

Credit Recovery Policy

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is committed to ensuring every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life by providing rigorous and inclusive learning environments for all students. DCPS seeks to become an anti-racist school district that is trauma-responsive and aligned to a whole-child approach that supports educators in meeting each child’s individual and holistic needs by eliminating opportunity gaps, interrupting institutional bias, and removing barriers to academic and social success, particularly for students of color. Credit recovery programming is one way in which the district provides support for students who have failed a course or are otherwise off-track academically. This policy conveys DCPS requirements related to credit recovery courses, including allowable courses, eligibility for credit recovery, allowable formats for instruction, scheduling and staffing, attendance, course completion and grading, the appeals process, and special consideration for English Learners and students with disabilities.

This policy rescinds and supersedes all previous policy, memoranda, and guidance promulgated by DCPS on this subject matter.

II. AUTHORITY AND APPLICABLE LAW¹

Source	Citation
District of Columbia Law	D.C. Official Code § 38-174(c) – Duties of the Chancellor
District of Columbia Municipal Regulations	DC Public Schools (DCPS) 5-B DCMR § 2103.6 – Truancy Original Title 5 5-E DCMR § 2602 – Challenge to Contents of Official Records

III. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Credit recovery means an alternative to course repetition for students who have previously failed a course required for high school graduation. Credit recovery targets the course standards in which students are deficient.

Proficiency-based means any system of academic instruction, assessment, and reporting that is based on learners demonstrating proficiency in knowledge, skills, and abilities they are expected to learn

¹ Nothing in this policy will supersede federal, state, or local law.

before progressing to the next level or challenge.

Subject and content area means a particular course of study, such as math, English language arts, science, or social studies.

Mastery means a level of performance that students must demonstrate to show grade level understanding of course content and standards.

IV. REQUIREMENTS

A. General Requirements

The DCPS credit recovery program is designed to support students in their efforts to recover credits from courses they have failed. Credit recovery courses are individualized and proficiency- based. Students in credit recovery are mastering course standards and units of study they failed to master during the original course. In order to earn course credit, all students must complete an identified set of required assessments. Credit recovery students are not required to re-take content they have already mastered in their original credit course if they have passing marks on all prescribed assessments related to specific course content*.

Credit recovery fits into a continuum of interventions for students who are at risk of falling off-track for graduation or who are already off-track. Credit recovery itself is not to be seen as the only intervention; rather, counselors, Pathways coordinators, and others will provide additional, necessary supports for students to ensure their success at high levels of performance. Credit recovery courses must not be the first line of intervention. Students who are struggling in their original classes must be provided the necessary classroom and staff supports as they work to pass the original class.²

All high school students who fail a course required for graduation may be considered for enrollment in credit recovery.³ Credit recovery allows students an opportunity to earn course credit by demonstrating mastery of content at the same level of rigor as the original course, consistent with DCPS curriculum. Students may be enrolled in only one credit recovery course at a time unless they have a schedule that is able to accommodate additional courses and receive permission from the principal and their school counselor to enroll in more than one credit recovery course at a time.

Secondary students who accrue thirty-one (31) unexcused absences in a course immediately fail the course – known widely as “failure due to absence” or “FA” - regardless of the course end date.⁴ To keep these students engaged and attending class, it is critical that these students can begin participating in recovery efforts upon receipt of that failing grade. This will ensure that students continue to receive

² See the [DCPS Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy](#) for additional information.

³ This policy applies to all high schools in DCPS, with the exception of Twilight Academies and Opportunity Academies.

⁴ See 5-B DCMR § 2103.6 (“DCPS secondary students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences in a course within a full school year shall receive a failing final grade in that course with a resulting loss of course credit.”); see also DCPS Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy available at <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/dcps-policies>.

consistent instruction and have the opportunity to master the content. Students who have failed due to attendance are able to attempt to recover the missing credits in credit recovery while remaining enrolled in the current class they have failed. This is consistent with DCPS' mission to increase the overall academic rigor and education for all of our students and the policy that only students who have failed a course can enroll in credit recovery for that course. This allows students who have failed courses due to absence to continue their path toward graduation by encouraging them to remain in their courses and continue to work to achieve content mastery.

This policy pertains to credit recovery courses offered before school, after school, during evening time, on Saturdays, and over the summer. Students may participate in credit recovery during traditional school hours only if they have an abbreviated schedule approved by their principal and school counselor and are not enrolled in a traditional course during that time. As a part of DCPS' high school summer school programming, and based on staff availability, credit recovery courses are available to all secondary students who failed an eligible course (see Allowable Courses, below) during any previous school year.

*Note: For credit recovery students to develop their individualized plans for credit recovery courses, teachers of original courses must adhere to DCPS and school-based policies around use of our student information system (Aspen) and curriculum platform (Canvas) to capture what content the student mastered in the original course and the remaining gaps.

B. Allowable Courses

Schools may offer credit recovery courses for any of the following credit-bearing courses required for graduation from DCPS:

- English;
 - Mathematics, including Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II;
 - Science, including lab sciences;
 - Social Studies, including World History 1 and 2, United States History, United States Government, and District of Columbia History;
 - World Languages;
 - Art;
 - Music;
 - Health; and
- Certain electives courses that are offered with pre-approval from DCPS' Office of Secondary Schools.

Courses required for graduation that are *not* included in allowable credit recovery offerings include the following:

- Physical Education.

C. Eligibility

Students are eligible for credit recovery if they have taken and failed the original course. Students may not take a credit recovery course concurrently with the same original credit course unless they have already earned a failure due to absence (FA) through the accumulation of more than thirty (30)

unexcused absences and are no longer eligible or able to earn a full or partial Carnegie Unit in that course.⁵ The grades earned in both the original credit course and the credit recovery course will appear on the student's transcript.

Students must be referred to a credit recovery course after a review of their transcript with their school counselor(s). School counselors, in collaboration with the school support team, are responsible for enrolling students who elect to participate in credit recovery and notifying parent/guardians.

D. Allowable Formats of Instruction

Credit recovery courses are individualized, each focused on the specific content of which a student has not yet demonstrated mastery. Schools have limited flexibility to determine their instructional approach to credit recovery courses based on the specific needs of individual students, provided the standards are equivalent to the standards of the original course and adhere to DCPS curriculum.

The two allowable instructional approaches are:

1. **Teacher-led**, whereby classes enrolled with students participating in the same or similar courses receive teacher-guided instruction in that course(s).
2. **Blended**, whereby teachers combine the use of approved online credit recovery courseware to supplement their teacher-led one-on-one, small group, and whole-class instruction.

See the Scheduling and Staffing section below for more details on the default model.

Approved online credit recovery courseware for each content area is identified by Central Services in alignment to standards for each course.

In all cases, schools must regularly monitor and assess students' progress toward mastery of the specific standards on which the students are working.

Schools must submit a list of credit recovery courses and the school's chosen instructional approach for each course each term to Central Services for approval.

E. Scheduling and Staffing

Each high school will develop its own schedule for credit recovery courses and submit that schedule to Central Services for approval.

The default staffing model for DCPS credit recovery courses shall be as follows:

⁵ See 5-B DCMR § 2103.6 ("DCPS secondary students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences in a course within a full school year shall receive a failing final grade in that course with a resulting loss of course credit."); see also DCPS Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy available at <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/dcps-policies>.

- Credit recovery classrooms shall be staffed by teachers certified in relevant content areas.
- Credit recovery classrooms may contain students who are working on different courses, provided that the teacher is certified to instruct across all courses within her/his classroom.
- The teacher to student ratio should not exceed 1:15 in credit recovery classes up to two courses. Teachers may be responsible for up to three courses but may only serve a total of 30 students between the three courses.

In addition, DCPS will consider alternative staffing models and instructional delivery models (e.g., in-person, virtual, hybrid) developed by schools and submitted to the Central Services for approval. In all cases, credit recovery classrooms shall be staffed by certified teachers.

F. Attendance

Students in credit recovery are engaged in individualized, proficiency--based courses focused on the standards and units that they failed to achieve in their original course. They are not enrolled in a “whole-class” experience and are not required to adhere to the same period attendance policy as students in regular courses.

In credit recovery courses, the teacher will work with students on their individual plans, including in-class supports and instruction, any additional out-of-class instructional supports such as tutoring, and the use of online platforms. Teachers will monitor students’ use of online platforms and out-of-class instructional supports. For each student, the balance of in-class, supplemental, and virtual instructional support will be determined by the teacher of record, with each student attending a minimum of 3 (three) in-person classes per week. Teachers shall work with students to determine an attendance plan comprised of between 3 and 5 days of in-class attendance, plus supplemental instructional time, plus online work as relevant. This plan needs to be documented in each student’s educational file. As part of this plan, students shall attend for all assessments and teacher-designated assignments and required instructional time. Students shall demonstrate the general equivalent of a week’s worth of work regardless of their attendance plan.

Teachers shall inform students of their progress on an ongoing basis. Teachers shall inform parents/guardians when students are at risk of not completing the course successfully. If students are absent without a valid excuse for 18 or more of the 3-day-minimum required credit recovery in-person class sessions, they shall be withdrawn from the course and receive a grade of “W.” Absence notification will be provided to families after 6, 9, and 15 unexcused absences.

G. Completion and grading

Consistent with the general DCPS Grading and Reporting Policy, marks/grades of A through D shall be assigned by the teacher in credit recovery courses to indicate the degree of mastery by a student of the content the student is working on. Students who attain a course grade of D or above will have successfully passed the credit recovery course and earned course credit. If a student does not successfully complete the credit recovery course curriculum at the conclusion of the school year, they will be assigned a grade of W. A grade of W is GPA neutral and does not result in a credit. Students

should not be assigned a grade of F; assigning a grade of W allows a student to continue to work toward content mastery in the course at a later time.

Credit recovery courses shall not replace original credit courses or their grades on a student's transcript. Grades in credit recovery courses are determined based on the following:

- 50% **Student practice & application**
- 50% **Assessment**, including regular teacher-monitored assessments and end-of-course exams.
 - Consistent with DCPS Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy, if teachers administer an end of course exam it can total no more than 20% of the final grade.

Because credit recovery is a hands-on, individualized and performance-based learning experience, there will be no "participation" component of the final grade. Successful completion of a proficiency-based course is considered an indication of self-management and responsible decision-making.⁶

H. Appeals process⁷

Consistent with the DCPS records appeals process, a parent or student has the right to seek to amend educational records believed to be inaccurate or misleading. An initial grade appeal for credit recovery courses, consistent with grade appeals in regular courses, shall be in writing and shall be directed to the school principal within ten school days of receipt of the grade.

The school principal shall immediately notify, in writing, the affected teacher of the challenge and ask the teacher to provide all tangible, pertinent, detailed, and dated records to substantiate the grade given, and shall meet with the teacher to discuss the grade.⁸ Within ten school days of receipt of the appeal, the principal shall review and consider all submitted records with the challenging party or representative and the teacher and issue a determination in writing. Please note that if any grade modifications are made pursuant to this grade challenge process, the principal must notify the affected teacher in writing prior to the grade modification and include the reasons for the modification.

A parent or student may appeal the principal's decision by submitting a written appeal to the Instructional Superintendent within five school days of receipt of the principal's decision.

When an appeal is submitted to the Instructional Superintendent, the Instructional Superintendent shall have ten school days within receipt of the appeal to review and consider all submitted evidence and issue a final determination in writing. The following procedural guidelines shall apply:

- The burden to show why the grade(s) in question should be changed shall be on the student or his or her parent; and
- Strict rules of evidence shall not apply.

⁶ In traditional courses, typically grades (before any end of course exam) are comprised of: 50% student practice and application, 40% assessment, 10% participation.

⁷ 5-E DCMR § 2602 provides regulations related to this process.

⁸ Collective Bargaining Agreement Between The Washington Teachers Union Local #6 of the American Federation of Teachers and The District of Columbia Public Schools; October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2019; Art. 19.1.1.

I. Special considerations

English Learners and students with disabilities are included as eligible for credit recovery under this policy. Students with disabilities, identified through the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) 2004, are eligible for credit recovery as determined in accordance with the goals and objectives, accommodations and modifications as it relates to the content standards developed and agreed upon by the IEP Team. For English Learners, any decision on credit recovery must be made in conjunction with the bilingual/English Second Learner (ESL) teacher.

V. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

All DCPS employees are required to comply with the requirements set forth in this policy. In order to support its implementation, principals are expected to make all staff aware of required activities on an annual basis.

Implementation of this policy requires that principals use existing Central Services course guidance or obtain approval from Central Services to use alternative course guidance. All schools must submit school-based credit recovery plans, including approval of credit recovery courses, and approval of credit recovery staffing plans when using a staffing model other than the default model.

Implementation of this policy will be reinforced through a central oversight process which includes regular data reviews, record sampling, reviews of underlying documentation, and, as needed, site visits. Data reviews will be conducted monthly to ensure appropriate use of credit recovery.

This framework will ensure that, together, we build a system of continuous improvement and prevent noncompliance. For key guidance and support with questions, training, or implementation, please visit dcps.dc.gov.

DCPS is committed to serving every student with equity, excellence, transparency, and accountability. For any concerns or violations about this directive, contact the Chief Integrity Officer either by completing the [Online Referral Form](#)⁹ or send your concern via email to dcps.cio@dc.gov.

⁹ Available at: <https://dcforms.dc.gov/webform/online-referral-form>.