SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

2027 South Carolina Honors Framework

South Carolina State Board of Education

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Ellen E. Weaver
State Superintendent of Education

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Introduction

This South Carolina Honors Framework Guide (SC Honors Framework) has been developed by Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) teachers in South Carolina. This guide includes:

- Definition of Honors Level Courses;
- South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) policies related to honors level coursework;
- Honors Level course framework and course assurance;
- Application checklist; and
- Definitions of key terms (see Appendix A).

Definition of Honors Level Courses

Honors courses must be developed and implemented to:

- Provide depth in rigor, complexity, challenges, proficiency, and innovation beyond the college preparatory (CP) level course as outlined in the South Carolina standards and Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.
- Provide an opportunity for adjusting pacing to increase depth and scope.
- Offer a differentiated program of study that provides an array of opportunities and fosters growth for all students with advanced learning needs based on their aptitudes, achievement, and interests.

SCDE Uniform Grading Policy (UGP)

All courses assigned honors weighting must meet the criteria outlined in the *SC Honors Framework* beginning in 2017–18. The district should retain evidence that all honors courses meet the criteria of the *SC Honors Framework* and provide such evidence as requested by the SCDE (see page 5). The local school board must approve all honors courses before they are offered to students. All content areas except Physical Education 1, Marching Band with Physical Education, and ROTC may be approved courses to receive honors weighting. The SCDE may audit courses (and supporting evidence) in the desk audit and full accreditation audit cycles.

When South Carolina state standards are updated, each honors course impacted by the update must undergo the approval process again to ensure full alignment with the current standards. This requirement applies to all honors courses regardless of when they were originally approved. Students taking courses for high school credit in the middle school or junior high school grade levels may receive honors weighting when calculating the high school grade point average (GPA). Enrollment in a course at an earlier grade level does not,

in itself, guarantee honors weighting. Honors designation must be based on evidence that the course meets the criteria outlined in the *SC Honors Framework,* including rigor, differentiation, and alignment to state standards. Evidence must be retained by the district and presented to the SCDE upon request that these courses meet the criteria of the *SC Honors Framework* (see page 8).

Honors can be used as an approved program model to serve gifted and talented students only if differentiation strategies are intentionally embedded for gifted students. The curriculum for gifted students must not only present rigorous academic challenges but also address and support the diverse learning styles and needs of gifted students. The Honors Framework should clearly outline the intentional design elements that address the specific instructional and developmental needs of gifted students.

One-half of a quality point (.5) is added to the College Preparatory (CP) weighting for honors courses that meet the SC Honors Framework Guidelines.

These criteria apply to all honors courses, including those offered online and in other nontraditional settings.

Purpose of the South Carolina Honors Level Framework

With the adoption of the 2017 UGP, the SCDE made the decision to support the request of stakeholders who were instrumental in the UGP revisions and create a uniform system for Local Education Agencies (LEA) to award honors credit for locally approved honors courses across the state. The honors course framework provides the detailed criteria required for LEAs to award honors weighting. Local school districts will be able to utilize this system to ensure that the courses approved for honors weighting will be developed, implemented, and assessed for advanced learners in South Carolina, and uphold the integrity of true honors level coursework. All courses will be aligned to South Carolina state standards and are subject for review prior to final approval. The course content, methods, and assessments should indicate depth in rigor, complexity, challenges, proficiency, and innovation beyond the CP level course as outlined in the South Carolina standards and *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. Documentation of approved honors courses should be maintained at the school and district level.

The following evidence is required for approved honors courses:

- Honors Level Framework and Assurance:
    - Ensures all components of the course are intentionally designed at the honors level for both content and assessment.
- Honors Level Course Application Checklist with documentation:
    - Rationale for course development (including district and/or school needs);
    - Alignment to South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards;
    - Curriculum Guide including pacing, syllabus, and scope and sequence:

        - The curriculum guide should include the following:
            - Course description;
            - South Carolina state standards alignment;
            - Key concepts;
            - Expectations at the honors level of performance;
            - Pacing guides with examples of assignments, timelines, deadlines, classroom assessments, rubrics, and grading practices; and
            - Instructional materials needed to successfully complete the coursework.
        - Student work samples (as soon as available);
        - Rationale for methods and materials;
        - Instructional materials and methods;
        - Rationale for assessment practices;
        - Assessment tools; and
        - Assessment samples, including pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments.
- Credential Teachers:
    - Credentialed in the area of instruction;
    - Prepared to teach advanced learners through multiple instructional methods per district/home school association policy; and
    - Required Gifted and Talented (GT) endorsement if Honors courses are being used as the program model to serve academic gifted and talented students.

South Carolina Honors Framework and Assurance

I. Course Content

1. Is there honors level course content evidence?

   Evidence for the Honors Level Course must include:
   - Rationale for course development (including district and/or school needs);
   - Alignment of standards and objectives (development of standards if necessary);
   - Course Outline and Plan; and
   - Student work (as soon as available), interest surveys, and data (trend, longitudinal, SLO, etc.).

2. How has the course content been adapted for advanced learners?

   The honors curriculum provides learning and enrichment opportunities extending beyond CP coursework, aligns with South Carolina state standards, and reflects the rigor, complexity, challenge, proficiency, and innovation defined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.

3. How does the honors level curriculum extend personalized student learning and allow for an environment in which students are self-directed and take ownership of their learning?

   Extensions and enrichment are aligned with the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*, South Carolina state standards, and appropriate advanced coursework.

II. Instructional Methods and Materials

1. What instructional methods and materials will be used?

   There is evidence of appropriate differentiation in instructional practice for advanced learners and gifted and talented students when the course is used as an approved program model for gifted and talented services. These instructional practices enhance instructional delivery and reinforce the components identified in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. These differentiated strategies may include, but are not limited to:
   - Varied texts and supplemental materials,
   - Technology to enhance instruction,
   - Adaptive digital content,
   - Targeted differentiated small group/individualized instruction,
   - Group investigation,

- Personalized learning plans,
- Curriculum Compacting,
- Scaffolded tasks,
- Independent learning contracts,
- Higher-level questioning and answering, and
- Student-initiated project design.

Differentiation resulting in complexity beyond the CP level course may include, but is not limited to:

- Student-initiated research,
- Student collaboration and engagement,
- Project-based learning,
- Problem-solving and critical thinking,
- Seminar methods to include the incorporation of writing,
- Choice boards/learning menus,
- Connections to world-class skills, characteristics, and context, and
- Creativity and innovation.

2. Is there evidence of honors level course instructional methods and materials?

Evidence of Instructional Methods and Materials must include:

- Rationale for instructional methods and materials;
- Instructional materials and methods;
- Sample units, lessons, and assignments;
- Student work samples (as soon as available); and
- Anecdotal data.

III. Assessment

1. How is the honors level course assessed?

Valid assessments are used throughout the course and are aligned with the honors-level curriculum. Pre-assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments are used to modify and enhance instruction and learning.

2. Is there evidence of honors level course assessments?

Evidence of the assessments must include:

- Rationale for assessment practices;
- Assessment tools (rubrics and/or scoring guides, formative, and summative assessments when applicable); and
- Assessment samples (pre-assessment, description of formative assessment, and summative assessment when applicable). During the initial year of

implementation of new standards or new honors courses, districts may provide planned assessment types, assessment descriptions, and associated rubrics as evidence of honors-level assessment practices. Because student artifacts and completed assessments may not yet exist, these items may be submitted after the first year of course implementation. Beginning in Year 2, actual assessments and representative student work samples should be included as part of the honors course evidence portfolio.

South Carolina Honors Level Course District Documentation Checklist

MUST INCLUDE: COURSE CONTENT EVIDENCE	**INCLUDED**
RATIONALE FOR COURSE DEVELOPMENT	
ALIGNMENT TO SOUTH CAROLINA STATE STANDARDS (COMPILATION OF STANDARDS, IF APPLICABLE)	
CURRICULUM GUIDE (PACING, SYLLABUS, AND SCOPE AND SEQUENCE)	
STUDENT WORK(IF AVAILABLE) AND DATA	

MUST INCLUDE: INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND MATERIALS EVIDENCE	**INCLUDED**
RATIONALE FOR METHODS AND MATERIALS	
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND METHODS	
SAMPLE UNITS OF STUDY, LESSONS, AND ASSIGNMENTS	
STUDENT WORK SAMPLES (AS SOON AS AVAILABLE)	
ANECDOTAL DATA	

MUST INCLUDE: ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE	**INCLUDED**
RATIONALE FOR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES	
ASSESSMENT TOOLS	
ASSESSMENT SAMPLES (PRE-ASSESSMENT, FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT, AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT) TO BE INCLUDED IN YEAR 2 WHEN UNAVAILABLE IN YEAR 1.	

REQUIRED SIGNATURE/TITLE (entire district/all school)

I. _____ _____

District Superintendent Date

II. _____ _____

Chairperson of District Board of Education Date

South Carolina Honors Level Course School Documentation Checklist

The documentation maintained at the school level must include everything on the district checklist in addition to the items listed below. The district office should annually provide schools with the information necessary to maintain complete and accurate documentation.

MUST INCLUDE:	**INCLUDED**
TEACHER NAME	
TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS (CERTIFICATION AND ENDORSEMENTS)	
COURSE TITLE	
COURSE DESCRIPTION	
DOCUMENTATION OF LOCAL APPROVAL (SIGNATURES)	

REQUIRED SIGNATURE/TITLE (individual schools)

I. _____ _____

Teacher Date

II. _____ _____

Principal Date

Appendix A

Definitions of Key Terms

Advanced Learner- a student who shows high potential, exceptional ability, or mastery in one or more academic subjects or skills at a level beyond what is typical for their age or grade.

Appropriate Advanced Coursework- coursework that goes beyond the College Preparatory (CP) level and is specifically designed for advanced learners.

Anecdotal Data- observation-based evidence that documents student learning, behaviors, performance, and growth, providing qualitative support for honors-level expectations and outcomes.

Complexity- the degree to which students engage in critical thinking by analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, and applying knowledge across multiple concepts, perspectives, or real-world situations beyond the expectations of a College Preparatory course.

Curriculum Compacting- a strategy that allows students who have already mastered specific skills or content to skip repetitive instruction and engage in more appropriate and challenging learning.

Depth in Rigor- the extent to which students engage in advanced levels of thinking, inquiry, analysis, application, and evaluation that require them to move beyond basic understanding and demonstrate deeper conceptual mastery.

Differentiation- the use of instructional practices and learning experiences specifically designed to challenge advanced learners through greater rigor, complexity, independence, and depth than those found in a College Preparatory course.

Enrichment- structured learning activities beyond the core curriculum that help students explore topics in greater detail, develop advanced thinking skills, and pursue their interests.

Extension- learning experiences that build on mastery of grade-level standards by encouraging students to explore concepts at greater depth, complexity, and challenge.

Innovation- the ability to create, adapt, and apply knowledge in original ways through creative thinking, problem-solving, and the development of authentic products or solutions that exceed College Preparatory expectations.

Personalized Learning- an instructional approach that adapts instruction, pace, content, and instructional methods to meet each student's needs, interests, and abilities.

Proficiency- the successful demonstration of mastery of honors-level knowledge and skills through performance that reflects advanced rigor, complexity, critical thinking, and independent application of learning.

Scope and Sequence- curriculum planning document that identifies the honors-level content, skills, assessments, and learning experiences to be taught and the progression in which they are delivered to ensure increasing rigor, complexity, and depth throughout the course.