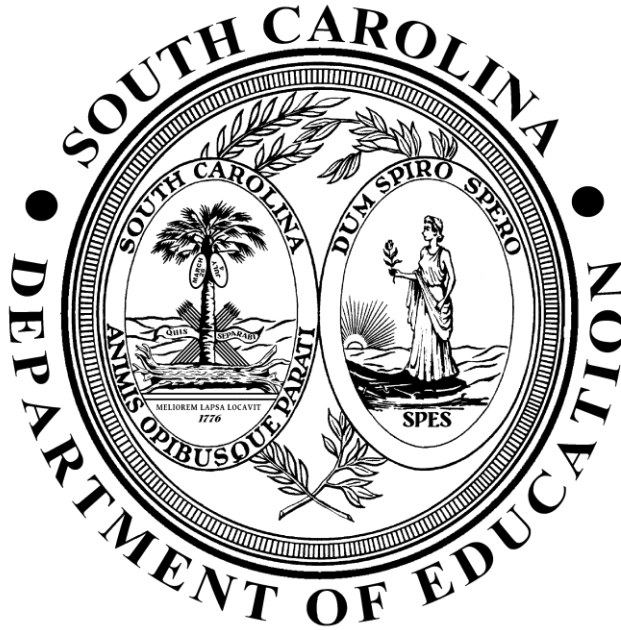


STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION



Proficiency-Based Systems

Overview and Submission Process

February 6, 2023

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Part I: Overview

South Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) [Regulation 43-234 \(II\)\(C\)](#) gives districts the opportunity to award credit for courses through a proficiency-based system that have been approved by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).

The purpose of the accompanying application is to provide districts with the opportunity to apply for authorization to develop such a system to award credit. Proficiency-based systems focus on providing educational experiences that occur either within a school or within a broader community, are not bound by existing instructional hour requirements, and are based on mastery of content. Once the requirements of the proficiency-based system credit type are met, a student is awarded credit.

Using this Application

Districts wishing to offer existing or new courses where credit is given through proficiency-based means should complete this application to design the system that will deliver those courses using the following situational guidance.

Existing: Districts seeking to offer existing courses through proficiency-based means only need to use the proficiency-based application. For example, if a district already offers an English 3 course in its catalog and wishes to now provide an opportunity to earn credit through proficiency-based means, they can use this application.

New: Districts seeking to award credit for new courses that do not exist in its current course catalog must first have those courses approved through the [innovative course application](#) or the [career and technical education innovative course application](#) process as prescribed in SBE [Regulation 43-234 \(II\) \(H\)](#).

For more information on, or to submit an innovative course application, please contact innovativecourseapp@ed.sc.gov. For more information on, or to submit a career and technical education innovative course application, please contact Murline Ingram at mingram@ed.sc.gov.

Types of Credit

School districts may use this application to create proficiency-based systems designed to award the following types of credit (see the related Frequently Asked Questions document for examples of courses that may be covered by these types of credit).

1. **Initial Credit:** Refers to an educational experience in which a student is seeking to obtain a credit for the first time. In this case, a student would enroll or participate in an educational experience and attempt to gain sufficient knowledge to demonstrate proficiency in order to earn the desired credit.

2. ***Credit through Prior Knowledge:*** Refers to a proficiency-based process by which a student demonstrates sufficient understanding of a subject to receive credit. In this case, a student's demonstration of subject knowledge is not tied to a specific educational experience and credit is awarded based on demonstration of mastery.
3. ***Credit Recovery:*** Refers to an educational experience that permits a student to receive credit to make up for a previously unsuccessful attempt to obtain credit. In this case, a student had previously enrolled in an educational experience, which may have been either traditional or proficiency-based but did not meet the requirements to receive credit.

Relevant Resources

These are resources that districts may wish to consult when creating their application:

- FAQ Document: This document provides responses to frequently asked questions related to the submission process.
- [South Carolina Education Flexibility Guide](#): This guide can be used to help think about how to create your own approach to personalized learning leveraging existing policies that promote flexibility and innovation.
- South Carolina Education Playbook: This provides examples of how districts in South Carolina and around the country are leveraging similar flexibilities.

Part II: Plan Submission

The submission process provides a structure for a school district to submit a plan to develop a proficiency-based system to award credit under [Regulation 43-234\(11\)\(C\)](#) to South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). Prior to completing this application, the SCDE highly recommends consulting the accompanying Overview and FAQ Document. The application should be completed and submitted using the fillable form feature located on the SCDE website.

Deadlines, Feedback, and Renewal Processes

Proficiency based systems plans are approved for the duration of the district strategic plan or school renewal plan each 5-year cycle. The first year of a new 5-year district strategic or school renewal plan, a new proficiency-based plan must be submitted. By April 30 of each year, districts will complete an evaluation of their proficiency-based systems plan and will upload it in the Strategic Renewal Application.

Plans will either be approved or returned to the district with feedback. If a plan is returned with feedback, districts are encouraged to resubmit the document after incorporating suggested revisions.

Once a plan is approved by SCDE, the district may use it to develop its proficiency- based system and accompanying courses. If the district submitted one or more innovative course applications for a course not currently approved by SCDE, the district must ensure that each new

course application is approved prior to offering it to students for credit. Should the district wish to develop courses outside the scope of its original proficiency-based system plan, such as offering a new type of credit, the district should submit an updated plan that includes the process for developing the proposed courses within the proficiency-based system to the state. The final proficiency-based system developed through the plan should be included in their district strategic plan the next time it is updated and should be shared publicly so that it is accessible by students, parents, and stakeholders.

If you have additional questions, please review our Frequently Asked Questions document or contact Dr. Lindsay Yearta (lyearta@ed.sc.gov) with the [Office of Personalized Learning](#).

Submission Questions

You will be asked to provide a response to the following questions, using the form on the SCDE website.

Section 1: Basic Information

Date Submitted:

District Name:

Primary Contact Name:

Contact Position:

Contact Phone Number:

Contact Email Address:

Section 2: Plan Information

Please note that the plan should provide readers with a detailed understanding of the process that the district will use to develop its proficiency-based system. This application requires districts to submit a plan for how the district will establish and develop a proficiency-based system. The district is not required to describe exactly what courses, systems, or structures will emerge from this process, though it may choose to do so. At minimum, all plans must address the following elements to be considered for SCDE approval:

- ***Goals:*** Briefly describe the goals that the district hopes to achieve through its proficiency-based system.
- ***Types of Credit:*** Indicate the type(s) of proficiency-based credit from the guidance document for which the district is seeking approval:
 - Initial Credit
 - Credit through Prior Knowledge
 - Credit Recovery
- ***Metrics for Accountability and Success:*** Provide a description of the process that the district will use to develop and finalize both short- and long-term metrics for how the district will determine whether its proficiency-based system has achieved success on its

articulated goals. Also describe how you will integrate these metrics into your district strategic plan.

- ***Student Participation:*** Provide a description of how the district will develop strategies and tools to communicate the existence of or encourage student participation in the new proficiency-based system as well as a short statement denoting which school(s) within the district will be included. Furthermore, provide a description of how the district will develop its process to determine which students are eligible to participate in a proficiency-based system course or receive proficiency-based system credit(s).
- ***Individual Student Learning Needs:*** For each of the proficiency-based credits that the district plans to offer, provide a description of the process that the district will use to develop and finalize strategies to ensure that individual student learning needs are addressed.
- ***Changes to District Policies:*** Describe the process that the district will use to determine what policies and structures may need to be changed to fully implement the proficiency-based system. This may include policies related to grading, reporting, and transcripts, among others.
- ***Community Engagement:*** Describe the process that the district will use to ensure that community members and stakeholders, including parents, students, and school staff are aware of the opportunities provided by the proficiency-based system. Also describe the process that the district will use to engage these stakeholders in its development.
- ***Method for Determining Proficiency:*** Provide a description of how the district will develop and finalize the methods of determining proficiency for the purposes of awarding credit for the courses offered through the proficiency-based system. The district should also describe how it will make sure that expectations are shared for all students enrolled in the course. Please also articulate whether and how the district will develop an appeals process.
- ***Academic Standards:*** Provide a description of the process that the district will use to ensure that the evaluation of mastery and any accompanying courses provided under the proficiency-based system address the appropriate academic standards and learning expectations for which credit is to be awarded.
- ***Supports (for the Credit Recovery option only):*** Describe what type(s) of additional supports the district will consider making available to engender student success and demonstration of content proficiency for credit recovery.
- ***Assurances (Last Step!):*** I certify that any courses that will utilize the proficiency-based methods outlined in this application have been approved by SCDE and that the district will take steps to ensure that they will be taught by teachers with the appropriate credentials.

Part III: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the actual regulation that allows for a proficiency-based system?

The state board [Regulation 43-234\(II\)\(C\)](#) states that:

A school may award credit for courses that have been approved by the SCDE in a proficiency-based system. A proficiency-based course may also be offered for one-fourth, one-half, or one unit if the system specifies these units. Each school district that seeks to implement a proficiency-based system must submit a plan to the SCDE that provides procedures for establishing and developing a proficiency-based system including the method for determining proficiency. The SCDE must approve the district-submitted plan prior to the district's use of the proficiency-based system. Districts are accountable for making sure that the academic standards and the individual learning needs of the students are addressed.

Is there a place where I can find additional examples of how other schools are leveraging South Carolina's flexibilities?

Use this [flexibility guide](#) to think about how to create your own approach to personalized learning leveraging existing policies that promote flexibility and innovation. Access the playbook to see examples of how districts in South Carolina and around the country are leveraging similar flexibilities.

What strategies should the district use to develop its proficiency-based systems plan?

The district may employ a variety of strategies to develop its proficiency-based systems plan. For example, the district may wish to develop a single team or set of teams composed of various stakeholders who are assigned a variety of tasks. [North Carolina](#) has developed an implementation guide that may be helpful to schools designing a process. Districts are encouraged to align their proficiency-based systems plan with their district strategic plan.

How should the proficiency-based system be integrated into my district strategic plan?

Districts submitting a proficiency-based system application should do so at the same time or before submitting their district strategic plan. As part of the district strategic plan process, the proficiency plan should be informed by the needs assessment and reflected in the performance goals, possibly as a strategy or part of the action plan outlined. Additional questions may be answered by using the [directions for district strategic plans](#) as well this [example strategic plan](#) (section related to proficiency-based systems starts on page 4).

What types of courses could be covered in this application?

Courses offered through a proficiency-based system could include the range of existing courses that typically can be counted for course credit based on state regulation and guidance. This could include, but is not limited to; traditional courses, gateway courses, summer program courses,

courses that are approved by a district but not offered at a school, adult education courses, locally designed courses, sign language courses, dual credit courses, career and technical education courses, work-based learning courses, cooperative agreements, and some internships. For more details on each of these types of courses, please see state board [Regulation 43-234\(II\)\(C\)](#) and SCDE's [work-based learning implementation guidelines](#).

What methods might a district leverage for demonstrating proficiency?

Districts may select from a variety of methods for demonstrating proficiency depending on the type of credit that they wish to offer. This could include demonstrated mastery through nationally or internationally recognized assessments, locally designed performance assessments, physical or digital portfolios, oral examinations, independent study, or other means that the district may wish to use. The district should also consider the extent to which it may need to develop rubrics, incorporate the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate competencies, revise the school schedule, any additional educator professional development which may be needed, and how assessment methods and criteria will be clearly communicated.

What amounts of credit may be offered?

The board regulation allows districts to award one unit, one-half unit, or one-fourth unit so long as the system specifies these units.

The application says that teachers must be properly certified to teach proficiency-based courses, what exactly does that mean?

The district should ensure that any teachers who provide instruction or oversight of proficiency-based courses under the system hold the appropriate South Carolina certification for the content area. If proficiency-courses utilize lab settings, a teacher who is properly certified specific to the content area must communicate regularly with the student and must monitor the student's progress. A properly certified teacher must also assign final grades for high school proficiency-based credit.

If the course to be offered includes an end of course (EOC) examination, do students receiving credit through a proficiency- based system need to take the EOC?

Yes, a student who receives credit for a course through a proficiency-based system that requires an EOC must still take that exam prior to receiving credit. Additionally, a district could determine that taking and passing an EOC could serve as a method for determining proficiency pursuant to this application. Schools are encouraged to consider the EOC testing windows when offering courses that require an EOC.

Why isn't content recovery included in this application?

Content recovery is not included in the application because districts do not need to submit anything to the state in order to implement content recovery. To pursue content recovery programs, follow the guidelines/rules in the [Uniform Grading Policy](#).

When should I expect to hear back from SCDE once I have submitted the application?

The SCDE will acknowledge receipt of the application before the application goes to the PBS Review Panel. The PBS Review Panel will meet approximately once a week in April and twice a week in May, and the SCDE may reach out to the district through that process.

For other questions regarding the proficiency-based system application, please contact the [Office of Personalized Learning](#).

