

# Integrating Coursework and Awarding Simultaneous Credit Guidance for Schools

## INTRODUCTION

Ohio’s Strategic Plan, *Each Child, Our Future*, envisions that each child is challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path and empowered to become a resilient, lifelong learner who contributes to society. Part of this empowerment can be found in the concept of integrated coursework. Integrating coursework allows students to have a unique meaningful learning experience. Strategy 10 of [Each Child, Our Future](#) emphasizes giving students multiple ways to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions for high school graduation and beyond. This includes redesigning middle and high schools to contribute to or create a more successful learning environment.

[Ohio law](#) allows districts, community schools and chartered nonpublic schools to integrate content standards from multiple subject areas into a single course for which students can earn simultaneous credit. Districts and schools can award *simultaneous credit* for multiple courses at once if the content from the courses is covered and mastered by a student through an integrated course. Integrating coursework *for simultaneous credit* allows students to have unique meaningful learning experiences that best meet their needs and interests.

This document outlines processes and considerations for schools when developing integrated courses. It also provides guidance for awarding appropriate credit for integrated coursework in order to satisfy Ohio’s graduation requirements.

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## WHAT IS AN INTEGRATED COURSE?

An **integrated course** is a single course that uses learning standards from different subject areas organized around a common theme. Integrating coursework intentionally highlights connections across multiple subject areas. Connecting learning expectations in one subject area to authentic, real-world applications in a different subject area may result in relevant, meaningful activities that support student learning and mastery. Schools can integrate an academic course with other academic courses or with technical courses. For example, schools can integrate Physics and Algebra 2 or Physical Science and a Career Technical Education (CTE) Engineering course.

## EARNING SIMULTANEOUS CREDIT THROUGH INTEGRATED COURSEWORK

Typically, students earn credit based on seat time for one academic subject area or one technical course at a time. Integrated courses, however, allow students to meet learning expectations and earn multiple credits for more than one academic subject area and/or technical course through a single course experience. This is called simultaneous credit. **Simultaneous credit** refers to full or partial credit students earn in more than one subject area while they are enrolled in a single course.

## ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING IN INTEGRATED COURSEWORK

The focus of integrating coursework for simultaneous credit takes the focus off instruction or seat time and puts the emphasis on student mastery.

Districts offering integrated courses are not excused from the requirement to administer Ohio's State Tests and WebXams. Schools may administer any state end-of-course tests associated with the integrated courses, either at the end of the course or when the state end-of-course assessment is offered.

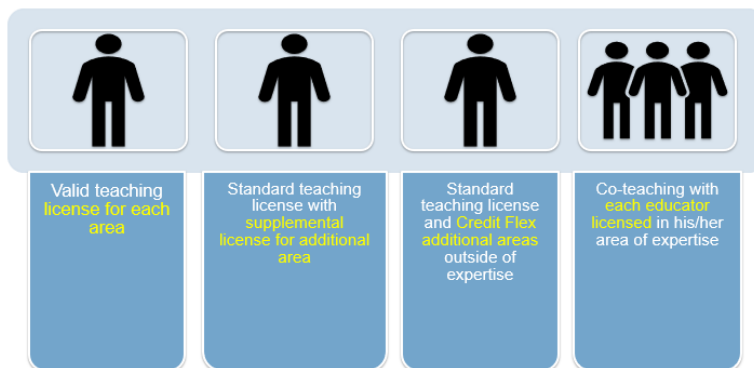
For courses or parts of courses that do not have an associated state test or WebXam, districts may work to create an appropriate assessment tool.

## COURSE DELIVERY MODELS

Districts implementing integrated coursework for simultaneous credit can take advantage of a variety of delivery models that are available.

1. Blending two full courses together with two teachers each properly certified in their content area.
2. Blending two full courses together with one teacher teaching the course.
  - a. The teacher holds a valid teaching license and/or supplemental license in both content areas.
  - b. The teacher holds a license in one content area and works with a teacher or expert outside contractor in another content area to plan the instruction and evaluate the course (Credit Flexibility).
3. Blending a full course and a partial course with two teachers each appropriately licensed in their content area.
4. Blending a full course and a partial course with one teacher teaching the primary course who works with a teacher or expert outside contractor in another content area to plan the instruction and evaluate the secondary course.
  - a. The teacher holds a license or supplemental license in both content areas.
  - b. The teacher holds a license in one content area and works with a teacher or expert outside contractor in another content area to plan the instruction and evaluate the course (Credit Flexibility).

### Teacher Qualifications



## USING CREDIT FLEXIBILITY TO OFFER SIMULTANEOUS CREDIT

Because Credit Flexibility does not focus on *how* or *from whom* students learn, credit flexibility can be used in awarding simultaneous credit for integrated coursework. [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 demonstrated. 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, as well as options to pursue niche interests, combine subjects and graduate early.

Under a Credit Flexibility Plan, Ohio awards credits based upon the demonstration of the learning expectations, not on the time spent in learning. Traditional credit is awarded based

upon the scheduled seat time of a class and is earned at the ratio of 1 unit per 120 hours of instruction. In contrast, credit earned through credit flexibility is based solely upon the demonstration of the learning expectations of a plan.

A combination of credit earned based on seat time and through credit flexibility can be used to award simultaneous credit. Any time students are awarded more credit than seat time warrants, the additional areas may be addressed through a credit flexibility plan. Districts decide which courses yield simultaneous credit and determine the amount of credit students will earn in each area. Districts should develop local policies that govern the awarding of simultaneous credit.

Because credit flexibility does not focus on *how* or *from whom* students learn, licensure or expertise comes into play when approving/designing the Student Credit Flexibility Plan (SCFP) and in evaluating or verifying the demonstration of the learning expectations. Students may use the credit flexibility process in an integrated course experience to earn the simultaneous credit; districts are permitted to design and offer courses for **groups of students** using credit flexibility. Districts may develop credit flexibility plan templates based on a specific course of study. Students who want to receive credit for these courses submit these plans and satisfy the requirements to earn the credit. *Note: In Credit Flexibility, students or another adult can be the teacher; licensure is not needed in regard to instruction, but expertise is required for the evaluation of the learning.*

*Districts also may update their credit flexibility plans and policies to include provisions on **whole-class** or multiple student credit flexibility plans.*

## TEACHER LICENSURE FOR INTEGRATED COURSES

Local districts have several options for identifying qualified teachers for integrated courses. If courses are integrated across licensure areas, districts may use teachers who have the following credentials:

- Valid teaching license, such as a resident educator, alternative resident educator or professional license in the appropriate grade band for each of the areas taught
- Standard teaching license with a supplemental license in the appropriate grade band and for each of the areas taught.

In a co-teaching approach, educators should be licensed in the appropriate grade band and respective areas of content. See the Integrated Courses in Education Management Information System (EMIS) section (page 5) for more information.

In some situations, a single instructor may not hold all the licenses needed to deliver the integrated course. The teacher(s) delivering the instruction (Teacher(s) of Record) should have the content expertise to help develop the course, content delivery plan and assessment of student learning. [Ohio law](#) requires teachers in core subject areas to be [properly certified](#). Additionally, Ohio law requires teachers in some subject areas, such as [computer science](#), to be licensed in the content area of computer science. Districts may report more than one teacher of record for integrated courses. As with all course reporting in EMIS, report all of the teachers who teach the course, and do not report teachers who are not responsible for the course planning and instruction.

## REPORTING INTEGRATED COURSES IN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (EMIS)

### Course Reporting in EMIS

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) requires that each course, staff and student be appropriately reported in the system. Courses shall be reported with a [single subject code](#). All teachers and all students shall be reported in each of the courses reported. The EMIS subject code is one aspect of the course used to evaluate the licensure of a teacher reported for the course in EMIS. When reporting a district integrated course that combines content normally reported under two or more EMIS subject codes, districts have several reporting options. Reference the Department's [EMIS Manual](#) for specific guidance on reporting.

It is possible that a single integrated course will meet more than one of the criteria listed above. In this case, the district must choose the most important criterion or report multiple courses in EMIS. Regardless of how you report courses in EMIS, each course should be reflected individually on student transcripts. *Note: If using Credit Flexibility, there should be a Credit Flexibility field in EMIS.*

### Teacher Certification and EMIS Reporting

All teachers reported for a course are evaluated for proper licensure and any other subject-area specific licensure requirements during EMIS processing. If a district reports more than one lead teacher or co-teachers, accountability calculations will be based on the teacher who teaches the greatest proportion of the course based on the course dates. If co-teachers are responsible for a reported course for the same period of time, and either teacher meets the licensure requirement for the course, it will appear in EMIS as being taught by a properly certified teacher.

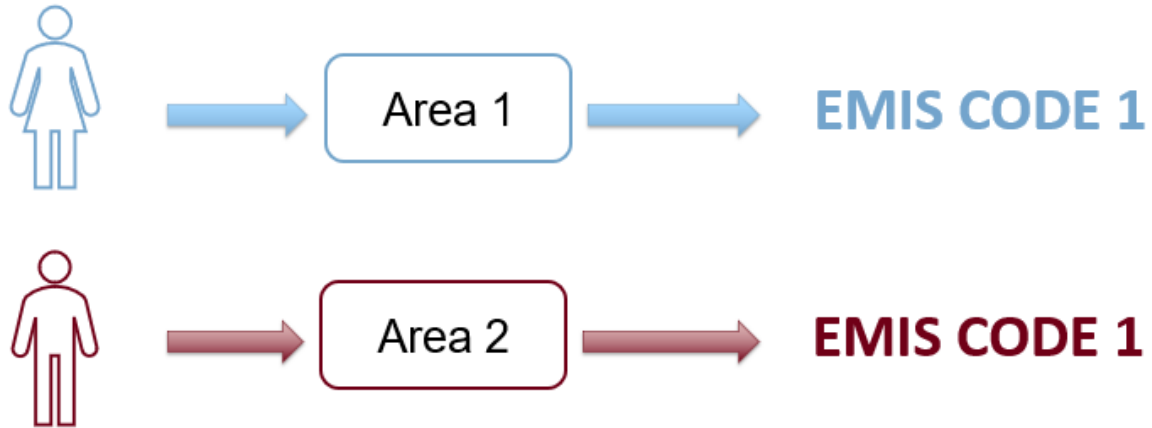
### Credit Reporting in EMIS

Regardless of how integrated courses are delivered, report the actual credit awarded to students in the [graduation summary record](#).

### Reporting Assessments for Integrated Courses

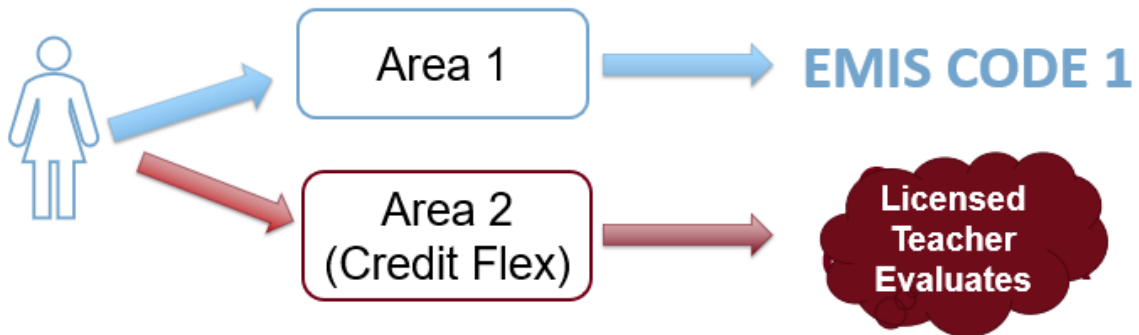
Test records determine which students are included in test-based accountability measures. When students take an end-of-course test(s) as part of an integrated course, the test(s) results should be reported on a student assessment record.

## EMIS



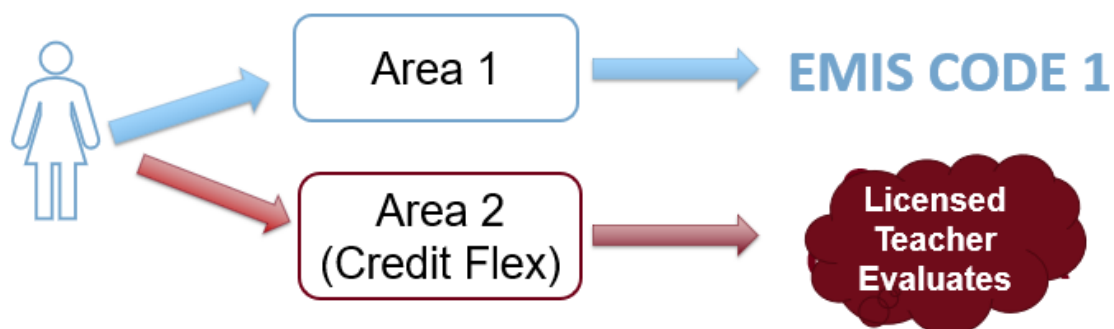
Credit based on seat time. Shared total time of instruction for each teacher.

## EMIS



Credit in Area 1 based on seat time.  
Credit in Area 2 based on evaluation of standards.

## EMIS



Credit in Area 1 based on seat time.  
Credit in Area 2 based on evaluation of standards.

### SCHOOL FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

#### School Districts

For funding purposes, participation in integrated coursework does not exempt a school from complying with the minimum number of hours of instruction each school year (1080 hours). To receive the full-time equivalency funding for a student, a student must be in attendance for the full school day or enrolled in at least five units of instruction during the school calendar year. Credit flexibility credits count toward the five units regardless of when the learning occurs. Districts operating online schools should refer to [this guidance](#).

#### Community Schools

Like traditional school districts, participation in integrated coursework does not exempt a community school from complying with the minimum number of hours of instruction each school year (920 hours). However, the five-credit hour rule does not apply to community schools. If a student attending a community school is not expected to be at the brick and mortar facility for the full school day, the community school may only receive a portion of the full-time equivalency funding for that student.

#### Career-Technical Education

Career-technical education teachers must be properly credentialed for integrated courses to receive career-technical education-weighted funding. All additional career-technical funding requirements apply to the integrated course.

#### E-schools and Blended Schools

For students participating in online community schools and blended schools, funding is based on participation in classroom and non-classroom-based learning opportunities.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Students may use credit earned from an integrated coursework experience to fulfill their graduation requirements.

A student may satisfy course requirements through a variety of instructional methods, including, but not limited to, integrated, applied, career-technical and traditional coursework. [Ohio law](#) provides that units students earn in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies delivered through integrated academic and career-technical instruction are eligible to meet students' graduation requirements. To earn full or partial credit that satisfies multiple graduation requirements, an integrated course must use learning expectations from each subject area for which students earn credit. Districts and schools can determine locally that the course has met the specific requirements for a diploma and award credit based on those determinations.

If the integrated courses are associated with an end-of-course test, students must still take all end-of-course tests associated with those courses. For example, if a student is taking an English language arts II course that is integrated with an American history course and the student is receiving credit for both courses, the student should take both end-of-course tests.

## TRANSCRIPTS

[State law](#) prohibits schools from requiring students to remain enrolled for any specific number of terms if they satisfy graduation requirements early. A local school district's board of education is responsible for determining how students earn credits and how much credit they earn. The local board may adopt a policy for awarding credit for integrated courses, including how that credit appears on transcripts.

While state law does not mandate how courses are reflected on transcripts, it is important to remember that schools use student transcripts in a variety of ways. Consider the following: college admissions, technical skill verification and transcript reviews by the National College Athletic Association ([NCAA](#)). Transcripts should specify the courses for which a student is receiving credit to properly show the coursework that student completed. *Note: Credit Flexibility requires that courses be recorded on a transcript in the same way as a traditional course is recorded.*

**The Department highly recommends that districts identify separately on a student's transcript all credits awarded for integrated coursework to clearly show the integrated courses for which the student has earned credit.**

## COLLEGE CREDIT GUIDELINES

### College Credit Plus

College Credit Plus (CCP) is Ohio's dual enrollment program that provides students in grades 7-12 the opportunity to earn college and high school credits at the same time by taking courses from Ohio colleges or universities. Integrated courses for simultaneous credit can also be



College Credit Plus courses. For more information visit <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-Education-Options/College-Credit-Plus>.

### **Articulated Credit**

With respect to career-technical education courses aligned to statewide opportunities for articulated credit through the Ohio Department of Higher Education's transfer and articulation guidelines, high schools must continue to follow the program approval and credit awarding process set forth by the Department of Higher Education's articulation and transfer policy.

These include the following:

- Follow the guidance documents (Career-Technical Assurance Guide (CTAG) and alignment documents) provided by the Department of Higher Education for each career-technical education course;
- Maintain approval from the Department of Higher Education through career-technical articulation verification and/or affirmation or review of the secondary course;
- Where it is required for student credit award opportunities, use the WebXam or (in a limited number of cases) the appropriate industry recognized credential;
- Clearly display a name similar to the career-technical education EMIS subject-coded course on the transcript and post a letter grade for university and college registrar verification purposes.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PROCESSES FOR DEVELOPING INTEGRATED COURSES

Planning and implementing integrated coursework typically require cooperation between teachers and administrators. School leaders carefully should consider the school's capacity to offer more integrated course options for students.

The process described below outlines sample steps districts can take to develop integrated courses. This is only one example; schools can develop integrated courses and award simultaneous credit in many different ways.

### Identify a Planning Team

The integrated coursework planning team may include the following individuals or groups:

- Academic and technical teachers;
- School special education, gifted, English learner representatives;
- School counselors;
- School administrators;
- Curriculum coordinators from the district, school or educational service center;
- EMIS coordinator;
- Career-Technical Planning District representatives;
- Postsecondary faculty; and
- Other individuals or groups the district considers appropriate.

### Identify Areas for Integration

Planning team members should work together to identify courses that align logically. There is no need to force alignment of content; as the planning team works, areas of alignment will emerge.

*When identifying areas for integration, schools might consider:*

- What courses naturally align with one another? What current instructional practices cut across academic or technical disciplines?
  - Are recommended courses that students take occurring either simultaneously or in a sequence? Are there project-based learning opportunities already happening in the school or district that cut across disciplines?
- Are there opportunities to integrate courses that help prepare students for their post-high school pathways?
  - Would integrating content allow students to have experiences that better prepare them for life after high school?
- How do the standards for the courses connect?
  - Standards alignments can be developed locally. Some questions to consider when determining alignment could be the following:
    - Do the standards for each course support or reinforce each other?
    - Do the standards from one course apply to standards from another course? Does this alignment enhance or improve the content addressed in the standards?
- What is the current instructional capacity within the school? What are the license areas of the instructional staff? Are there currently cross-curricular teacher-based teams?

- If a school has teachers who are licensed to teach multiple subject areas, their cross-curricular knowledge can make them a natural fit for teaching or advising on content delivery for integrated courses.
- Existing teacher-based teams in a school may already be doing cross-curricular planning and projects. Members of these teams are well-suited to take the next step in planning a fully integrated course.

**Standards by Design:** Department staff worked with career-technical and academic teachers to determine where there is currently alignment between Ohio’s career field technical content standards and the four core academic subject areas of math, English language arts, science and social studies. These alignments are displayed in the [Standards by Design](#) tool. This tool allows educators, students, parents and any other interested party to search for these alignments and view reports of where the alignment may exist. These alignments are a guide and are not a definitive representation of all connections that can be made between these subject areas.

Alignments are rated as *enhancement*, *application* or *reinforcement* to better clarify how schools can use the standards as they plan to integrate standards in coursework.

- *Enhancement* – Enhancement occurs when a standard or competency enriches the standard or competency from the other content area by increasing skills or supplementing content knowledge.
- *Reinforcement* – Reinforcement occurs when a standard skill in two subjects exactly corresponds or a standard skill in one content area supports a standard skill from another.
- *Application* – Application occurs when the course employs a standard or competency in relevant situations provided by the other content area standard or competency, allowing skills and concepts to be used in real-world contexts.

## **Design and Implement the Integrated Course Experience**

Planning teams should meet regularly to design, implement and evaluate integrated coursework experiences. After they have identified courses for integration, reviewed the standards for areas of alignment and selected instructors, they should consider the additional factors outlined below.

*When designing the integrated course experience, consider the following:*

- The time needed for instructors to guide student learning of all standards in the integrated course. Schools may need to adjust the master schedule, for example, using block scheduling, modified block or additional open schedule options.
  - Does integrated course delivery require adjustments to the master schedule?
  - Should the school adjust student schedules to accommodate the integrated course?
  - What adjustments need to be made to the master schedule for cross-curricular planning time for instructors?
- Throughout the design and implementation of the integrated course experience, school leaders will need to provide opportunities for key staff to sharpen skills in content areas and approaches to integrated instruction.

- How will school leaders identify the professional development needs of the planning team and instructional staff?
- What resources will the school use to support professional development?
- How will the school monitor professional development to ensure faithful implementation?

### **Evaluate and Continuously Improve Course Experiences and Offerings**

Planning teams should meet to determine the effectiveness of courses offered. When meeting to evaluate, planning teams could consider the following:

- Did the implemented integrated course(s) lead to great student achievement? This could include achievement on end of course assessments, final course grades, etc.
- Are there sections of the course(s) that should be strengthened?
- Are there emerging opportunities to add additional integrated courses?
- Were students able to access additional relevant courses and experiences as a result of taking the integrated course(s)?