

EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM DESIGNATION CRITERIA FOR CONNECTION TO CAREER

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 4: Connection to Career

Designated programs should expose students to a variety of career opportunities including greater depth in careers relevant to their selected pathway, for example, by providing opportunities for targeted workforce and career skills development, career counseling, and elements of experiential and workplace learning.

This guiding principle dictates that designated early college programs should be designed to support college and career readiness such that students are expected to develop awareness of their educational growth and development while understanding the manner in which their educational path is connected to career opportunities. This connection should be framed broadly, to allow students to explore career possibilities and to more generally develop foundational employability skills necessary to thrive in any work environment.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Connection to Career:

1. Career Development Education (CDE) is integral to the early college program design, with career awareness, exploration and/or immersion activities included in the program across the four years of high school¹,
2. Program is designed to incorporate in depth and comprehensive college and career counseling that aligns to the necessary elements of individual learning plans (as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).
3. College and career counseling and education incorporates relevant regional and statewide labor market data as a method to inform students about career opportunities beyond college and supports students to make the connection between that information and their potential pathways.
4. Specific career and college counseling will be part of the early college program plan, including the guided use of individualized learning plans beginning in 9th grade.
5. Program will engage area employers to support connections between education and career.



6. Courses offered as part of the early college program will be aligned with multiple postsecondary and degree pathways (see Guided Pathways).

Final Designation Criteria to demonstrate Connection to Career:

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

1. Proposed career development education activities, by grade level, that include awareness, exploration, and/or immersion (internships, proposed career pathways) that consider labor market information.
2. A plan for proposed career development education activities for students. This plan should include specific employer contacts in order to demonstrate a commitment of community businesses and other partners, with the goal of exposing students to a variety of career options and internship opportunities.
3. Identification of the higher education partner's commitment and resources to help support connections between education and career.
4. Incorporation and integration of an online tool for use in college and career counseling (e.g., Naviance or MEFA Your Plan for the Future).

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

¹ Immersive experiences include internships, capstones, cooperative education, or clinical experiences (as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).