

# EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM DESIGNATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The Early College Joint Committee of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed and approved designation criteria for early college programs in June of 2017.

## **Guiding Principle 5: Effective Partnerships**

***Designated programs should be a partnership between at least one institution of higher education and one public secondary school and district, and may include one or more employers. Partnerships should present evidence that the program is consistent with collective bargaining agreements and memoranda of understanding detailing the nature of governance, budget, sustainability, scheduling, respective responsibilities, and performance measures. Programs should be sufficient in size to capture economies of scale goals and to ensure long-term sustainability.***

Fundamentally, an effective and sustainable early college program necessitates a fully integrated partnership between the school, district, and postsecondary institution. Tacit agreement to collaborate is not sufficient—deep commitment to partnership and continued full collaboration on both sides is imperative. While designation purposes therefore require substantive evidence of these partnerships in the form of a MOU, what will be most important to maintain these partnerships will be clear and respected relationships between instructors and leadership at both institutions.

### **Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Effective Partnerships:**

1. The K-12 school district(s) and postsecondary institution outline plans to be fully integrated partners in the program. Roles and responsibilities of each partner during the planning process are clearly identified, including which entity will be the fiscal agent.
2. Where there is a requirement for local bargaining relating to any aspect of the pathway, local requirements must be followed. The proposal outlines plans to have discussions concerning collective bargaining agreements, at both the K-12 and higher education level, as needed.
3. Each partner has identified personnel empowered with the authority to enter into memoranda of understanding discussions.
4. Application details the leadership at each partner institution empowered to make decisions around early college at the K-12, higher education, employer, and community level.

5. Plan will detail initial plans identifying key costs associated with the program for both institutions, including—but not limited to—per credit student support and student transportation. Applicant partners have realistic plan to sustainably support a high quality program across all partners, and have identified a necessary funding structure to achieve that goal.
6. Applicant has provided preliminary outlines and a clear plan to complete detail regarding graduation requirements, college course taking, and pathways to credentials including certificates, associate, and bachelor's degrees.

**Final Designation Criteria to demonstrate Effective Partnerships:**

The applicant shall continue to meet all criteria requisite for Preliminary Designation. In addition, the applicant must provide:

1. A joint or common vision statement agreed upon by partners, and the value add of and value proposition for each partner.
2. A current, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines an active partnership between the school district and the institution of higher education (IHE) that addresses topics including, but not limited to:
  - a. the location and proposed faculty of the dual credit courses offered in the Early College program;
  - b. the anticipated costs and planned funding sources for all instruction costs and for all support, logistical, administrative and other activities, including but not limited to, costs for tuition, fees, and textbooks;
  - c. student transportation;
  - d. program coordination plan;
  - e. student support plan; f. faculty support plan; and
  - f. career partnership coordination plan.
3. The MOU shall also include the following necessary components:
  - a. grading periods and policies;
  - b. courses of study;
  - c. curriculum alignment;
  - d. student learning outcomes;
  - e. instructional materials;
  - f. instructional calendar;
  - g. student enrollment and attendance policies;
  - h. provisions for discontinuing ECHS program operation in the event that becomes necessary;
  - i. provisions and processes for collecting, sharing, and reviewing student and teacher/instructor data to assess the progress of the ECHS program;
  - j. policy for advising students on the transferability of all college credits offered and earned;
  - k. professional development for ECHS faculty (including both district and IHE faculty/staff);
  - l. policy to ensure the IHE transcripts college credit earned through dual credit in the same semester that credit is earned;



- m. policy addressing the role of each partner in the resolution of student issues (including student conduct, investigative procedures, consequences); and
  - n. indication of how often the MOU will be reviewed.
4. The MOU shall also detail performance measure goals, and how the data attached to those measures will be collected, analyzed, and disseminated. Those measures should include but not be limited to the following:
- a. retention rate of participating students, disaggregated by subgroup;
  - b. high school graduation rate of participating students;
  - c. percentage of participating students who complete the program;
  - d. percentage of participating students who gain postsecondary credits and how many credits;
  - e. percentage of participating students who achieve an associate's or bachelor's degree within three or six years of high school graduation; and
  - f. college and/or career outcomes of students.
5. Detailed MOUs for any other partnerships, including community-based organizations, businesses, and other partners.
6. The application should also include the following for the program in the aggregate:
- a. budgets, including estimates of both start-up costs as well as per student ongoing costs to sustain the program (with reference to the cost estimates described in the Parthenon study);
  - b. staffing plans;
  - c. faculty and teacher qualifications;
  - d. job descriptions for individuals supporting the ECHS Program;
  - e. training or professional development and support plans;
  - f. student mentor/induction program plans; and
  - g. faculty and teacher assignments.

[Download the complete Early College Toolkit here.](#)