IOWA | Department of Education

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Senior Year Plus

Department of Education Audit Plan 2026-2027



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. On May 17, 2024, the Postsecondary Course Audit Committee was eliminated and responsibilities of the audit committee transferred to the Iowa Department of Education.

Currently, 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. **NACEP standards** are the standards by which the Department has historically reviewed concurrent enrollment courses. As of the end of FY26, all community colleges continued to maintain active NACEP accredited status. 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. 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 the concurrent enrollment audits 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 measurable criteria for each standard. The process includes a self-study and a thorough review by a national 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.

A secondary option for accreditation was requested by community college presidents in 2025. Beginning AY26, community colleges now have two options for meeting concurrent enrollment accreditation requirements: they may continue accreditation through NACEP, or they may choose to have a thorough review of all six NACEP standards of their Senior Year Plus programs by the Department during the college's regularly scheduled state accreditation visit. State accreditation visits occur every five years, though the Department has the authority to conduct concurrent enrollment audits as necessary.

At this time, four community colleges have chosen to utilize the Department as their accreditation body for Senior Year Plus; they include Indian Hills Community College, Iowa Central Community College, Northwest Iowa Community College and Southwestern Community College. Each of these four institutions are accredited through NACEP until the end of 2027, therefore the Department's accreditation option will be utilized once NACEP accreditation expires and their next Department accreditation visit is scheduled.

NACEP Reaccreditation Activities

By the end of 2027, all community colleges will have been reaccredited or will be in the process of reaccreditation with NACEP. Those in the process include Eastern Iowa, Hawkeye, Iowa Valley, Kirkwood, North Iowa Area, Northeast Iowa and Western Iowa Tech. These colleges follow a similar accreditation timeline to ensure all standards are viewed and verified and their letters of intent completed and submitted to NACEP by December 2025. Reaccreditation for the postsecondary institutions listed above will be completed by end of year 2026.

All NACEP community colleges follow a process for reaccreditation: self-study, institutes and/or peer meetings, a submitted 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 2026-2027

Community colleges have two options for meeting concurrent enrollment accreditation requirements: either through NACEP or through state accreditation. Each college selects the option that best fits their Senior Year Plus program needs. Each college's selected accreditation option is detailed below in Table 1.

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.

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.

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

Table 1. 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	2031-2032
Easter Iowa Community College	College Connection	2012	2019	2026	2026-2027
Hawkeye Community College	College Now!	2012	2019	22027	2026-2027
Indian Hills Community College	Connect 2 College	2012	2019	-	2026-2027
Iowa Central Community College	Earlybird Program	2012	2019	-	2026-2027
Iowa Lakes Community College	Career Connect	2025	2023	2029	2029-2030
Iowa Valley Community College	Concurrent Enrollment	2012	2019	2026	2026-2027
Iowa Western Community College	College Early Start	2013	2022	2028	2028-2029
Kirkwood Community College	College Credit in High School	2012	2019	2026	2026-2027
North Iowa Area Community College	Career Link	2012	2019	2026	2026-2027
Northeast Iowa Community College	High School Partnerships	2012	2019	2026	2026-2027
Northwest Iowa Community College	Concurrent Enrollment	2012	2019	-	2026-2027
Southeastern Community College	Jump Start	2013	2020	2027	2027-2028
Southwestern Community College	Concurrent Enrollment	2012	2019	-	2026-2027
Western Iowa Tech Community College	College Now	2012	2019	2026	20026-2027

Senior Year Plus Programming

While NACEP conducts a thorough review of concurrent enrollment programming and processes, the Departments continuously reviews and audits the whole of Senior Year Plus that encompasses multiple college credit opportunities. Joint enrollment options are as follows:

Concurrent Enrollment

Courses approved through each district's school board and included in the district-to-community college contract. These courses are open to all eligible Iowa students enrolled in grades 9-12 who meet proficiency and prerequisite requirements. Public, nonpublic and homeschool students may participate through their public districts. These courses are tuition-free to students, including textbook, materials, fees and tools, and most are eligible for supplemental weighted funds.

Nonpublic Concurrent Enrollment

NPCE is an extension of concurrent enrollment programming allowing nonpublic schools to directly contract courses through the community college. Participation is optional and eligibility for funding is subject to an appropriation set by the Iowa Legislature.

Summer College Credit Program

SCCP is a program offered through the summer for high school students including eighth graders moving into their freshman year and non-graduated twelfth graders. SCCP courses are Career & Technical Education (CTE) specific and are offered at no cost to the student. Participation is optional for districts through a contract with the community college. Funding for SCCP is through a legislative appropriation paid directly to participating community colleges.

Career Academies

Career and technical education sequence of studies offered through a contract between the school district and community college. The high school portion may include high school and concurrent enrollment courses. Course sequences lead to community college awards.

Postsecondary Enrollment Option

Students enroll in courses through Iowa 4-year college/universities for high school and college credit. PSEO is allowable only if a course is not available through an Iowa community college. School districts pay the postsecondary institution $250. Tuition, textbooks, fees and materials are of no cost to the student.

Advanced Placement (AP®)

High school courses taken for high school credit. Postsecondary credit may be awarded upon matriculation based on the student's performance on the AP® exam.

Project Lead the Way® (PLTW)

STEM-based curriculum offered by the high school or through a contractual agreement with a community college. Courses may apply toward high school minimum accreditation standards.

Regional Academies

An agreement between multiple school districts who send students to a host district that offers advanced coursework. Courses are for high school credit only. The host district is eligible to receive supplementary weighting.