

Goal Path Description for Practitioners and Learners – Secondary School Credit

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Secondary School Credit Summary

What is the learner's goal? The secondary school credit goal path description examines the connection between Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) service provision and transition to secondary school credit programs. This goal path description addresses options available to learners who wish to obtain secondary school credit(s) or an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

Role of LBS Service Providers

LBS service providers help learners examine the benefits and opportunities in pursuing a secondary school credit goal path, as well as reviewing what is involved in the process. LBS service providers work with a learner to explore whether a secondary school credit goal is appropriate to the learner's needs and abilities, is feasible within the learner's means and is achievable in the learner's community. If secondary school education is not a suitable goal, the LBS service provider should help the learner explore alternative options and/or other goal paths.

LBS service providers develop a learner plan that describes the learner's goal path and includes the learning activities, resources and assessment tools which prepare a learner for transitioning to secondary school credit.

Key questions when discussing a learner's secondary school credit goal:

1. Why does the learner want to acquire an OSSD or secondary school credit(s)?
2. Does the learner have a clear and accurate understanding of whether an OSSD or secondary school credit(s) is needed for the goal?
3. Has the learner acquired any high school credits in the past? If so, how many, for which courses and when? If credits were obtained a number of years ago, should the learner receive guidance from the school board to find out about whether different options are available to obtain a secondary school diploma?

4. Is the learner aware of the time commitment required to prepare for successful transition into secondary school courses and the time it will take to complete the OSSD once out of LBS?
5. Are there any issues/needs that the learner should address in order to be prepared for the demands of a secondary school credit goal path? (e.g. need for other supports and services including second-language needs, etc.)
6. Is this goal path suitable and achievable for the learner?
7. Can the LBS service provider prepare the learner with the requisite literacy and basic skills needed to transition to secondary school credit(s)?
8. Are there other program options that could prepare the learner for the goal?

What is secondary school credit?

School boards provide opportunities for adults to return to school and complete their OSSD and/or to complete specific credit courses required for entry into postsecondary institutions or apprenticeship programs. Learners can also study for and earn credits through the Independent Learning Centre (ILC).

To review how learners can study for and earn credits through the Independent Learning Centre, please visit <http://www.ilc.org/index-main.php>.

An OSSD is awarded to individuals who have:

- acquired 30 credits (18 compulsory and 12 elective);
- completed a required number of hours of community service (principals will determine the number of hours of community involvement activities that a mature student will have to complete); and
- successfully completed the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test or Literacy Course.

Credits are granted by a principal on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

All students are required to meet the secondary school literacy graduation requirement in order to earn an OSSD. The requirement is based on the expectations for reading and writing throughout the Ontario curriculum up to and including Grade 9. The purpose of the secondary school literacy graduation requirement is to determine whether students have the skills in reading and writing that they will need to succeed in school, at work and in daily life. To meet this requirement, students are expected to take and successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). For information please review The Ontario Curriculum: English – The Ontario Secondary School Literacy

Course (OSSLC), Grade 12 (2003) at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/english.html>.

Mature students have the option of enrolling directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT. They may still elect to meet the literacy graduation requirement by successfully completing the OSSLT. The reading and writing competencies required by the OSSLT form the instructional and assessment core of the course. The credit(s) earned for successfully completing the OSSLC may also be used to meet credit requirements for the OSSD.

An Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) may be granted upon request to students who left school before earning the OSSD, provided that they have earned a minimum of 14 credits. An OSSC may be accepted for entry into some apprenticeship programs, some entry-level employment positions and entrance into the Canadian Armed Forces.

For more information on secondary school credit(s) requirements please review the Ministry of Education's Program and Diploma Requirements section at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/secondary/oss/oss.html>.

The General Education Development (GED) and the Academic and Career Entrance Program (ACE) Certificates are recognized by some employers and by all Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) programs as equivalent to Grade 12 or high school. For some students, these certificates provide an alternative means to achieving postsecondary entrance, employment and career goals. To review the General Education Development, please visit <http://www.ilc.org/ged/index.php>.

Key Questions:

1. Are there readily accessible secondary school credit courses in the community in French or English?
2. Is the learner able to attend secondary school credit classes as they are scheduled?
3. Should the learner explore night school and/or correspondence options?
4. Is the Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) program an option in the learner's community?
5. Is General Education Development (GED) training in French or English an option in the learner's community?
6. Would the learner be able to access and manage credit courses online?
7. Would the learner be able to access and manage credit courses through the Independent Learning Centre (ILC)?

Who is eligible and what are the entrance requirements?**Secondary School Credit Eligibility**

Secondary school credit courses are available to all adults. Some school boards may have specific requirements for some of their programs/schools, such as:

- minimum age;
- having been out of school for a certain period of time; and/or
- being enrolled in a secondary school credit program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

Adults applying to register in credit courses for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD may be offered intake and assessment counselling in order to determine what credits they still need to earn along with literacy requirements and community hours. In some cases this may include an entrance test.

Role of LBS Service Providers

LBS service providers supply the learner with the necessary supports, tools and information so that they are able to identify the OSSD requirements and/or credits needed for further education and/or employment/apprenticeship opportunities. If possible, LBS service providers also help the learner identify how to obtain the required language proficiency or required supports such as note takers, assistive devices, etc.

Key Questions Related to Eligibility and Entrance Requirements:

1. What is the contact information for the key contact people in the secondary school credit program(s) in the learner's community? (e.g. intake and assessment person, guidance counsellor, program coordinator, principal, etc.) Contacts may be located through "What services are available near me?" on the Employment Ontario website at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/search.asp> - search under Adult High School Credit Programs.
2. What are the intake and assessment policies and procedures?
3. Is there information from the school board on how to prepare a learner for the intake assessment process? (e.g. practice tests, test rubric, test taking strategies, etc.)
4. When does intake and assessment take place? (dates and times)

5. Does the learner have any documentation of previously earned high school credits?(e.g. Ontario Student Transcript, official records from other jurisdictions, etc.)

What are the learner's options for secondary school credit?

Secondary School Credit Program

Most school boards in Ontario provide secondary school credit programming through their Adult and Continuing Education Departments. Programs are offered in a number of ways and in a variety of settings including:

- both Anglophone and Francophone school boards;
- both Catholic and public school boards;
- adult high schools, adult learning centres or centres for continuing education;
- malls and community centres;
- large and small groups;
- during the day or at night;
- in modules or quad-mesters of approximately six to eight weeks;
- individually and online by correspondence/self-study through a school board or ILC; and
- in alternative secondary schools and Native Friendship Centres.

Credit courses are taught by certified teachers who are in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers.

The delivery of credit courses differs from school board to school board, but may occur in one or more of the following ways:

- teacher-taught, large group classes using materials developed by the teacher and/or school board in accordance with Ontario curriculum guidelines
- teacher-taught classes using self-study materials
- semi-independent classes using ILC materials and/or school board developed self-study materials with some teacher support
- independent self-study courses offered through ILC or school boards using ILC materials and/or school board developed self-study course materials
- online courses
- cooperative education courses where credits may be obtained through work experience related to the academic course the student is enrolled in

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Mature Students

Learners may be eligible for a formal evaluation and credit-granting process where they may obtain credits for prior learning. The *Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Mature Students* process is designed to recognize the knowledge and skills that students have acquired, in both formal and informal ways, outside secondary school. PLAR for mature students is available to a student who:

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year;
- has been out of school for a period of at least one year before returning as a mature student; and
- is enrolled in a secondary school credit program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

Staff at the school will determine if the student is eligible to apply for *PLAR for Mature Students* processes or for Maturity Credits (for those who first entered secondary school in Ontario before 1999). School staff will assist the students with the application process.

Policies and processes related to *PLAR for Mature Students* are complex. Information should be obtained from the school board website or directly from the school where the student is planning to register. All credits granted through the PLAR process must represent the same standards of achievement as credits granted to students who have taken the course.

The following three processes are available under PLAR for Mature Students:

1. Grade 9/10 “equivalency” process:

This process is used for students who do not have a transcript indicating successful completion of the first two years of secondary school in Ontario (or a comparable education system). It includes an individual student assessment for the purpose of granting Grade 9 or 10 credits in English (4), mathematics (4), science (4) and Canadian history/geography (4). The individual assessment will be completed in English or French depending on the school board the adult registers with. The total of secondary credits previously earned through classroom attendance and “equivalency” credits granted at the discretion of the principal cannot exceed 16 Grade 9 and 10 credits.

2. Grade 11/12 “challenge” process:

Under the challenge process the student is required to:

- apply to challenge a specific course;
- provide evidence of prior learning; and
- participate in a formal assessment process.

If successful, the student receives a credit and mark for the course.

3. Grade11/12 “equivalency” process:

This involves an assessment of credentials and other French or English documentation from jurisdictions within and outside of Ontario for the purpose of granting credit for Grade 11 and 12 courses. The mature student submits an application that includes supporting credentials and formal documentation for review, to determine if equivalent credits can be granted.

For information on *Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Mature Students* please review Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memoranda No. 132 at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/132.html>.

Role of LBS Service Providers

LBS service providers support, guide and prepare learners in transitioning from LBS programming to secondary school credit(s) or completion of an OSSD and/or other recognized high school equivalencies.

Key Questions:

1. What secondary school credit programming options are available in the learner's community? (e.g. available courses, timetable, scheduling, etc.)
2. Which of the above options best fits with the learner's goal path needs?
3. What information is needed to assist the learner in accessing the best options for further education and training?

Are there any additional requirements?

To transition into and manage secondary school credit coursework, it is necessary for a learner to have certain levels of communication and language proficiency. For information on second-language proficiency please review the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks at http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=1.

It is important that the learner contacts the specific school board and/or department heads to obtain information on the language entry requirements and the language proficiency assessment used.

To manage secondary school course work a learner needs to be able to work independently and be comfortable with a modular based approach.

Role of LBS Provider

LBS services providers assist the learner in identifying whether there are additional requirements for the goal and provide referrals for any applicable supports and/or services.

Key Question:

1. Does the learner have accessibility requirements that may influence available options?

What are the costs and required supports? Are government supports available?

Secondary School Credit Costs

Secondary school credit courses are free; however, course textbooks and supplies may run as high as \$100.00 per course (usually refundable). The Independent Learning Centre (ILC) charges a non-refundable \$40.00 fee per course for distance learning courses.

Government support may be available to:

- cover the costs of textbooks and supplies;
- provide free, government-funded child-care services;
- provide funds to cover costs of transportation and parking; and
- provide assessment of learning disabilities and/or other special needs.

Role of LBS Service Providers

LBS service providers should provide learners with the necessary supports, tools and information so that they are able to contact the appropriate government ministries to determine the costs and supports that are applicable to the learner's prospective secondary school program.

Key Resources

What assessment tools and learner resources are used for secondary school credit?

Secondary School Credit Program Assessments

- Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA)

The Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) website provides samples of the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test* (OSSLT) to help the student prepare for and understand the content of the test. To review the EQAO website please visit <http://www.eqao.com/Students/Secondary/10/10.aspx?Lang=E&gr=10>.

The *OALCF Selected Assessment Tools* provides a sampling of assessments and resources available to practitioners and assessors. To review the OALCF Selected Assessment Tools please visit http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Selected_Assessment_Tools_Mar_11.pdf.

To find an appropriate collection of learning materials, please visit the *OALCF Resources* page of the OALCF website at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/tools-and-resources.html>.

For more information, please also visit The Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA)'s website at www.cesba.com.

How do I know what information, referrals and supports a learner needs?

Learner goal attainment is closely linked to the quality of wrap-around supports they receive. Supports generally fall under five categories: financial/material, academic, health, employment and social service supports.

Role of LBS Service Providers

Service coordination requires LBS service providers to refer their learners to the necessary programs and supports available in the community. It is the responsibility of the LBS service providers to supply learners with the appropriate information and referrals.

Key Questions:

1. Has the necessary information been obtained to determine which support(s) and/or referral(s) are needed?
2. What supports does the learner need? (e.g child care, transportation, learning disability assessment, physical accommodation, etc.)
3. Has the learner already accessed any of the necessary supports?
4. What transition referrals are needed? When should they be accessed?
5. What forms of government supports or programs could help the learner achieve the goal(s)?
6. Are there any issues or potential areas of concern with the learner which may need to be assessed by another agency?

Secondary School Credit Key Development Skills

Learners need to develop all six OALCF competencies (*Find and Use Information, Communicate Ideas and Information, Understand and Use Numbers, Use Digital Technology, Manage Learning and Engage with Others*) to achieve their goals. The Key Development Skills below list the specific skills a learner needs to develop a secondary school goal. These skills were drawn from goal path-specific research and development projects conducted in Ontario.

To review the six competencies of the OALCF please visit <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/tools-and-resources.html>.

Reading

- reads an expository text of up to 250 words to locate and connect ideas and information
- scans text to locate specific information
- skims to get the gist of longer texts
- obtains information from detailed reading
- follows the events of descriptive, narrative and informational texts
- integrates several pieces of information from documents
- selects appropriate reading materials for various purposes

Communication (Oral and Written)

- initiates and maintains interactions with one or more persons to discuss, explain or exchange information or opinions
- speaks clearly to express ideas using correct grammar
- writes notes, emails, directions, instructions, text messages and letters using appropriate punctuation, grammar and spelling
- writes a five-paragraph essay
- writes logical responses of 2-3 sentences in response to test questions
- completes documents using familiar information
- prepares and presents information to a familiar audience on various topics

Numeracy

Numeracy/Mathematics has four strands:

1. number sense and numerical operations
2. algebra
3. geometry
4. data interpretation and probability

Learners should:

- perform basic calculations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
- perform calculations using fractions, percentages and ratios
- calculate costs and expenses involving rates such as discounts and taxes
- solve basic equations
- make conversions
- work with basic algebra, factors and integers
- use problem-solving strategies (2-step)
- make simple comparisons and one-step calculations involving various measurements

Research

- locates, selects and assesses information from a variety of sources
- locates information using library, media, internet and primary resources
- evaluates and prioritizes information for various purposes
- analyzes and synthesizes information

Technology

Demonstrates basic computer skills including:

- keyboarding
- basic word processing
- PowerPoint
- Excel
- basic Internet search techniques
- use of a calculator

Self-Direction

- prioritizes, organizes and manages tasks (e.g. manages time to create study schedules)
- tracks own progress
- uses critical thinking skills
- demonstrates problem-solving skills
- advocates for self
- exercises basic social skills
- takes responsibility for own learning – attends class regularly, completes assignments, participates actively in class, etc.
- uses appropriate test-taking strategies for various kinds of tests and exams

Community Notes

LBS service providers can use this section to enter community related information for the secondary school credit goal including contact information, specific program entrance requirements, costs, program registration dates, etc.

