

# HOW TO STRUCTURE COLLEGE COURSES AND DETERMINE STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

A P-TECH 9-14 school's scope and sequence details what high school and college courses students take, when students will take each course, and how skills and strands of learning build across the grades (see "How to Develop a Scope and Sequence"). In addition to the steadily increasing complexity and rigor of academic and vocational experience that is built into the scope and sequence, the design of P-TECH 9-14 model college courses should gradually build students' responsibility and autonomy from grade nine through grade fourteen. P-TECH 9-14 schools are designed for students to feel like college students from the first day of ninth grade – but P-TECH schools must also be strategic in helping early college students develop the self-reliance required for college success. P-TECH 9-14 schools control certain variables in the design of a college course, such as the location of the course, the course's student composition (high school students, college students, or a mix), and how long and often the class meets, but the syllabus, grading policy and content of a college course for P-TECH 9-14 students should always be identical to what a typical college student experiences. In students' first exposure to college courses, they are supported with intensive oversight and familiar routines, designed to build students' comfort and confidence. At the end of their time at a P-TECH 9-14 school, students have developed the independence to take college courses with the full individual responsibility expected of any successful college student.

## 1. When are students eligible to take college courses?

Depending on the scope and sequence for a given P-TECH 9-14 school, students are scheduled for their first college class in the tenth grade or later. Before the students take their first college class, staff members ensure that students understand punctuality, attendance, in-class conduct, communication with instructors and academic integrity. Students and parents receive information and a written contract that outlines academic and behavior expectations for P-TECH 9-14 school students (See Sample Student Contract). Parental consent and sign-off on students' travel between the high school and the college campus may also be required.

P-TECH 9-14 schools establish a policy on student eligibility to register for college courses. For example, a school may establish that students must be in good standing in their high school courses and/or receive approval from a high school teacher before taking their first college course. For some courses, such as introductory English and math, the college may require students to meet more specific proficiency criteria, such as benchmark scores on the SAT/ACT, college placement exams, or other standardized tests. The P-TECH 9-14 school can offer students preparation for college proficiency or placement tests, and should ensure that students master foundational skills that are needed to succeed in a college course. Students who do not yet meet college eligibility benchmarks should take high school courses that prepare students to meet them. In some cases, students may need greater exposure to high school curriculum and content before demonstrating readiness to succeed in college courses, and the school should anticipate and provide for concurrent high school sections for particular college courses for those students. All eligibility criteria should be made explicit and shared with students, parents, and school staff when students enter the school.

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## 2. How are Colleges Structured?

### DUAL CREDIT COURSES

In a dual credit course, students concurrently earn high school and college credit for a given course. The standards and requirements of dual credit courses must meet the standards for the college course as well as the requirements for the high school course. The scope and sequence establishes which courses award both high school and college credit. Dual credit courses should be chosen for their ability to “bridge” student experience from high school into college, as well as to provide space for regular college courses later in the sequence, particularly in years 13 and 14.

### COURSE LOCATION

P-TECH 9-14 schools may be located on or near their partner college campus. Many, if not all, of the college courses offered prior to 12th grade may be taught in the high school building, either by a college professor, a college-high school teaching team, or a high school teacher who is also an adjunct faculty (see “Course Instructors” below). After 11th grade, as students begin taking courses on the college campus, they may travel to the campus together, and they may be required to “sign in” with the College Liaison to verify their attendance. As they become familiar with the college campus and the course-taking routine, greater independence and autonomy are built into student schedules.

### COURSE INSTRUCTORS

P-TECH 9-14 schools have several options when setting up instructors to teach college courses. Full-time college professors or adjunct professors may be assigned by the college department to teach courses for students. P-TECH 9-14 schools sometimes arrange for college and high school faculty to team-teach a course together, which can allow for some of the pedagogical approaches familiar to high school students to be incorporated in the college class. This type of team teaching can also be useful professional collaboration for all involved, helping both instructors understand the alignment of related high school and college content. Another staffing option is for a high school teacher to be given adjunct status by the college department, so that the high school teacher can teach college courses, using the college syllabus, assignments, exams, and grading rubrics. The college department will require that the high school teacher have a masters degree in the relevant field, not just an education degree, and may have other requirements to verify that the course content meets college standards. It is important to note, however, that students are often motivated by being taught by an actual college professor, and putting one in place can help create the college-readiness culture being created at the school.

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## COHORT COURSES

Cohort courses are sections of a regular college course, as listed in the college catalogue, that are organized by the P-TECH 9-14 school and open only to students enrolled in the school. The course is identical in every way to the equivalent course section open to all college students, but only P-TECH 9-14 school students are enrolled in the cohort course. A cohort course allows the school to work with the instructor to closely monitor students' attendance, behavior and performance. Tutoring and monitored study groups can offer targeted supports to students in a cohort course. P-TECH schools can also control how many students are registered in the cohort course. In an introductory college composition or public speaking course, for instance, P-TECH schools sometimes enroll fewer students than the maximum allowed by the college. The smaller class size helps instructors and students stay on track. A cohort class may be offered at the high school in the early years of the program or be offered on the college campus during the later years.

## INTEGRATED COURSES

Students who are familiar with college, and have proven that they can be successful in college courses, can be given opportunities to register for classes in which traditional college students are in the majority and the course is taught on campus. The instructor may not be aware of which students in the course are early college students. Integrated courses are typically offered to a small number of students who have either demonstrated exceptional maturity or who are in the latter part of the program and are therefore older.

## BLENDED COURSES

A hybrid of cohort and integrated courses, blended courses involve registering a small cohort of P-TECH 9-14 school students in a class with a significant number of traditional college students. Monitored study groups can also be part of the supports for these kind of courses. Blended courses are offered on the college campus.

## STRETCH COURSES

Stretch courses are college courses that are offered at a slower pace. With appropriate college approval, a course that is usually one semester long can be extended over two semesters, which can be a valuable support to students, especially early in the program. The stretched course gives the instructor various options to support students in learning the content, like giving shorter reading assignments, spending more time explaining and practicing challenging concepts, or giving more frequent assessments of student understanding. Students earn the same number of credits for a stretch course as they would for the one- semester version of the course, but take a longer time to do so. For instance, a typical 3-credit, one-semester course that meets for 45 hours, can be scheduled as a 3-credit stretch course that meets for 90 hours (or more) over the full academic year, or it can be scheduled as a 3-credit stretch course for 45 hours over the course of the academic year.

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## **EXTRA LAB/RECITATION SECTIONS**

In addition to the regular class time, a P-TECH college course can be designed to meet for additional small- group instruction time. For instance, a college chemistry class may meet four hours each week, and the P-TECH school may provide students in the course an additional weekly recitation section for one hour each week. The instructor can use the additional class meeting time to review concepts and give additional practice, or go more in-depth in response to student questions or concerns. In some cases, the instructor for the extra class session may be a high school teacher who sits in on the regular course lectures, and supplements the college lectures with more detailed instruction.

**For more information about the P-TECH 9-14 model, please visit [ptech.org](http://ptech.org)**