



# CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

## CREDIT FLEXIBILITY PLAN

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District has adopted a plan that enables students to earn units of high school credit based on a demonstration of subject area competency, instead of or in combination with completing hours of classroom instruction.

## WHAT IS A CREDIT FLEXIBILITY PLAN?

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District has adopted a plan that enables *STUDENTS TO EARN UNITS OF HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT BASED ON A DEMONSTRATION OF SUBJECT AREA COMPETENCY, INSTEAD OF OR IN COMBINATION WITH COMPLETING HOURS OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION*. This plan for credit flexibility is designed to broaden the scope of curricular options available to students, increase the depth of study possible for a particular subject, and allow tailoring of learning time and/or conditions. These are ways in which aspects of learning can be customized around more of students' interests and needs.

Students may earn credits by:

- Completing coursework;
- Testing out of or demonstrating mastery of course content; or
- Pursuing one or more “educational options” (e.g., distance learning, educational travel, independent study, an internship, music, arts, after-school/tutorial program, community service or other engagement projects and sports).

Credit flexibility is intended to motivate and increase student learning by allowing:

- Access to more learning resources, especially real-world experiences;
- Customization around individual student needs; or,
- Use of multiple measures of learning, especially those where students demonstrate what they know and can do, apply the learning, or document performance.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A CREDIT FLEXIBILITY PLAN?

1. Any student enrolled in grades 9 through 12 may complete a *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* to replace a required graduation requirement.
2. A *Credit Flexibility Plan* may be requested for any subject or class and there is no limit to the number of *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposals* a student may make.
3. A student who is requesting a *Credit Flexibility Plan* must identify a licensed teacher, counselor, or administrator from his/her assigned school to serve as the “teacher of record” advisor for his/her proposed *Credit Flexibility Plan*. This advisor is responsible for assisting the student in determining if s/he is capable of being able to complete the work outlined in the proposed *Credit Flexibility Plan* in the manner specified to earn the credits being requested. Although not required, a student may request the assistance of more than one faculty advisor in support of his/her requested *Credit Flexibility Plan*.

## HOW DOES A STUDENT REQUEST A CREDIT FLEXIBILITY PLAN?

1. A student interested in requesting a *Credit Flexibility Plan* should complete the *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* available on the Academics section of the district website, available in the main office of each school, and available in the annual high school course selection guide.
2. A complete *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* must clearly explain each of the following points:
  - a. What course content and academic credit will be included in the plan?
  - b. How will the student demonstrate proficiency?
  - c. What (assessment) instruments or (educational) programs will be used to demonstrate proficiency?
  - d. What will be the minimum threshold needed to award credit (% of passing rate on tests, performances, demonstration of competency, etc.)?
  - e. How will a grade be determined?
  - f. What are the consequences of not completing the *Credit Flexibility Plan* or doing failing work?

- g. Who will serve as the “teacher of record” and teacher advisor?
  - h. When will the credit proficiency evidence be due?
  - i. How and when will progress toward success be demonstrated?
  - j. What measures will be used to verify completion of the credit flexibility?
  - k. What costs, if any, must be assumed by the student?
3. The student, legal guardian, “teacher of record” advisor, and school administrator must sign the agreement and the completed *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* must be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer of the school district for approval.
  4. The Chief Academic Officer will assign the *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* to members of the Academic Office staff with expertise in the area(s) identified in the student’s *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* for review and approval.
  5. The Chief Academic Officer will notify the student, legal guardian, and “teacher of record” advisor in writing of approval or rejection of the *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* within five (5) business days of receipt (as identified by date/time stamp). Should the *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* be rejected, reasons for the rejection will be provided in the written notice.
  6. Should a student’s *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* be rejected by the Chief Academic Officer, or should the student not receive written notification of approval/rejection within five (5) business days of receipt of the proposal, the student may follow the appeal process outlined below.

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#### HOW IS A CREDIT FLEXIBILITY PLAN GRADED AND HOW ARE HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS AWARDED?

1. As part of the credit flexibility option request, the requesting student must request that the option be graded as either a “pass/fail” or “letter grade” option. Letter grades will be awarded using the Board adopted grading scale of: A = 100-90%; B= 89-80%; C= 79-70%; D=69-60%; and, F= 59-0% with a minimum of 60% mastery needed on the approved assessment to earn a “pass” in the “pass/fail” option.
2. As part of the *Credit Flexibility Option Proposal*, the student must state the number of credits requested. The credit(s) outlined on the approved credit flexibility option request will be awarded on the student’s official high school transcript along with the earned grade, using the grading options outlined above.
3. An approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* is to be monitored by the “teacher of record” advisor. When the outcomes of the *Credit Flexibility Plan* are completed, the “teacher of record” advisor should score the outcomes using the criteria outlined in the approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* and submit the completed *Credit Flexibility Plan* along with a recommended final grade and credit to the Chief Academic Officer. The Chief Academic Officer will verify that the recommended final grade meets the stated outcomes of the approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* and meets state and local graduation requirements and will issue the final grade and credit.
4. The final grade and credit, as approved by the Chief Academic Officer, will be documented on the student’s official high school transcript. The completed *Credit Flexibility Plan* along with notification of the student’s final grade and credit awarded for completion of that plan will be placed in the student’s official cumulative record.
5. Grades earned via credit flexibility will be entered on the student’s transcript in the same manner as typical CMSD course grades and will be indistinguishable from any other grade on the transcript. The name of the course will appear on the transcript as it appears on the student’s approved *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal*.

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#### WHAT IS THE APPEALS PROCESS IF A CREDIT FLEXIBILITY PLAN PROPOSAL IS REJECTED?

If a student’s *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* is rejected by the Chief Academic Officer or if the student does not receive an approval/rejection notification within (5) business days of receipt, the student has the following procedural rights:

1. The student, his/her legal guardian, and the “teacher of record” advisor are encouraged to request an appointment with the Chief Academic Officer to informally discuss the written reason(s) for rejection and attempt to resolve those identified reasons.

2. The student may make a formal complaint in writing to the District’s Director of Equal Opportunity using a District Complaint Report Form (found in Appendix B of the Student Code of Conduct). Oral reports will also be accepted. Oral reports can be made by telephone at 216/838-0101 or in person at 1111 Superior Avenue E, Suite 1800, Cleveland OH 44114.
3. Upon receipt of either an oral or written formal complaint, the Director of Equal Opportunity will convene meeting to include the student, his/her legal guardian, the teacher of record and a representative of the Chief Academic Officer to review the complaint. The Director of Equal Opportunity will conduct such additional investigation as he/she deems necessary and shall make a recommendation to the Chief of Staff who will review the recommendation and will provide the final decision to the legal guardian, student, and Chief Academic Officer.
4. If a student or his/or her legal guardian is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint from the District’s Director of Equal Opportunity, the student may further appeal to the Ohio Department of Education.

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### WHAT ARE SOME CREDIT FLEXIBILITY OPTIONS THAT STUDENTS MIGHT CONSIDER?

There are many ways that students can demonstrate learning and students are encouraged to work closely with their “teacher of record” advisor to develop *Credit Flexibility Plan* proposals that take advantages of their own personal strengths. Some ideas students might consider include:

- Taking on-line coursework from an accredited institution
- Taking post-secondary options courses at local colleges and universities
- Earning certificates or credentials from qualified agencies (e.g., Microsoft certification, union apprenticeship card, etc.)
- Completing a project, performance, or activity that demonstrates learning of particular content
- Testing out of subjects by taking exams that demonstrate proficiency in the subjects
- Completing an independent research project or study
- Participating in educational travel experiences
- Completing internships, mentorships, or other work-experience activities
- Presenting tasks that demonstrate learning to a panel of experts

Students should remember that these are starter ideas and that students may work with their “teacher of record” advisor to propose their own ideas of how best to demonstrate learning.

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### HOW DOES CREDIT FLEXIBILITY IMPACT A STUDENT’S ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY AND NCAA ELIGIBILITY?

The Ohio High School Athletic Association sets and monitors rules regarding athletic eligibility. These rules are outlined in the OHSAA Student-Athlete Eligibility Guide, which is available in each school, from the district’s Interscholastic Activities Office or on the OHSAA website ([www.ohsaa.org](http://www.ohsaa.org)).

In general, to be eligible for athletics, a student must be currently enrolled and must have been enrolled in school in five (5) full credit courses during the immediately preceding grading period (semester, quarter, six-weeks, etc.). A student enrolled in credit flex courses must, at the conclusion of the high school’s grading period, be “passing” their credit flex course in order for this course to count toward the five one credit (or equivalent) courses used to establish athletic eligibility. The student may not yet have completed the course(s), but it must be determined by the “teacher of record” advisor that the student was “passing” the course(s) at the time the grading period ended. If it is determined that the student is not passing, no credit toward the five credits (or equivalent) required for eligibility can be awarded.

Students should also be aware that the NCAA eligibility requirements specifically address the types of learning opportunities available through credit flexibility policy (e.g. online/distance learning, independent study, one course taught over two years) and the responsibilities of the school in submitting those opportunities to the NCAA to be included in the List of Approved Core Courses. The NCAA does not allow “credit by exam” courses to be applied to core course eligibility requirements. For more

information about the specific rules and regulations governing participation in high school and college athletics, visit the NCAA eligibility website ([www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)).

Students and parents should discuss OHSAA eligibility requirements and NCAA eligibility requirements with school staff prior to the development of a student's individual learning plan to ensure compliance with OHSAA rules.

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## OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Does the "teacher of record" advisor have to be a teacher, counselor, or administrator from my school?

**A1.** Yes, however students may also include "external mentors" in their *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal*. For example, a student who wishes to request a *Credit Flexibility Plan* in The Arts may work with a local artist who can validate the quality of the work created, but the student must still have a "teacher of record" advisor from his/her school supervising his/her *Credit Flexibility Plan*.

Q2. Who can serve as an "external mentor"?

**A2.** Anyone with documented expertise in the area of interest outlined in the student's *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* may serve as an "external mentor". Examples might include: (1) a local artisan who can validate the quality of the work created by the student; (2) a private coach who can validate the time, effort and competitive level of a student's participation in a particular activity; or (3) a private music or dance instructor who can attest to the hours of study and the performance level of the student, etc.

Q3. Can the student's *Credit Flexibility Plan* be modified once it is agreed upon and approved?

**A3.** Yes. If conditions change once the *Credit Flexibility Plan* has been agreed upon and approved by the Chief Academic Officer, the student, legal guardian, and "teacher of record" advisor may request a modification of the approved plan. A modified *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* must be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer for approval, as defined in "How does a student request a *Credit Flexibility Plan*?" above.

Q4. Can a student test out of the second semester of a course after sitting for the first semester of that same course?

**A4.** Yes. A student who wishes to test out of a second semester of a course after sitting for the first semester of that same course could request to do so by completing a *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* as defined above.

Q5. If a student requests to use credit flexibility to earn a credit in a course not offered by the school, whose responsibility is it to find the course of study or educational program that supports the academic credit?

**A5.** The student is responsible for locating and/or identifying a mutually acceptable course of study or educational program not offered in the school to earn a desired credit.

Q6. If a student takes a course from another school or provider as part of a *Credit Flexibility Plan*, will CMSD accept the credit and grade from that school?

**A6.** CMSD will approve and accept the credit and grade from any provider who is accredited to provide high school course credit in the state of Ohio or in the provider's home state. The student should work with his/her "teacher of record" advisor to verify the legitimacy of the source in order to determine if credits earned will be accepted (i.e. is the organization accredited from a recognized organization or from a state department of education). Verification that a provider is eligible to grant credit will be required at the time the *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* is reviewed for approval so that a student will know if the credit will be accepted by CMSD before beginning the *Credit Flexibility Plan*.

Q7. Is there a list of approved online courses, institutions or other educational resources that students can reference to determine if credits earned via on-line learning will be accepted?

**A7.** No. At this time there is no list of pre-approved providers.

Q8. What if a student does not complete his/her *Credit Flexibility Plan*?

**A8.** The approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* should be considered a contract between the student, his/her legal guardian, and the school district. Therefore, a student who fails to satisfactorily complete the requirements outlined in an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* will receive a failing grade ("F") on his/her official transcript.

Q9. What if a student needs more time to complete his/her *Credit Flexibility Plan* or needs to revise his/her work in order to satisfactorily meet the requirements outlined in his/her *Credit Flexibility Plan*?

- A9.** A “teacher of record” advisor may recommend to the Chief Academic Officer a grade of incomplete (“I”) if the advisor is able to provide evidence that the student is making appropriate efforts satisfactorily complete the approved *Credit Flexibility Plan*. In the event that an incomplete grade is approved and an extension is allowed by the Chief Academic Officer, the student must complete the requirements of the *Credit Flexibility Plan* within the extended timeline allowed. A student who fails to complete the requirements outlined within the timeline authorized as part of an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* will receive a failing grade (“F”) on his/her official transcript.
- Q10. Can a student have more than one extension to his/her *Credit Flexibility Plan* timeline?
- A10.** There are circumstances in which a “teacher of record” advisor would be able to provide evidence that would warrant more than one timeline extension and these extensions would be considered. However, only those instances in which a clear record of evidence demonstrates a legitimate reason for extension will be honored. Extensions will not be honored simply because a student didn’t complete the requirements of the *Credit Flexibility Plan* without evidence of the circumstances that prevented his/her ability to do so.
- Q11. Can a student earn a physical education credit by requesting a *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* for participating on a school sports team?
- A11.** No. Ohio law prohibits the participation on a school or community sports team as a simple substitution for physical education. However, a student could develop a *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposal* which includes participation on a school or community sports team as part of the evidence necessary to demonstrate learning of the district’s physical education curriculum.
- Q12. How do schools count attendance for students using an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* that includes activities that occur away from the school (i.e., mentorship, travel, etc.)?
- A12.** Students with an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* that includes activities that occur away from the school will be counted as present in the same manner as if the student was enrolled in a traditional Post-Secondary Enrollment (PSEO) program. Students with approved *Credit Flexibility Plans* are still enrolled as students in their home school.
- Q13. Can Students with Disabilities (SWD) or students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) create *Credit Flexibility Plans*?
- A13.** Yes. Students who are on IEPs are allowed to complete *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposals* in exactly the same manner as any other student. In addition, students who have IEPs may wish to work with their IEP teams to create their *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposals*.
- Q14. Can Gifted and Talented (GT) students or students who have a Written Acceleration Plan (WAP) create *Credit Flexibility Plans*?
- A14.** Yes. Students who are on WAPs are allowed to complete *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposals* in exactly the same manner as any other student. In addition, students who have WAPs may wish to work with their WAP teams to create their *Credit Flexibility Plan Proposals*.
- Q15. Can a student test out of a class by taking an Advanced Placement (AP) test?
- A15.** A student can test out of a regular or honors course by passing an AP exam as long as s/he doesn’t wish to list the title of Advanced Placement on his/her official high school transcript. However, The College Board (the organization which creates the AP tests) permits use of the AP label on a transcript only for students who have completed an official AP audit-authorized course. Transcripts may not reflect AP status for students who test out of a course by passing an AP exam.
- Q16. Can a student earn both high school and college credit for a class s/he has taken as part of an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan*?
- A16.** Yes. If a college grants credit hours for a course, a high school may still accept that same course as evidence of completion of requirements of an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* and can earn high school credit.
- Q17. How will credit flexibility affect class standing? If a student takes many courses through credit flexibility will that affect salutatorian/valedictorian placement?
- A17.** Since credits will be reported on student transcripts in the same way that seat time credit is recorded as a graded option, the student grade point average (GPA) will not be impacted negatively by courses taken through credit flexibility and will not negatively affect class standing.

Q18. How does credit flexibility impact honors classes?

**A18.** If an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan* replaces an existing honors class which carries additional GPA weight, the *Credit Flexibility Plan* grade will carry the same GPA weight as the class it is intended to replace.

Q19. Who is responsible for costs such as supplies, travel, and other costs associated with the credit flexibility plan?

**A19.** The student is ultimately responsible for the costs of an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan*. However, students should work closely with their “teacher of record” advisors in identifying resources available in the school to assist with the implementation of the plan (e.g., bus tickets to travel to a museum exhibit, art supplies for a project, etc.).

Q20. Can a student get credit for something s/he is paid to do?

**A20.** Yes. A student may earn credit from learning that occurred during a paid experience as long as the student is able to demonstrate that s/he met the learning objectives outlined in the approved *Credit Flexibility Plan*. For example, a student who works in a paid internship in a hospital lab as a way of demonstrating his knowledge of chemistry principles may earn chemistry credit from this experience.

Q21. Can a student use district resources, materials, and equipment (e.g., textbooks, computers, video cameras, musical instruments, etc.) to support an approved *Credit Flexibility Plan*?

**A21.** Yes. A student may use the resources that are available and not in use as long as the student’s “teacher of record” faculty advisor authorizes the use of those resources. The student is responsible for the appropriate care of those resources and must reimburse the district for any loss or damage of resources in his/her possession.

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## OTHER QUESTIONS?

For any questions not answered in this document, please contact the Chief Academic Officer’s office by telephone at 216/838-0101 or by email at [Academics@clevelandmetroschools.org](mailto:Academics@clevelandmetroschools.org).