

**Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Early College High School Program Designation Process and Criteria
PRELIMINARY DRAFT
4.10.17**

DRAFT

Table of Contents

Early College High School Program Defined..... 3

Early College High School Program Designation Process Overview 3

Applicant Criteria..... 3

Early College High School Program Designation Process Timeline (AY2017-2018) 4

Early College High School Program Designation Criteria Framed by Guiding Principles..... 5

Guiding Principle 1: Equitable Access 5

Guiding Principle 2: Guided Academic Pathways..... 7

Guiding Principle 3: Enhanced Student Support 9

Guiding Principle 4: Connection to Career10

Guiding Principle 5: Effective Partnerships11

DRAFT

Early College High School Program Defined

Early College High School (ECHS) Programs are designed to blend elements of high school and college to provide students, especially those at-risk students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (e.g., low-income students, students of color, and potential first-generation college-goers) with the opportunity to experience and complete college-level academic coursework and simultaneously gain exposure to a variety of career opportunities. Through deep and strategic partnerships between high schools and institutions of higher education, ECHS programs enable students to earn 12 or more college credits on an intentional pathway in a rigorous, highly supportive environment. ECHS programs reduce the potential time and expense of earning a college credential.

In January 2017, The Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education jointly approved five guiding principles for ECHS. In order to receive designation as an ECHS Program, applicants must demonstrate with evidence that they can implement all five of the principles. Implicit within this framework is fulfillment of all six components of a high quality career pathway: career advising, work-based learning, postsecondary linkages, integrated instruction, credential attainment, and alignment with labor market data, which are aligned and embedded within the implementation of the five ECHS principles. .

Early College High School Program Designation Process Overview

In order to ensure that partners developing a Massachusetts Early College High School are first establishing key foundation elements for an Early College High School program, there will be two stages to the Designation Process—Preliminary Designation and Final Designation.

Early College High School programs wishing to seek an official designation from the Commonwealth must first apply for a **Preliminary Designation**. A Preliminary Designation will recognize an Early College High School Program for having completed sufficient planning and design in compliance with the Preliminary Criteria as framed by the Guiding Principles. Receiving a Preliminary Designation will allow the applicant to apply for a Final Designation.

A **Final Designation** will require that the applicant has fulfilled essential elements of ECHS program design and provide sufficient evidence that the program has enrolled students as defined by the Designation Criteria, or that the applicant has developed all necessary infrastructure to begin enrolling students upon designation. An applicant may not apply for a Final Designation unless they have already received a Preliminary Designation.

Applicant Criteria

Lead applicants for consideration of an Early College High School program designation may be either a Massachusetts public high school or a Massachusetts public institution of higher education (IHE).

Early College High School Program Designation Process Timeline

Following recommendation by the Early College Joint Committee and approval by the Board of Higher Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will release a request for applications for Preliminary Early College High School Program Designation, and will accept those applications on a rolling basis from July 2017 through September 2017. The departments will then recommend applicants for Preliminary Designation for approval by the Early College Joint Committee by October 2017.

Should any funding be made available for planning and infrastructure related to an ECHS program, those funds will be distributed by the requisite agency through a separate request for proposal (RFP). Such an RFP will be framed around the Preliminary Early College High School Design Criteria.

The Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will accept applications for Final Early College High School Designation on a rolling basis beginning in January 2018. The departments will then recommend applicants for Final Designation for approval by the Early College Joint Committee on a rolling basis in the spring of 2018 for student enrollment in AY2018-2019.

Early College High School Program Designation Criteria Framed by Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle 1: Equitable Access

Designated programs should prioritize students underrepresented in higher education enrollment and completion. To facilitate this, programs should be structured to eliminate barriers to student participation. Design might therefore include, but not be limited to, tuition-free participation, open enrollment without regard to prior academic performance, student supports to promote success, scalability, multiple entry points for students, and student supports to prepare students for entry into the program.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Equitable Access:

1. The Program is designed and funded such that it will be offered free for all student participants.
2. Enrollment in program will be open to all students enrolled in the secondary school, without respect to prior academic performance.¹
3. Should student applications exceed program capacity, participation should be determined by a lottery among applicants.
4. The program will present a basic plan for outreach and recruitment of students who are at-risk (low-income students, students of color, and potential first-generation college-goers). A plan for outreach to parents is also included.
5. The program will use appropriate data from the post secondary Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) to identify and target eligible students, and to support students throughout the program.
6. The program will identify appropriate recruitment strategies for traditionally underrepresented students, including students of color, low income students, English language learners and students with disabilities. The program leverages the work of existing college access programming to identify students who would benefit from the program.
7. Program design aims to reflect admissions and placement policy to ensure that the highest number of first-generation and other underrepresented students are able to participate in early college programming.
8. Data is presented about the current number and percent of students in the high school or district that are low-income, students of color, and/or first gen. who would be targeted for inclusion.

¹ This aspect of program design is subject to and may account for appropriate processes to address suitability for special populations of students, such as those with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Programs may also be designed to require students to meet reasonable benchmarks of participation, engagement, and performance to continue participation.

Final Designation Criteria to demonstrate Equitable Access:

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

1. Long-term program design reflects a reasonable plan to target enrollment of significant scale relative to school/school district size.
2. Program design reflects thoughtfulness and opportunity with regard to student entry and exit points in the program. A program will demonstrate a clear pathway for students but will also be designed to allow for multiple entry points for students. Program design will also be structured such that should a student need to exit the program, the student will be able to transition out of the program and back into the traditional or a different high school program in a coherent way.
3. The applicant will also submit the following:
 - a. Longitudinal data showing student enrollment trends.
 - b. Needs assessment demonstrating potential district need for such a program in the district or region, including those based on student needs and/or employer demand.
 - c. Written recruitment plan, including a timeline of recruitment and enrollment events, and recruitment materials for distribution at feeder schools and other appropriate locations in the community (e.g., recruitment schedule).
 - d. Written communication plan for targeting identified audiences, parents, community members, school board, higher education personnel, etc.
 - e. Materials used for outreach, including but not limited to, brochures and marketing in Spanish, English, and/or relevant second language(s).
 - f. Written admission policy, including lottery process and minimum enrollment requirements.
 - g. Calendar of family/parent outreach events and other opportunities to educate students, counselors, principals, parents, the school board, and community members on the Early College High School program.

Guiding Principle 2: Guided Academic Pathways

Designated programs should be structured around clear and detailed student academic pathways from secondary and post-secondary education with regard to coursework, sequencing, and experiences beyond the classroom. Given this pathway, students should be expected to complete at least twelve college credits that count towards a postsecondary credential. Programs should also offer students substantive exposure to career opportunities in high demand fields, allowing them to make an informed decision about which career pathway to pursue. Students should also be exposed to the authentic experience and academic rigor of postsecondary education. This would require validating that courses are as rigorous as college level courses offered on campuses. Further, programs should prioritize allowing students to take courses on college and university campuses where possible, and otherwise offer experiences intended to acculturate students to the post-secondary experience.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Guided Academic Pathways:

For a Preliminary Designation, the applicant must meet the following criteria relevant to Guided Academic Pathways:

1. The program design is clearly articulated, thoughtfully designed, and fully integrated pathway for students, including:
 - a. inclusion of early career and postsecondary education exploration, grounded in employability skills and labor market information;
 - b. program design reflecting an integration of course taking, career exploration and work based learning;
 - c. pathway starting at grade 9 is designed to prepare students for later college level coursetaking.
 - d. course taking is linked with the broader college going experience, such that where feasible, at least some academic courses are taught on the campus of the postsecondary partner institution;
 - e. program is designed such that during high school, students will have gained a clear understanding of the postsecondary pathways and courses of study available to them, and how those courses of study will help facilitate their career aspirations; and
 - f. program is designed such that upon completion, students will also fully understand the range of postsecondary institutions available to them, how to matriculate at those institutions, and how to pursue the financial aid necessary to pay for those opportunities.
2. The program outlines a basic plan for scope and sequence of high school courses to enable participating students to later access college-level coursework in a cohort of their peers.
3. The range of college credits available to be completed (with a minimum on-plan target of 12) should be stated. To the extent possible, these courses should fall under the

[MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation](#) and align with established "[A2B Mapped](#)" Degree Pathways.²

4. The program includes a description of when and where college coursework will be completed and how it is articulated with a high school's graduation requirements.

Final Designation Criteria to demonstrate Guided Academic Pathways:

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

1. Scope and sequence evidencing a course of study allowing for all on-track students to graduate with at least 12 college credits.
 - a. At a minimum, students should be required to complete English Composition I or the equivalent and a college-level mathematics course prior to high school completion. Students should be identified as more interested in a STEM or non-STEM pathway for the purposes of completing a math course that will be appropriate for their field of study.
 - b. Further, as stated above, program design should reflect an effort to ensure that student course taking aligns with MassTransfer Pathways. As such, it is recommended that the remaining course sequence be mapped with major requirements for a particular "A2B Mapped Degree Pathways or with the MassTransfer GenEd Foundation.
2. Proposed schedules for students enrolled in the Early College High School program
3. Sample redacted individualized learning plan (ILP), including connections between areas of interest and exposure to career opportunities.
5. Proposed high school course catalogs or additions to existing catalogs, including program outlines and course descriptions and syllabi.

² The Department of Higher Education, in collaboration with the three segments of public higher education, has developed "A2B Mapped" degrees in specific disciplines and metamajors that seek to create a seamless transition from two-year to four-year institutions. To the extent possible, high school pathways and course offerings should be aligned with the "A2B" mapped degrees, and these pathways should be an essential part of the consideration of any Early College High School program design process.

Guiding Principle 3: Enhanced Student Support

Designated programs should incorporate sufficient wraparound services to promote academic success and completion, taking into consideration the needs of diverse populations of students.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Enhanced Student Support

1. The program plan identifies potential academic and nonacademic challenges for all potential student participants.
2. Plans include supports for academic, nonacademic, and career purposes. These plans should incorporate evidence-based strategies and consider the supports offered by existing college access programming.
3. Program design includes an outline of potential academic supports, such as tutoring at the high school or college level.
4. An appropriate contact for student support is named in the application. Final contact information for this individual is provided, along with a description of the role. If the role requires staff to be hired, a proposed job description is included.
5. Appropriate safety procedures for students on college campuses are addressed.

Final Designation Criteria to demonstrate Enhanced Student Support:

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

1. Plan for ongoing academic and non-academic support that includes support for English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and first generation college students.
2. Student schedules evidencing advisory/or college access/ readiness and support time built into the program.
3. Advisory/study skills curriculum material.
4. Tutoring schedules and to the extent possible, participation.
5. Detailed calendar of awareness activities for current and prospective students, including application assistance, financial aid counseling, and college and career advising.
6. Policy on communicating to students that they are at risk for failing a course, supports for helping the student get back on track, and actions that may or may not be taken if a student fails a course or multiple courses.

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.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Connection to Career:

1. Career Development Education (CDE) is integral to the early college high school program design, with career awareness, exploration and immersion activities ~~are~~ included in the program across the four years of high school, especially immersive experiences such as internships, capstones, cooperative education, or clinical experiences (as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).
2. Program will use an online tool for college and career counseling that aligns to the necessary elements of individual learning plans (as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education), and it includes information on relevant regional and statewide labor market data, as well as descriptions of potential pathways (i.e., Naviance or MEFA Pathways, formerly known as Your Plan for the Future).
3. Specific career and college counseling will be part of the early college high school program plan, including the guided use of individualized learning plans beginning in 9th grade.
4. Courses offered as part of the early college high school 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 immersion (internships, proposed career pathways) that consider labor market information.
2. A five-year plan for proposed work-based learning activities for students with contact information, evidencing a commitment of community businesses and other partners to expose students to a variety of potential career options and possible internship opportunities.
3. Identification of the higher education partner's commitment and resources to help support connections between education and career.

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/or 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.

Preliminary Designation Criteria to demonstrate Effective Partnerships:

1. The K-12 school district(s) and IHE(s) should 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. 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.
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 ideally the value add of each partner.
2. A current, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines an active partnership between the school district(s) and the institution of higher education (IHE) that addresses topics including, but not limited to:
 - a. the location and proposed faculty of the courses offered in the Early College High School program ;
 - b. the allocation of costs for tuition, fees, and textbooks;
 - c. student transportation;
 - d. program coordination plan;
 - e. student support plan;

- f. faculty support plan; and
 - g. 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. instructional materials
 - e. instructional calendar
 - f. student enrollment and attendance policies
 - g. provisions for discontinuing ECHS program operation in the event that becomes necessary;
 - h. provisions and processes for collecting, sharing, and reviewing student and teacher data to assess the progress of the ECHS program;
 - i. policy for advising students on the transferability of all college credits offered and earned;
 - j. professional development for ECHS faculty (including both district and IHE faculty/staff); and
 - k. policy to ensure the IHE transcripts college credit earned through dual credit in the same semester that credit is earned.
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. high school graduation rate of participating students;
 - b. percentage of participating students who complete the program;
 - c. percentage of participating students who gain postsecondary credits and how many credits;
 - d. percentage of participating students who achieve an Associate's or Bachelor's degree within three or six years of high school graduation; and
 - e. 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;
 - 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;
 - g. faculty and teacher assignments.