

COURSE OPTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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1. *What is Course Options?*

Course Options was created in Wisconsin statutes through a provision in the 2013-15 Wisconsin State Budget which repealed and recreated the Part-Time Open Enrollment statute. It allows students enrolled in Wisconsin public school districts to attend up to two courses at a time in a variety of educational institutions.

2. *Who may participate in Course Options?*

Any Wisconsin public school district student may apply to attend a participating educational institution through Course Options.

3. *What are the educational institutions from which courses can be taken for Course Options?*

The Course Options statute identifies the educational institutions as a nonresident school district, the University of Wisconsin System, technical colleges, nonprofit institutions of higher education, tribal colleges, charter schools, and nonprofit organizations that have been approved by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). A list of approved nonprofit organizations is available on the DPI [Course Options website](#).

4. *Can students in grades 4K-8 attend courses through Course Options?*

Yes. However, the statute does allow districts to deny an application if the requested course does not satisfy a high school graduation requirement or does not conform to the student's academic and career plan.

5. *Can students in grades 4K-8 attend courses at institutions of higher education (IHE)?*

Because there are no grade level restrictions on Course Options eligibility, students in grades K-8 may apply to attend such courses as long as the students meet any entrance and enrollment criteria and prerequisites established by the educational institution from which the student wants to take the course.

6. *Can students attending school in a nonresident district through Full-Time Open Enrollment or Chapter 220 participate in Course Options?*

Yes. The statute does not exclude students from participating in Course Options when they are also participating in Full-Time Open Enrollment (FTOE) or the Chapter 220 interdistrict integration transfer program.

7. *Can students attending school in a nonresident district through Full-Time Open Enrollment or Chapter 220 use Course Options to take courses in their actual resident district?*

Yes. Because the district of full-time attendance serves as the "resident district" for Course Options (see Question 8), the actual resident district would be considered an "educational institution" at which a student could take courses under Course Options.

8. *For Full-Time Open Enrollment students, which district is responsible for approving or denying the Course Options application and paying the costs?*

The educational decision-making and funding responsibilities for students participating in Full-Time Open Enrollment (FTOE) or the Chapter 220 interdistrict integration transfer programs follows those students to their district of full-time attendance. Therefore, the responsibility for approving or denying Course Options applications and paying the costs of approved courses go to the district of full-time attendance and that district will serve as the "resident school district" for Course Options purposes.

9. How should a student decide whether or not to participate in Course Options and, then, what courses to take?

There are many factors in deciding whether to participate and the courses to take. Students should work with their parents/guardians and counselor to determine whether or not Course Options would be appropriate and, if it is, the educational institutions and courses the student should consider.

10. How much does Course Options cost for students?

The cost for attending Course Options courses varies based on several factors. For courses that will not award college credits upon successful completion or that are not attended at an institution of higher education (IHE), there are no costs for students. For courses attended at an IHE and for which college credits will be awarded upon successful completion, the IHE may charge a student or the parent or guardian an amount that has been negotiated between the IHE and the student's district.

11. How much does Course Options cost for the school district?

The cost to school districts for students attending courses under Course Options varies based on several factors. These costs are laid out in the [Course Options Cost Table](#) available on the [Course Options website](#). Some of the costs, as noted in the Cost Table, are to be negotiated between the district and the educational institution. See Questions [27](#) and [28](#) for additional information on costs to districts.

12. How many courses can a student take through Course Options?

There are no limits on the total number of courses a student may take through Course Options; however, students can attend no more than two courses at the same time through the program.

13. Do students have to take both courses at the same place?

No. A student can take courses at different educational institutions, as long as no more than two courses are taken at the same time. However, it is the student's responsibility to make sure that the courses fit into his or her schedule.

14. How do students find out what courses are available, when they are scheduled, and any course prerequisites?

Course information can be obtained directly from the educational institution a student wants to attend; acquiring this information is the student's and parents' responsibility. However, students can work with their school counselor to discuss the range of opportunities available and how they support the student's future plans. Because this program is new, many counselors are still learning about the available opportunities.

15. Are students restricted to high school level courses when applying for Course Options?

No. Students and parents can pursue options in grades K-12. However, the Course Options statute allows resident districts to deny student applications for courses that do not satisfy a high school graduation requirement.

16. Can a student attend an online course through Course Options?

Yes, as long as it is offered by one of the qualifying educational institutions and meets all Course Options criteria.

17. Can a student attend a course at an educational institution if the district offers a comparable course?

Yes, as long as it is offered by one of the qualifying educational institutions and meets all Course Options criteria.

18. Must Course Options applications be acted upon by a student's resident school district board of education?

Yes. The Course Options statute grants a student's resident school board the authority to approve or deny applications based on the statutory criteria. Local boards of education should adopt policies and/or procedures for processing and acting on Course Options applications in accordance with the requirements contained in the Course Options statute.

19. Must resident school districts wait to act on applications until they have been approved by the respective educational institutions?

No. The resident district should initiate its review and approval/denial process upon receiving copies of applications from educational institutions. The Course Options statute provides the same notification timeline for resident districts and educational institutions. This timeline may not provide sufficient time for the resident district to complete the review and approval/denial process prior to their required notification deadline. Therefore, the resident district should act on and notify the student of its decision independent of the educational institution's decision.

20. Can students take courses for both high school credit and college credit through Course Options?

Yes. As part of Course Options, eligible students can participate in a wide range of courses offered by technical colleges, the University of Wisconsin colleges and universities, tribal colleges, and nonprofit institutions of higher education.

21. Must school districts award high school credit for courses taken through Course Options?

No. The Course Options statute does not require that students be awarded high school credits for courses taken under the program. Consequently, it is a local decision whether or not to award credits for Course Options courses.

22. If awarding high school credit for courses taken through Course Options, how should the credits be calculated?

The Course Options statute does not include any provisions for factoring credits earned in courses taken under the program. Consequently, it is a local decision how to determine the number of local credits to award, if any, for courses taken under Course Options.

23. How should grades be factored into student grade point averages (GPAs) for courses taken through Course Options?

The Course Options statute does not include any provisions for student grades earned from courses taken under the program. Consequently, it is a local decision whether or not to include the grades in student GPAs and, if so, how to factor them in for Course Options courses.

24. Did Course Options replace Youth Options?

No. Youth Options is a separate state program that allows students to take courses at a technical college, the UW, or a private college, but it has different rules, limitations, and processes than Course Options. Students should check with their school counselor for more information about which program will best meet their needs. General information about Youth Options can be found at the [Youth Options website](#).

25. Can students participate in both Course Options and Youth Options?

Yes, as long as they meet the requirements and adhere to the processes for each.

26. Under what circumstances would a student want to use Course Options instead of Youth Options?

There are many factors in deciding which program will best meet a student's individual needs. Students and parents should learn as much as they can about both programs and ensure the student

has participated in a variety of academic and career planning services. With a vision for the student's future beyond high school and corresponding goals, the students and parents should work with a school counselor and/or mentor to determine the types of courses a student should be taking, the educational institutions that offer such courses, and the program that will provide the best access.

27. *Can a student apply to take dual credit courses, such as Transcribed Credit or College Credit in High School courses, through Course Options?*

Yes. These types of courses are typically offered by the college or university for college credit through an agreement between the college or university and the resident school district. The college or university enrolls the student and awards credit and, in certain cases, charges tuition, while the course itself is generally taught by a resident school district teacher who is certified as an adjunct faculty member of the college or university. Since students would be attending an educational institution covered by the Course Options law in this circumstance, a student would be able to apply to take such courses through Course Options.

28. *What is the cost a resident district needs to pay a college or university for students who attend college/university courses for college credit that are offered in the high school by high school instructors who are certified to serve as adjunct faculty?*

State law requires the resident school district to pay the educational institution an amount equal to cost of providing the course to the pupil as determined by the Department of Public Instruction. These costs are laid out in the [Course Options Cost Table](#). The costs of these types of courses should be based on a negotiated agreement between the resident school district and the institution of higher education (IHE) the student is attending for college credits, with a goal that the agreement is cost-neutral for both parties. The resident school district and IHE may also negotiate additional tuition and fees to be charged by the IHE to the student if the course taken would result in college credit upon successful completion.

29. *What is the cost a resident district needs to pay a college or university for courses taught for high school students only by a college or university instructor?*

State law requires the resident school district to pay the educational institution an amount equal to the cost of providing the course to the pupil as determined by the Department of Public Instruction. These costs are laid out in the [Course Options Cost Table](#). The costs of these courses should be based on a negotiated agreement between the resident school district and the institution of higher education (IHE) that is providing the instruction and awarding the college credits. The resident school district and IHE may also negotiate additional tuition and fees to be paid by the student or parent or guardian if the course taken would result in college credit upon successful completion.

30. *Can private school students and students in home-based education programs participate in Course Options?*

No. Course Options requires students to be enrolled in a public school district. However, separate statutes allow private school students to take up to two high school courses per semester in the students' resident school district, and students enrolled in home-based education programs can take up to two courses in any grade in either the resident or a non-resident school district.

31. *Are students enrolled in independent charter schools able to participate in Course Options?*

No, students attending an independent charter school authorized by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the City of Milwaukee, or the University of Wisconsin-Parkside are not enrolled in a public school district; therefore, they are not eligible to participate in Course Options.

- 32. Are public school students able to take Course Options courses at independent charter schools?**
Yes, students enrolled in public school districts are allowed to take up to two courses at a time at any charter school, including independent charter schools, through Course Options as long as they meet all other applicable criteria.
- 33. Who is responsible for providing supports for special education students taking a course through Course Options?**
The student's resident district (or district of full-time attendance for a Full-Time Open Enrolled student) would be responsible for ensuring any supports are provided to comply with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). That resident district could directly provide the supports or arrange for the supports to be provided by the educational institution, but would be responsible for the related costs unless worked out otherwise.
- 34. Who is responsible for transportation for Course Options?**
The student and parent are responsible for transporting the student to and from the course and for the costs of that transportation unless the course is fulfilling a requirement of a student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) in which case special education service requirements apply. The exception is if a district chooses to coordinate and cover the costs of transporting students to a Course Options course.
- 35. Is there financial assistance available for students and parents who are unable to pay the cost of transportation?**
If the student and parent are unable to pay the cost of transportation, the parent may apply to the DPI for reimbursement of actual transportation costs. Preference will be given to families that are eligible for free or reduced price lunches under the federal School Lunch Program. Information on requesting transportation assistance can be obtained here: www.oe.dpi.wi.gov/transportation.
- 36. Can a school district refuse to participate in Course Options?**
No. Wis. Stats. § 118.52 states that "A pupil enrolled in a public school may attend an educational institution under this section..." This language does not allow any Wisconsin public school or district to opt out of Course Options.
- 37. Can a school district implement criteria for students to participate in Course Options?**
No. Districts can only apply the criteria included in the Course Options statute for determining whether or not to approve a Course Options application (see next question for criteria).
- 38. What criteria can schools use to deny a Course Options application from a resident student?**
Schools must deny a Course Options application if the resident district determines that the requested course conflicts with the student's individualized education program (IEP) under §115.787(2) Wisc. Statutes.

In addition, schools may deny a Course Options application if the course does not satisfy a high school graduation requirement under Wis. Stats. § 118.33 or if the course does not conform to or support the student's academic and career plan under Wis. Stats. § 115.28(59)(a), if any.
- 39. May an Educational Institution deny an application based on the grades of the student applying?**
Yes, but only if those same criteria apply to all other students who wish to take the course.
- 40. May an Educational Institution deny an application if the student who is applying has not met course prerequisites?**
Yes, but only if those same criteria apply to all other students who wish to take the course.

41. *May an Educational Institution deny an application for disciplinary reasons?*

Yes, but only if those same criteria apply to all other students who wish to take the course.

42. *What records may a nonresident school district request from a resident school district?*

The nonresident school district may request those records or transcripts that are necessary to determine whether the student meets the school district's established criteria for admittance to the course. The nonresident school district may also request records relating to an expulsion during the current or preceding two school years or pending disciplinary proceedings that may lead to expulsion.

43. *Can Course Options students displace other students enrolled in the educational institution from a space in the same course?*

No. Educational institutions should only consider Course Options applications for open space available in courses that have not been filled by other enrolled students.

44. *What should an educational institution do when more Course Options applications are received than space is available in the course?*

The Course Options statute requires that a random selection process be used when more applications are received than space is available. The educational institution can apply entrance and enrollment criteria and prerequisites to each application and then randomly select from those applications that meet the criteria and prerequisites.

45. *How does a nonprofit organization get approved to participate in Course Options?*

A nonprofit organization wanting to participate in Course Options needs to submit a current year application (PI-8901) to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction by the deadline indicated on the form. The application must include all required information and signatures and be accompanied by all required documentation. Full information about the selection criteria can be found at the [DPI Course Options website](#).

46. *Can districts implement other means of offering students opportunities to attend courses in various educational institutions without using Course Options?*

Yes, but that does not absolve districts from participating in Course Options; they must still adhere to all requirements and procedures for students who choose to apply for courses through Course Options. In addition, the alternatives must not be more restrictive or limiting for students than would be possible under Course Options. The Department of Public Instruction encourages school districts and educational institutions to implement programs and procedures that increase student opportunities while being mutually agreeable and beneficial to all involved parties.

47. *Can students who are under age 16 attend courses at Wisconsin Technical Colleges during the normal school day?*

Not if those courses would need to be attended on a Technical College campus. Wisconsin Statute 38.22 restricts students under the age of 16 from attending Wisconsin Technical Colleges during the hours of the normal school day. This restriction applies to all students including those wanting to attend through Course Options. Students may attend Technical College courses offered in the resident school district or at another location collaboratively agreed to by the resident school district and the Technical College. They may also attend courses offered outside the normal school day hours, if they are approved by the Technical College and resident school district.

48. For students attending school in a district other than the pupil's resident school district pursuant to a whole grade sharing agreement, who serves as the "resident district"?

For a student attending school in a district other than the pupil's resident school district pursuant to a whole grade sharing agreement under Wis. Stats. § 118.50, the school board of the district in which the pupil is attending school will act as the "resident district" for purposes of Course Options.

49. If a student is denied a course under Youth Options, can the student apply to take the same course under Course Options?

Yes. Course Options has different criteria for denying applications, and there are no restrictions on applying for the same courses also applied for under Youth Options.

50. Can a student enroll in a course at an institution of higher education (IHE) in order to ensure a seat in the course and then switch that seat to Course Options if the application is approved?

Generally speaking, no. There are no provisions in Course Options restricting a student from enrolling in a course outside of Course Options. However, Course Options is meant to allow K-12 students to fill empty seats in existing courses. If a course is filled without the Course Options student, then the IHE should deny the application because there are no empty seats.

51. Can districts require students to pay for books, fees, or tuition that is the responsibility of the district and then reimburse the students?

No. Students cannot be charged any amount, even if they will be reimbursed, for attending courses under Course Options with the exception of additional tuition and fees charged under Wis. Stats. § 118.52(12)(b). This provision allows an institution of higher education to charge students additional tuition and fees for attending courses for which the student will receive post-secondary credits for successful completion of the course. The IHE and the school district will determine the amount of additional tuition and fees the IHE may charge the student for attending such a course.

52. Can students attend courses under Course Options during the summer?

Yes. The Course Options statute includes no provisions limiting when students attend Course Options courses.

53. Can districts require students to repay costs if they fail or fail to complete a course attended under Course Options?

No. The Course Options statute includes no provisions allowing districts to recoup costs from students. However, students should be strongly advised about other costs that could arise by failing or doing poorly in a Course Options course.

Students attending a course under Course Options that awards college credits upon successful completion are enrolled in that institution of higher education (IHE) and their course grades become part of their permanent college academic record. Poor or failing grades in a Course Options course could cause a student to be placed on academic probation when enrolling in an IHE after high school graduation. This could, in turn, jeopardize a student's access to financial aid.

54. How do districts adjust student enrollment counts for students taking courses under Course Options?

Students taking courses through Course Options will not affect district enrollment counts.