



Career and Technical Education Articulation Agreement Guidelines

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) is providing this guidance document as a resource for public school districts in the State of Iowa. The intent is to provide clarification regarding the requirement for each career and technical education (CTE) program to be articulated with at least one postsecondary institution.

Legal Basis for Articulation Agreements

The requirement for CTE articulation agreements is contained in Chapter 46 of the Education section (281) of Iowa Administrative Code (IAC):

Articulation. *Teachers and administrators from both secondary and postsecondary instructional levels shall (when applicable) meet to identify competencies required at each level, and to jointly prepare agreements of articulation between secondary and postsecondary levels for specific occupational areas. Such joint articulation efforts will facilitate the secondary-postsecondary transition and help reduce duplication between the two levels. Articulation agreements shall be signed with at least one postsecondary institution per program offered at the high school level (as appropriate), i.e., community colleges, apprenticeship programs, or private postsecondary institutions. 281 IAC 46.7(3)*

The requirement is further emphasized in the general accreditation standards for high school vocational (CTE) programs. 281 IAC 12.5(5)(i) states these programs, "...shall be articulated with postsecondary programs of study, including apprenticeship programs..."

Eligible agencies (i.e., states) receiving funds granted through the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) are also required to describe how they will improve the transition of students from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment through programs, activities or services that may include the creation, development or expansion of dual or concurrent enrollment programs, articulation agreements, credit transfer agreements and competency-based education. Sec. 114(e)(7)(C)(i)

Meeting the Articulation Requirement

When pursuing one or more articulation agreements, consider the following:

- How will students and parents be made aware of the agreement?
- How will the district assess and document that students have met the competencies listed within the agreement?
- What data will be collected about students participating in the agreement(s)?
- Each option will require the completion of a [drawing board](#).
- Who will complete the drawing board for the CTE program and how will it be kept up-to-date?

Iowa Department of Education guidance should be viewed as advisory unless it's specifically authorized by state statute, according to Iowa Code section 256.9A. This does not apply to administrative rules, declaratory orders, or materials required by federal law or courts.

The articulation requirement for a CTE program can be met by one of four options:

- Use of a recognized statewide articulation agreement
- Establishment of a district-to-postsecondary institution agreement
- Use of a contracted postsecondary CTE course
- Use of a completed, verified [Program of Study](#)

Articulations should be established with the community college that includes the district in its service area. If the college does not have a CTE program that aligns with the secondary program, the articulation agreement can be made with another community college after the local community college has been consulted.

Additional information and resources can be found in the [Senior Year Plus Guide for Educators and Educational Administrators](#).

Option 1: Statewide Articulation Agreements

A statewide articulation is a list of skills or competencies pertaining to a course(s) that has been approved by the community colleges statewide offering that course(s) within a program. The Department currently offers statewide articulation agreements for the following program areas:

- Child Growth and Development
- Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- Nutrition

Information regarding each of these agreements can be found in the Career and Technical Education area of the Department's website within the related [service area](#) information section.

Option 2: District-to-Postsecondary Institution Agreements

A district-to-postsecondary institution agreement is designed to build a strong partnership between a secondary and postsecondary CTE program. While similar to a statewide agreement from a content standpoint, a district-to-postsecondary institution agreement allows for more individualized, specific alignment between the participating entities.

When creating a district-to-postsecondary agreement, the following guidelines apply:

- The agreement must clearly identify which CTE course(s) from the secondary school is articulated to the postsecondary institution (e.g., community college) and what postsecondary program/course is impacted.
- An agreement stating the two parties will articulate, but does not provide a description of what will be articulated, does not meet minimum compliance.
- The agreement must be signed by the college and the district within the last five years. As changes in the impacted course(s) occur, an updated agreement should be created.
- The agreement must identify how the student will benefit from the articulation. For example, a student completing the specified secondary course (or courses) will be given credit for a certain course (or part of a course) at the postsecondary institution.
- A single, signed agreement may include agreements for multiple CTE programs areas; however, the details stated above must be provided for each program area.

Option 3: Contracted Postsecondary Courses

Contracted postsecondary courses result in both secondary and postsecondary credit being granted. **Direct college credit is the ultimate form of articulation.**

Contracted courses can be divided into two categories: those meeting the definition of concurrent enrollment per Iowa Code 260E and those used by a district to meet minimum CTE accreditation requirements. Courses from either category can be used to meet the articulation requirement.

To meet the articulation requirement, the joint enrollment course must align with the CTE program for which it is being used. For example, if the district has an agreement in place to provide an Automotive Collision Repair course, this course would not meet the articulation requirement for a secondary Manufacturing program.

Arts and Sciences (A&S) courses, such as Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Humanities courses will not suffice for meeting a CTE articulation requirement. An exception might be made for certain courses, such as Introduction to Accounting, which community colleges sometimes offer as part of an A&S Accounting program versus a CTE program. These unique situations should be discussed with a Department CTE consultant to ensure they are acceptable for meeting the articulation agreement requirement.

Option 4: Proof of Collaboration and Participation

State CTE program criteria require that a CTE Program of Study (POS) include grades 9-14. If Options 1 – 3 do not apply, then the POS should be supported with evidence of collaboration with, and participation of, a postsecondary institution (i.e., community college). Collaboration should include a meeting (face-to-face or virtual) with postsecondary faculty/staff that align with the high school CTE pathways (i.e., Early Childhood HS pathway with ECE Community College pathway; Graphics and Communications HS pathway with Graphic Design Community College pathway).

Documentation required for proof is the cooperating postsecondary institution's formal (signed/dated) approval of the program's critical program competencies and a completed drawing board for grades 9 - 14. Critical program competencies are the subset of state-approved CTE standards and competencies that apply to the agreed upon secondary curriculum. To meet the articulation guidelines, the approval must be signed within the last five years.

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