

Instruction**External and Online Credit Options**

In 21st Century Learning, the Hamden Board of Education recognizes that many learning experiences are available outside the Hamden High School curriculum that will contribute to a student's overall education. Education through external and online courses are an alternative means of instruction for students who may need assistance obtaining credits necessary to earn a diploma, to maintain academic standing, or to provide enrichment for those who might require special courses. External and online courses increase accessibility and flexibility to a wider variety of instructional opportunities.

1. Definitions
 - A. Online learning (also cyber learning, e-learning, and virtual learning) - Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the Internet.
 - B. External credit – Credit earned in a course not taken in Hamden Public Schools, but which may be eligible for Hamden High School transfer credit.

2. External and Online Credit Options

Only courses taken at Hamden High School in grades nine through twelve, inclusive, shall satisfy Hamden's graduation requirements, except a student may be granted credit toward meeting Hamden's graduation requirements upon:

- A. The successful completion of a Hamden High School level course while enrolled as a Hamden Middle School student in grade seven or eight.
- B. Achievement of a passing grade on a subject area proficiency examination identified and approved, within available appropriations, by the Commissioner of Education, regardless of the number of hours the student spent in a public school classroom learning such subject matter.
- C. The successful completion of coursework at an institution accredited by the Department of Higher Education or regionally accredited. For the purposes of this section, one three-credit semester course, or its equivalent, at such an institution shall equal one credit or one-half credit as determined by the appropriate K-12 Director and the Coordinator of Counseling.
- D. The successful completion of online coursework, provided, at a minimum, the online coursework meets the following criteria:

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1. The workload required by the online course is equivalent to that of a similar course taught in a traditional classroom setting.
 2. The content is rigorous and aligned with curriculum guidelines approved by the State Board of Education, where appropriate.
 3. The course engages students and has interactive components, which may include, but are not limited to, required interactions between students and their teachers, participation in online demonstrations, discussion boards or virtual labs.
 4. The program of instruction for such online coursework is planned, ongoing and systematic.
 5. The courses are
 - a. Taught by teachers who are certified in the state or another state and have received training on teaching in an online environment, or
 - b. Offered by institutions of higher education that are accredited by the Department of Higher Education or regionally accredited.
- E. The successful completion of summer school courses at an accredited high school other than Hamden High School.
- F. The successful completion of approved Independent Study.
3. Mandated Online Credit Recovery Program
- The Board of Education shall offer an online credit recovery program for students who have failed high school courses. Students who are identified by certified personnel as being in danger of failing to graduate must be allowed to complete online district-approved coursework toward meeting high school graduation requirements. The district shall designate, from among existing staff, an online learning coordinator to administer and coordinate the online credit recovery program.
4. Prior Approval Requirements for External and Online Credit Options
- A. The following external credit option does not require prior approval:
 1. Hamden High School level courses successfully completed while enrolled as a Hamden Middle School student in grade seven or eight.
 - B. The following external and online credit options require written approval of the Hamden High School Principal and recommendation from the appropriate K-12 Director and the Coordinator of Counseling, in accordance with these administrative guidelines and the procedures/forms that implement these

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administrative guidelines before the student registers for or begins the educational activity:

1. Online credit enrichment courses identified by the district that are not offered at Hamden High School.
 2. Online credit courses offered at Hamden High School that could not be scheduled for a student.
 3. Online credit courses mandated by state statute to be offered for credit recovery.
 4. Online credit courses, summer school courses, or courses at constituent unit of the state system of higher education mandated by state statute to be offered for support and remedial services.
 5. Coursework at an institution accredited by the Department of Higher Education.
 6. Summer school courses completed at an accredited high school other than Hamden High School.
 7. Independent Study
- C. For these external and online credit options, students must have completed all appropriate prerequisites, and must obtain a recommendation from the appropriate K-12 Director and from the Coordinator of Counseling, or building administrator, before submitting the application for external credit to the office of the Coordinator of Counseling. If the application proposes that the school system will fund any costs, the administrator responsible for the funding budget must approve the proposed expenditure and record the budget codes on the application before the application is considered for approval by the high school Principal. Applications for prior approval of external and online credit options may be obtained from the counseling department.
- D. External or online credit courses offered as an alternate method of education for students who are expelled, students receiving homebound or hospitalized instruction, students with disabilities, or students with a Section 504 plan require written approval from the Director of Pupil Personnel Services. For these external and online credit options, students must obtain a recommendation from the appropriate K-12 Director and from the Coordinator of Counseling before submitting the application for external credit to the Director of Pupil Personnel Services. The following external and online credit options require written approval of the Director of Pupil Personnel Services in accordance with these administrative guidelines and the procedures/forms that implement these administrative guidelines before the student registers for or begins the educational activity:

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1. The course will serve as an alternative or a supplement to extended homebound instruction.
 2. The district has expelled the student from the regular school setting, and the student has been offered an alternative educational opportunity.
5. Payment of fees for external and online credit options.
 - A. The Board shall pay the fees for external and online credit options, if the course is:
 1. Offered through Hamden Public Schools for credit recovery, or
 2. Mandated by state statute for support and remedial services, or
 3. Taken online as an alternate method for expelled students.
 - B. For all other external and online credit options, all fees imposed on the learner are the sole responsibility of the learner and not the Board of Education. The Board of Education may establish a scholarship fund for economically disadvantaged students, as determined by the federal free and reduced lunch program, and applications would be made available to eligible students.
6. Limits on External and Online Credit Options

Students must be enrolled full time (minimum of 5 courses) in order to take online learning courses unless the Principal waives this requirement in writing. No more than 1.0 external credit may be taken each semester and no more than a total of 4 external credits may be taken throughout the high school career unless the Principal waives these limits in writing stating the reasons why, citing whatever circumstances have necessitated this waiver.

7. Grades for External and Online Credit Options

Once approved, the external or online credit course must be completed or a grade of "F" will be assigned unless the high school approves a withdrawal from the course. The responsibility for submission of grades for external credits lies with the student. The school must receive an official record of the final grade before awarding credit toward graduation. Only approved courses shall be posted on student transcripts. Grades will not be used in determining class rank or calculating weighted grade-point average.

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8. Evaluation of Online Courses

The district will evaluate the educational effectiveness of the online courses and the teaching/learning process to include assessments based on curriculum standards as well as student satisfaction. The district will use this evaluation to decide whether to continue or discontinue the use of the course. Approval of any course shall be based upon its compliance with Connecticut's academic standards and requirements, including but not limited to the course content and rigor, its length and scope, its method of assessing knowledge acquired by the student, the qualifications of the instructor and other appropriate factors.

Legal Reference: CT General Statutes 10-221
10-221a and PA 10-111

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