data values will evolve with continued input from state partners.
- School districts should continue to utilize the expertise of program-specific advisory committee members to ensure certificates are of value to students and that the preparatory criteria are met.

Dual Credit

- While CTE courses are commonly aligned with CTE Dual Credit opportunities, any dual credit program may be appropriate to support the course meeting preparatory criteria.
- Our partners in the community and technical college system have shared that the majority of articulation agreements are executed for courses that range between 150-180 hours of instruction. The opportunity for dual credit is an important consideration for the offering and approval of preparatory courses.

District Action

- Regularly review previously approved and proposed preparatory courses to ensure alignment with minimum program standards criteria. If the course does not meet the criteria, work with OSPI program staff to determine more appropriate CIP code selection and next steps.
- When submitting a preparatory course in the Course Approval system, upload the completed CTE Preparatory Course Criteria Form on the "Misc. Docs" tab.
- When submitting a preparatory course in the Program Approval system, upload the completed CTE Preparatory Course Criteria Form in the Miscellaneous Documents section.

Additional Clarification

- We anticipate modification to the application systems in the future to process preparatory course requirements in a different manner than a form upload to the "Misc. Docs" tab and section..
- Preparatory courses are best built with a minimum of 140 hours of instruction, although courses may meet criteria with less instructional hours. OSPI does not anticipate approval of preparatory course submissions that are less than 90 hours; however course submissions will be reviewed to determine if minimum criteria are met. Program staff may ask additional questions prior to approval.

Contact

For general information, please contact cte@k12.wa.us. For program-specific information, please contact the appropriate CTE [program supervisor](#). For questions related to the Course Approval or Program Approval systems, please contact [Samantha Sanders](#).

