



Department of Education

# **Senior Year Plus**

Department of Education Audit Plan 2025-26

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State of Iowa  
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## Overview

The Department is charged with annually auditing postsecondary courses offered to high school students in accordance with Iowa Code chapter 261E. Previously, the Postsecondary Course Audit Committee was in place to adopt an efficient process to meet this charge that leveraged the mandated audit to ensure community college participation in a larger, sustained quality improvement process. However, on May 17, 2024, the Postsecondary Course Audit Committee was eliminated and responsibilities of the audit committee transferred back to the Department of Education.

The Department's review is limited to specific concurrent enrollment standards impacting community colleges and school districts. Review criteria include those stated in Iowa Code 256.17, as well as other criteria in the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership (NACEP) standards. The charge of the committee was to review course syllabi, instructor qualifications, examples of student products and the results of student assessments. In total, NACEP utilizes 16 national standards for curriculum, partnership, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation that encompass the mandated review criteria, as well as other Senior Year Plus requirements (Iowa Code 261E and 256.11) and appropriate practices. NACEP standards are in close alignment with Senior Year Plus requirements, as well as the Standards for Concurrent Enrollment Courses adopted by the community college chief academic officers in 2008. The Department prepared a [crosswalk](#) which details the alignment between Senior Year Plus requirements and NACEP standards.

To ensure NACEP standards are met, the organization utilizes an accreditation process. The Department accepts institutions' submission of evidence of obtaining accredited status to demonstrate audit criteria are met. This evidence is reviewed through the state's community college accreditation process.

The intent of coupling this initiative with the NACEP accreditation process is to incentivize participation in a larger, sustained quality improvement effort. This effort aligns with other accountability mechanisms, including the state accreditation processes for community colleges and school districts. Those processes have been modified to increase accountability for Senior Year Plus programming.

The NACEP accreditation process involves a rigorous peer review of concurrent enrollment practices to ensure that institutions demonstrate they meet or exceed measurable criteria for each standard. The process includes a self-study and a thorough review by a peer group from accredited institutions which include public two and four-year universities. Institutions go through a full reaccreditation process every seven years. Accredited status certifies that courses delivered through concurrent enrollment are the same as other community college courses in terms of faculty credentials, curricula and syllabi, assessment and learning outcomes.

### Initial Accreditation Activities

As of the 2015-16 academic year, all 15 community colleges have become full members of NACEP. Following a recommendation of the community college chief academic officers, the Iowa Association of Community College Presidents stated its commitment to the process and having each college obtain accredited status expeditiously.

The audit committee stated in its 2011-12 audit plan if any college failed to make sufficient progress in obtaining NACEP accreditation, a rigorous alternative method for evaluating audit criteria would be implemented. The alternative method would ensure that the standards established by the committee and approved by the department were satisfactorily met. If any courses were found to have failed to meet the

committee's standards through the alternative process, the course(s) would be ineligible for future school district supplementary weighted funding. The committee could reinstate course eligibility if corrective action was taken to remedy concerns and bring the course into compliance with the audit criteria within the specified timeframe. All audit findings would be shared with involved institutions and be shared with the public via the Department's website.

In May 2011, the audit committee determined that each of Iowa's 15 community colleges continued to make adequate progress toward obtaining accredited status. Des Moines Area Community College sought and obtained accreditation during the organization's 2009-10 accreditation cycle (accredited in fall 2010) and the other 14 signed letters of intent to apply during the 2011-12 cycle. An additional 11 Iowa community colleges attained accredited status the following year, for a total of 12 accredited institutions at the end of the 2011-12 application cycle.

If any college was not able to obtain accredited status and did not commit to seeking accredited status in the following application cycle (accredited in fall 2013), the audit committee would have reconvened and adopted an alternative method as previously described. This did not occur since the remaining colleges remained committed to obtaining accreditation from NACEP.

According to the 2012-13 audit plan, colleges that were unable to obtain accredited status during the 2011-12 application cycle were subject to state review. The reviews were limited in scope and focused on core requirements in Iowa Code 256.17, including instructor qualifications and course syllabi.

Per the 2012-13 audit plan, the department requested additional documentation from each of the remaining three nonaccredited colleges including: the NACEP peer evaluation report identifying deficiencies, the college's plan for addressing identified deficiencies and a letter reaffirming the institution's commitment to obtaining accredited status.

The Department analyzed the documentation of the three colleges subject to the review, and two provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they did not violate the Senior Year Plus requirements that would be included in a limited state review. In July 2012, the committee noted these institutions were making sufficient progress and met expectations for fiscal year 2012. The third did not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate review requirements were met and was subject to a site visit. One issue was identified through the review and was immediately remedied. In November 2012, the committee noted the last college met expectations for fiscal year 2012.

During fiscal year 2013, two of the remaining three community colleges obtained accredited status. Iowa Lakes Community College did not obtain accredited status but remained committed to the process. The committee determined that a mentoring arrangement between Hawkeye Community College and Iowa Lakes Community College would be used to demonstrate the college was meeting standards until its next application was processed. Through the arrangement, Hawkeye Community College identified deficiencies in Iowa Lakes' 2012-13 NACEP application and provided technical assistance regarding concurrent enrollment program delivery, documentation protocols and application preparation.

Iowa Lakes Community College's NACEP accreditation application was submitted in July 2014. The application, including all required evidence, was audited by a team of peer reviewers from accredited two- and four-year institutions. The review team submitted their findings to the NACEP Accreditation Commission, which made a final accreditation decision in April 2015. Following their April 2015 meeting, the NACEP Accreditation Commission announced that Iowa Lakes Community College obtained accredited status. Accordingly, all 15 of Iowa's community colleges have received NACEP accreditation.

## **Reaccreditation Activities**

Des Moines Area Community College was the first institution to obtain NACEP reaccreditation in 2017. The majority (eleven) of the community colleges pursued and obtained reaccreditation in 2019: Eastern Iowa Community College, Hawkeye Community College, Indian Hills Community College, Iowa Central Community College, Iowa Valley Community College District, Kirkwood Community College, North Iowa

Area Community College, Northeast Iowa Community College, Northwest Iowa Community College, Southwestern Community College and Western Iowa Tech Community College were granted reaccreditation during the 2018-2019 NACEP application cycle; and Southeastern Community College was granted reaccreditation during the 2019-20 NACEP application cycle.

Iowa Western Community College sought reaccreditation during the 2019-20 application cycle; however, based on the application for submission, the Commission voted and determined an extension of one year would be granted to the institution to provide evidence and address the Commission's concerns, which allowed the institution to remain accredited through the 2020-21 academic year. The Commission reached this decision based on the findings that the program provided evidence of compliance with the majority of NACEP's 16 accreditation standards. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission postponed the 2020-21 accreditation cycle and granted institutions receiving one-year extensions up to two years, if needed, to provide adequate evidence. As a result, Iowa Western was provided an extension of up to two years of its current accreditation term through the end of the 2021-22 academic year. A site visit by the assigned peer review team is required of all institutions seeking accreditation. NACEP conducted a site visit (virtually) with Iowa Western on March 21, 2022 to discuss their progress towards reaccreditation with a final vote to determine reaccreditation occurring during the NACEP Accreditation Commissions spring 2022 meeting. The NACEP Accreditation Commission convened on April 19, 2022 during their spring meeting and voted to accredit Iowa Western Community College. Iowa Western Community College remains accredited through academic year 2028-2029.

Des Moines Area Community College is the most recent community college to receive reaccreditation from NACEP. DMACC had their site visit on February 25, 2025 and received reaccreditation through 2031-2032. Iowa Lakes Community College ILCC went through the process in 2023 and are reaccredited through 2029-2030.

As stated above, due to the pandemic, almost every community college had their reaccreditation year extended. All other 2026-27 community colleges: Eastern Iowa, Hawkeye, Indian Hills, Iowa Central, Iowa Valley, Kirkwood, North Iowa Area, Northeast Iowa, Northwest Iowa, Southwestern and Western Iowa Tech will be following a similar accreditation timeline to ensure all standards are viewed and verified and their letters of intent completed and submitted by December 2025. Most Iowa NACEP members, and some out-of-state NACEP members, attended the NACEP Accreditation Institute held at Hawkeye Community College March 26-28, 2025.

All community colleges follow a process to reaccreditation: Self-Study, Institutes and/or peer meetings, submit a Letter of Intent, a year of gathering evidence, completion of their application, application review, Peer Review Site Visit and Certification. Though each reaccreditation is good for seven years, the process to reaccreditation may take two years or more to complete adequately.

## **Audit Plan for 2025-26**

[NACEP standards](#) are the standards by which the Department has historically reviewed concurrent enrollment courses. As of the end of FY25, all community colleges continue to maintain active NACEP accredited status.

For the next audit period covering AY25 – AY26, community college leadership will have the option to meet concurrent enrollment course audit requirements by either 1) showing active NACEP accreditation status or 2) through the review of their concurrent enrollment program during the college's regularly scheduled state accreditation visit. State accreditation visits occur once every five years, though the Department reserves the right to conduct concurrent enrollment audits as necessary.

Regardless of the community college's choice of accrediting bodies, they will continue to prove their Senior Year Plus programs meet exemplary rigor and quality standards. A draft audit plan was brought to community college presidents, CAOs and coordinators for stakeholder engagement and feedback.

Concurrent enrollment courses provided by institutions without NACEP or Department accredited status will not be eligible for supplementary weighted funding (to school districts) per Iowa Code 256.17. It has been determined that both the NACEP and Department's accreditation process, are effective in ensuring the quality of concurrent enrollment offerings.

The Department reserves the right to change the audit plan if necessary.

## Appendix A: NACEP Accreditation Status of Iowa Community Colleges

Institution	Concurrent Enrollment Partnership	Initially Accredited	Reaccredited	Reapply Date	Accredited through Academic Year
Des Moines Area Community College	Career Advantage	2010	2025	2031	2031-32
Eastern Iowa Community College	College Connection	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Hawkeye Community College	College Now!	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Indian Hills Community College	Connect 2 College	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Iowa Central Community College	Earlybird Program	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Iowa Lakes Community College	Career Connect	2015	2023	2029	2029-30
Iowa Valley Community College District	Concurrent Enrollment	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Iowa Western Community College	College Early Start	2013	2022	2028	2028-29
Kirkwood Community College	College Credit in High School	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
North Iowa Area Community College	Career Link	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Northeast Iowa Community College	High School Partnerships	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Northwest Iowa Community College	Concurrent Enrollment	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Southeastern Community College	Jump Start	2013	2020	2027	2027-28
Southwestern Community College	Concurrent Enrollment	2012	2019	2026	2026-27
Western Iowa Tech Community College	College Now	2012	2019	2026	2026-27