

# Iowa Department of Education



## AGENCY/PROGRAM APPLICATION (Revised 9.27.18)

### Iowa High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) Alternative Pathways



STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 32: *Alternative Pathways to a High School Equivalency Diploma* and House File 473, an Iowa statute that grants the Iowa Department of Education authority to establish policies and procedures for alternative pathways for the completion of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED).

## **Background**

In January 2018, the Iowa State Board of Education (Board) adopted an administrative rule change establishing alternative pathways for an Iowan to earn a high school equivalency diploma (HSED). Previously, the only way to earn a HSED was by passing the HiSET®, the state-approved high school equivalency test.

The new pathways, which are in addition to the HiSET®, are based on the accumulation of secondary credit or the completion of a postsecondary credential equal to or beyond an associate degree. All of Iowa's alternative pathways are grounded in comprehensive data, research, and integrity that ensures rigor and maintains quality standards important to Iowa.

A high school diploma is a foundational step toward achieving self-sufficiency and financial stability for all Iowans. Currently, there are an estimated 150,000 Iowans who lack high school diplomas. These expanded options aim to reduce this number by providing flexibility in how students can demonstrate competency leading to the issuance of high school equivalency diplomas.

## **Eligible Institutions**

The HSED options discussed in this application packet may be administered only by entities approved by the Department per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(1). These entities must be either be (a) accredited by the Higher Learning Commission OR (b) eligible entities as defined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73 and subsequent federal workforce training and adult education legislation.

## **Application Instructions**

Any eligible institution wishing to provide one or more HSED Alternative Pathway options must be authorized by the Department. The process of becoming an authorized HSED alternative pathways provider begins by completing this application and submitting it with all necessary signatures to the Department. Applications may be submitted for any or all of the following HSED options: 1) Department-Approved Test; 2) Attainment of High School Credits; 3) Postsecondary Degree; and 4) Foreign Postsecondary Degree.

Please read all questions carefully and complete each response as requested. Incomplete applications will be returned.

Additionally, please ensure that the organization's authorized representative reviews, signs, and dates both sets of assurances included in this application (see pages 17-22). Attach any supporting documents which support your responses or illustrate your procedures and processes.

For implementation guidance concerning these four options, programs are strongly encouraged to review the [Chapter 32 Implementation Guide](#).

## **Delivery Instructions**

Please complete this agency/program application and return it via email in one single, scanned PDF file to [Alex.Harris@iowa.gov](mailto:Alex.Harris@iowa.gov). Make sure all signatures and dates are included before scanning.

Applicants who choose to submit a hard copy of the application should mail it to the attention of Alex Harris, Adult Education and Literacy, Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, 400 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146.

## **Application Due Date**

Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis.

## **Notification of Approval**

Upon the completion and accurate submission of this application form, applicants will be notified of the Department's decision regarding approval. Please allow at least 10 business days for notification of approval.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Organization

Organization's Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Street 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Street 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

### Program Director/Coordinator

Program Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Street 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Street 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION

An approved program shall be administered by an eligible institution. Please select the eligible provider category/categories your organization falls under.

- Entity accredited by the Higher Learning Commission
  
- AEFLA Recipient (i.e., as defined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73, and subsequent federal workforce training and adult education legislation)

## PATHWAY OPTIONS

An eligible institution may provide one or more approved programs. Select each HSED alternative pathway option your program offers or is applying plans to offer.

- Option 1: HSED Based on a Department-Approved Test
  
- Option 2: HSED Based on Attainment of High School Credit
  
- Option 3: HSED Based on Postsecondary Degree
  
- Option 4: HSED Based on Foreign Postsecondary Degree

**OPTION 1**  
**High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) Program**  
**Based on a Department-Approved Test**

**Overview**

Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.7 provides for the awarding of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) to a participant who achieves the appropriate minimum standard scores on an approved test. The Iowa Department of Education (Department) currently has a contract with Educational Testing Service (ETS) to provide the HiSET® as the Department-approved assessment for the state of Iowa.

**Guidance**

Refer to Option 1 in the [Chapter 32 Implementation Guide](#) for detailed program requirements.

**Application**

Iowa has an established process for an entity to become a Department-approved testing site. Iowa's 15 community colleges and a few other entities are approved to offer a HSED program based upon a department-approved test, which is currently the HiSET®. Therefore, these approved institutions do not need to submit this application for Option 1; however, would need to submit the application to expand their authority to offer Options 2, 3, or 4. New entities seeking approval to become official testing centers may contact Mike Williams, Education Program Consultant, at [mike.williams@iowa.gov](mailto:mike.williams@iowa.gov).



- e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education:
2. Course fees are determined by the local program. If you intend to assess fees, they must cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. (Please answer all 4 questions)
- a) If applicable, identify the fees your program will charge:
- b) What specifically will these fees cover?
- c) How did your program determine these fees were necessary and reasonable?
- d) How will program income earned from course fees be applied back to the program?
3. How will your program ensure that the courses your program develops are rigorous and aligned to a minimum of the National Reporting System (NRS) Levels 4-6 and/or College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) Levels D & E? Provide detailed information on the curriculum your program plans to offer. How many hours do the courses meet?
4. Given that you are allowed to award credits for work-site learning, how will you assess this learning?
- a) Prior work-site learning

b) Current work-site learning

5. While there is no official residency requirement for this HSED option, some components of this option require on-site in-person participation. Briefly describe your delivery methods below, the estimated percentages of each method of delivery, and proctoring methods for any online components of the program. *(i.e. Our program plans to offer 20% of our high school credit courses using the WebCT course management system. Courses taught online include English and Government. Exams will be proctored by our Academic Achievement Center, located in Ankeny, IA).*

a) Face-to-face Delivery:

b) On-line Delivery:

c) Correspondence:

d) Other:

e) In the space provided below, please provide your assurance that this alternative pathway option will not be offered completely online or in a correspondence format.

6. Please explain or submit a copy of your program's written policy for the awarding of prior credit authorized under this option. How will your program ensure consistency of evaluation? Who will be reviewing participants' transcripts? *Note: The policy shall apply uniformly to all centers and/or campuses operated by the approved program.*

*Reminder: Please sign both sets of assurances (General & HSED Related) found at the end of this application.*



d) Discussion of program options available to the participant:

e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education:

3. Fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. (Please answer all 4 questions).

a) If applicable, identify the fees your program will charge.

b) What specifically will these fees cover?

c) How did your program determine these fees were necessary and reasonable?

d) How will program income earned from these fees be applied back to the program?

4. Please explain or submit a copy of your program's written policy for determining an award authorized under this option. *Note: The policy shall apply uniformly to all centers and/or campuses operated by the approved program.*

5. How will transcripts be evaluated to ensure authenticity? How will your program ensure consistency in the evaluation of participants' transcripts? Who will review these transcripts?
  
6. How will your program determine that a postsecondary degree was awarded by a regionally accredited institution?

*Reminder: Please sign both sets of assurances (General & HSED Related) found at the end of this application.*



e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education:

3. Fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. (Please answer all 4 questions).

a) If applicable, identify the fees your program will charge.

b) What specifically will these fees cover?

c) How did your program determine these fees were necessary and reasonable?

d) How will program income earned from these fees be applied back to the program?

4. Please explain or submit a copy of your program's written policy for determining copy an award authorized under this option. *Note: The policy shall apply uniformly to all centers and/or campuses operated by the approved program.*

5. Describe how your program will accurately evaluate foreign credentials.

6. If you are using a third party foreign credential service to evaluate transcripts, how will you ensure that they are an approved provider?
  
7. If the participant is not a U.S. citizen, how will you ensure he/she meets the following requirements?
  - a) Demonstrates proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing as defined by the Department's approved English language proficiency standards. Describe the instruction the participant will be receiving (i.e., length and hours).
  
  - b) Successfully completes a course in government or civics education. Describe the instruction the participant will be receiving (i.e., length and hours) (*Note: This course may be integrated and contextualized with other basic skills as needed*)

*Reminder: Please sign both sets of assurances (General & HSED Related) found at the end of this application.*

## General Assurances

The applicant hereby assures that:

1. The program will be operated so as not to discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, national origin, ancestry, religion, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disabilities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (45 USC 2000d through 2000d-4) and its implementing regulations (34 CFR Part 100), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 USC 794, and its implementing regulations (34 CFR Part 104), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, (42 USC 12134), et seq. and its implementing regulations (28 CFR Part 35), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, (20 USC 1681-1683), and its implementing regulations (34 CFR Part 106), and Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, (42 USC 6101) et seq., and its Implementing regulations (45 CFR Part 90). All approved providers with whom services and benefits in connection with its education programs will ensure compliance of the above-cited statutes, regulations, guidelines and standards against those students or employees.
2. The applicant will administer each program in accordance with all statutes, regulations, program plans, policies and applications applicable to that program.
3. The applicant will adopt and use proper methods of administering each program, including the enforcement of any obligations imposed by law on agencies, institutions, organizations, and other recipients responsible for carrying out each program, and the correction of deficiencies in program operations that are identified through audits, monitoring, or evaluation.
4. The applicant will cooperate in carrying out any evaluation of each program conducted by or for the Iowa Department of Education, the United States Secretary of Education or other federal officials.
5. The applicant will retain all records relating to a program for which program income are received for a period of five years after the completion of the activity for which the funds are used or until such time greater than five years as all pending reviews or audits have been completed and resolved.
6. The applicant has adopted appropriate procedures to implement the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (20 USC 123g) and its regulations (34 CFR Part 99).
7. The applicant shall repay all funds determined to be due to the federal government because of a disallowance decision in a manner deemed reasonable by the state or the federal government.
8. To the extent authorized by law, the applicant shall indemnify, save, and hold harmless the State, its employees and agents, against any and all claims, damages, liability and court awards including costs, expenses and attorney's fees incurred as a result of any act or omission by it, or its employees, agents, subcontractors or assignees in its operation of the programs.
9. Fiscal control and accounting procedures required under Office Management and Budget (OMB) Circular Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements will be

used to ensure proper collection and disbursement of all program income and fees associated with operating the program.

10. The Iowa Department of Education reserves the exclusive right to use and grant the right to use and/or publish any part or parts of any summaries, abstracts, reports, publications, records and materials resulting from this program.
11. If applicable, the continuing approval as a provider is subject to the approval of the Iowa Department of Education.
12. By signing this application, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the application is true, complete and accurate. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent information or the omission of any material fact, may subject me to criminal, civil or administrative penalties for fraud, false statements, false claims, or otherwise.

### **Authorized Representative Information**

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Representative Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## HSED Alternative Pathway Assurances

**All HSED Options.** Assurance is granted to the Iowa Department of Education that:

1. Consent of the participant's parent or guardian is required for those persons under the age of 18. An exception to this age requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.
2. Foreign students with an F-1 visa are prohibited from enrolling in any publically funded adult education or family literacy program.
3. A verification of non-enrolled status from the last high school attended is required for participants age 18 or under.
4. Participants must complete a comprehensive intake at an approved program that consists of each of the following components: a) Registration or enrollment form; b) Proctored assessment of the participant's reading level; c) Assessment of the participant's career interest and aptitudes; d) discussion of program options available to the participant regarding completion of a HSED to include the requirements, expectations, benefits, and limitations of each option; and e) development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education.
5. Course fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. Fees must be identified in the program provider's application to the state and should be minimized so as not to create a barrier for adult learners. All fees/income collected must be expended directly for the purposes of the AEFLA program and cannot be commingled with other funds to purchase non-AEFLA related items or provide non-AEFLA services.
6. The HSED will not be awarded until the participant reaches 18 years of age, and the participant's ninth grade class has graduated from high school.
7. The HSED option may be administered only by entities approved by the DE per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(259A).
8. Programs need to capture several required data elements in their intake process, during services, and at the completion of credits earned.

**HSED Option 1.** Assurance is granted to the Iowa Department of Education that:

9. Participants can enroll for instruction at the age of 16 but will not be able to officially test until the age of 17. An exception to this age requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

10. Participants do not have to be a resident of Iowa to take the HiSET® exam.
11. Prior to HiSET® testing, the activities related to the comprehensive intake must be completed.
12. Participants must bring a verification form with them each day they test.
13. Scores remain valid for a period of five years from the date of the first subtest taken. Participants may retake any expired subtest. The only exception is for test series that expire prior to the five years, in which case all previously taken subtests are void and must be retaken.
14. If a participant has not achieved the minimum standard test score on any subtest in effect at the time of testing, the participant shall be permitted to apply for retest. Participants may retest twice per calendar year provided one of the following conditions is met: a) A period of three months from date of initial testing has elapsed; OR b) The participant completes instruction in an AEL program in each subject area to be retested. This instruction shall be certified by an official of the AEL program provider to the test administrator authorized to release the retest.

**HSED Option 2.** Assurance is granted to the Iowa Department of Education that:

15. Participants must be at least 16 years and 9 months of age to enroll in secondary credit bearing classes.
16. Participants do not have to be an Iowa resident to participate in this high school diploma option. While there is no residency requirement for this HSED option, some components of this option require on-site in-person participation. Furthermore, it is not the DE's intention to offer this pathway option to circumvent legislative requirements from other states. Therefore, this option is not conducive to complete online or correspondence formats.
17. Participants must demonstrate completion of an approved program consisting of at least 36 high school credits: eight high school credits in English or communications; six in mathematics; six in science; six in social studies, including government; and ten elective requirements. Courses that are developed by approved programs must be rigorous and aligned to a minimum of the National Reporting System (NRS) Levels 4-6. Courses in Math and English must have a curriculum that addresses the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) associated with CCRS levels D & E. Courses must also be designed in which credit is earned with a proficiency level of 70% or higher. Core credit courses may be contextualized or integrated as long as the associated standards are addressed through the unit of instruction.
18. The ten credit elective requirements must align with the 21st century skills and be classified in one of the following five areas: 1) Civic literacy; 2) Health literacy; 3) Technology literacy; 4) Financial literacy; and/or 5) Employability skills. Electives from core areas (English, Math, Social Science, & Science) can also count toward these ten elective credit requirements. 1,000 hours of prior and/or current work-site learning is equivalent to one high school credit. Prior work-site learning and current work-site learning may be counted toward an elective.

19. Credit awarded by a regionally accredited postsecondary institution for the successful completion of a course that applies toward the requirements of a postsecondary credential including, but not limited to, a certificate, diploma, associate, bachelor, or graduate-level degree program shall be accepted to fulfill the requirements for the satisfactory completion of a program.
20. Each program seeking approval to provide this option will be required to submit and adopt a written policy for determining the awarding of equivalency credit authorized under this subsection. The policy shall apply uniformly to all centers and/or campuses operated by the approved program.
21. Participants must demonstrate competence through continuous enrollment in an approved program for a minimum of two high school credits.
22. If the participant is not continuously enrolled in an approved program, the participant will become subject to the minimum graduation requirements applicable to the date of re-enrollment.

**HSED Option 3.** Assurance is granted to the Iowa Department of Education that:

23. Participants must be residents of the State of Iowa at least 90 days prior to the beginning of the term for which the participant is enrolling.
24. Participants must provide official transcripts to an AEL program to document completion of program requirements.
25. The postsecondary degree must be awarded by a regionally accredited postsecondary institution.
26. Participants must be at least 16 years and 9 months of age.

**HSED Option 4.** Assurance is granted to the Iowa Department of Education that:

27. Participants must be residents of the State of Iowa at least 90 days prior to the beginning of the term for which the participant is enrolling.
28. The participant must present to an AEL program an official transcript from an institution of higher education attesting to the completion of the program of study required for the postsecondary degree. If the transcript is not in English, the applicant shall also provide a certified translation.
29. The participant shall be a United States citizen, or meet both of the following requirements: a) demonstrates proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing as defined by the department's approved English language proficiency standards; AND b) successfully completes a course in government or civics education. (Note: This course may be integrated and contextualized with other basic skills as needed).
30. Participants must be at least 16 years and 9 months of age.

## **Authorized Representative Information**

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Representative Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_