

Focus

Credit Flexibility Plan



*Updated August 2019*



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What is Focus?

# Focus is a state-funded charter school which helps teens and young adults earn their high school diploma while preparing for the workforce.

Focus Vision

The vision of Focus is to nurture success and empower students to

# become ethical and productive citizens.

Focus Mission

The mission of Focus is to provide a standards-based education to

# students in grades 9 through 12 that leads to a high school diploma and prepares them for post secondary education, specialty training or entry into the labor force.



Accelerating and Empowering Student Learning

With “Credit Flex,” students will be able to show what they know and move on to

higher-order content they are ready to learn and have not yet mastered. They will be able to learn subject matter and earn course credit in ways not limited solely to “seat time” or the walls of a school building. They will be able to customize aspects of their learning around their interests and needs, which might include flexible schedules and a choice of modalities (e.g., online learning and community-based projects), as well as options to pursue niche interest areas, combine subjects and graduate early.

***Why credit flex?*** Research and experience tell us that it encourages student self-direction and motivates learners to develop new skills and fulfill their potential. It lets students ask questions, solve problems and manage the continuous change that underscores life. And it recognizes that while learning experiences must be high quality, not all learning happens inside the classroom or in formal education settings.

## Key Facts about Ohio’s Credit Flex Plan

The plan adopted by the State Board of Education includes the following provisions:

* The Carnegie Unit will be retained, while students will have options for demonstrating subject area competency and earning credit.
* All students will have opportunities to earn credits through flexible methods, although credit flexibility will pertain only to high school credit.
* There is no limit to the kinds of course work,

nor to the number of credits that can be earned.

* Credit will be reported on student transcripts in the same way that seat time credit is recorded.
* Teachers will determine when credit should be awarded, but other mechanisms (e.g., the use of a multi-disciplinary teaching team, a professional panel from the community or a state performance-based assessment) may be used to “inform” a credit determination.
* Local boards of education will establish implementation policies, and boards will be prohibited from setting policies that negate or otherwise prohibit access to the plan.

## How Will School Boards Be Affected?

Before the start of the 2010-11 school year, local boards of education must adopt a Credit Flex plan that includes the following provisions:

* Any student is eligible to be considered for alternative ways for earning credit, but students must be capable of meeting the conditions necessary to earn the credits.
* Local board must review policy (with

a suggested two-year time frame) and collect performance data including the number of participating students, total credits earned and extent to which student participation reflects diversity of the student body.

* An appeals process must be available should a student’s proposed alternative learning credit be denied by the school or district.
* Local boards of education must communicate this provision annually to parents and students, and must submit data to the state about the methods and frequency of communication.

**What Role Will the State Play?**

The Ohio Department of Education, State Board of Education or a representative authority will build the capacity of the state’s Credit Flex system.

* Identify assessments for immediate use, and for test out or demonstration purposes.
* Identify and implement a strategy (e.g., rubrics, models, standardized review process,

and/or an open source platform) for developing capacity around high quality, locally developed assessments in a variety of content areas.

* Establish an appeals process, which may be conducted by a third party, for individuals who have local level complaints about having access to or implementation of the policy.
* Amend the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) for Operating Standards pertaining to Educational Options.
* Use a web-based mechanism to communicate and share research, and to serve as a clearing- house for models and promising practices.
* Offer districts an early adopter strategy to pioneer these alternative options so that the findings can be applied to the state’s plan.
* Work with professional associations to build capacity and accelerate access to policy and provisions with consistency and quality.
* Communicate and encourage other entities (e.g., P-16 councils, business advisory councils, Educational Service Centers, eTech and charitable foundations) to identify regional learning opportunities, and assist with multi-district efforts.

The Case for Credit Flexibility

In the course of their work, members of the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team examined the flexible time and credit earning practices of schools and districts both in Ohio and across the nation. They looked at a variety of Ohio policies and practices, including those in the areas of educational options, dual enrollment and accelerated learning. Team members concluded the following:

1. **Carnegie structures as currently designed do not guarantee learning for each and every student.** Ohio’s statewide aggregate graduation rate is 87 percent. Among our graduates who become first-year college students, remediation rates in mathematics and/or English run about 45 percent. Other students never make it to graduation day—about 20,000 students drop out of Ohio schools every year.
2. **At least five provisions in the Ohio Revised Code already allow some flexibility, but they operate as exemptions to standard procedures and practices.** Not accounting for dual credit, less than five percent of all high school credit is earned through these provisions.
3. **Most states have provisions permitting flexibility, but they are not widely used.** System structures such as testing, scheduling, funding and accountability act as barriers to flexibility.
4. **Although there is evidence that schools, certain models and some states use flexibility to meet the needs of individual students and groups of students, on the whole, Ohio does not record, measure or disseminate these efforts.** Alternative education, credit recovery, dropout prevention/ intervention, enrichment/acceleration, independent study, early college and dual credit have all produced positive results in Ohio, yet they are largely seen as outside the ***regular*** system.

Ohio’s plan for credit flexibility is designed to

*broaden the scope*of curricular options available to students, *increase the depth* of study available for a particular subject and *tailor the learning time or conditions needed* (to shorten or lengthen the time necessary to complete a high school diploma and/or postsecondary degree). In these ways, students can customize aspects of their learning around more of their interests and needs.

With Credit Flex, high school students can earn credit in three ways, or in a combination of these ways:

1. By completing traditional coursework
2. By testing out or otherwise demonstrating mastery of the course content; or
3. By pursuing one or more “educational options” (e.g., distance learning, educational travel, independent study, an internship, music, arts, afterschool program, community service or engagement project and sports).

Credit Flex has numerous benefits for students and families, teachers and counselors, school administrators, employers, community leaders and Ohio taxpayers.

**For students and families . . .** Credit Flex means more choice and autonomy in deciding how, when and where students learn; more options for individually suited pathways to postsecondary and career goals; and acceleration and convenience including more options.

**For teachers and councilors…** Credit Flex offers flexibility and autonomy to choose the best paths to support individual learning; increased opportunity for collaboration and interdisciplinary work; and shared accountability for student learning and performance.

**For schools and districts . . .** Credit Flex broadens and deepens access to electives that engage students; and it allows administrators to make maximum use of community resources to meet student needs.

**For business and the community . . .** Credit Flex creates options for educating and building relationships with students and educators about industry opportunities, competencies and trends; generates opportunities to attract and retain Ohio students as future employees and community partners; and directly adds value to the education system by engaging them in meaningful partnership in support of education, workforce development and community outcomes.

**For the State of Ohio . . .** Credit Flex produces a strong return on taxpayers’ investment in education (e.g., accelerated learning and fewer dropouts) and helps students prepare themselves for postsecondary education and the workplace.

In 2006, the Ohio General Assembly established the Ohio Core Curriculum (Senate Bill 311),

which raised expectations for what all Ohio students must know and be able to do to earn a high school diploma. At the same time, SB 311 directed the State Board of Education to develop a statewide plan for

implementing methods for students to earn units of high school credit based on the demonstration of subject area competency. In addition to raising the expectations for graduation, lawmakers provided ***flexibility*** to students and educators to successfully meet these higher expectations.

Developed by the Ohio Credit Flexibility Design Team, Ohio’s “Credit Flex” plan shifts focus from evaluating student learning based on “seat time” to assessing students’ demonstrated academic and skill level or performance. The plan does not eliminate Carnegie units or “seat time” requirements altogether. Rather, it retains seat time as one option and expands the number of options for earning credit by adding demonstration of subject area competency and structures that support it irrespective of any time requirements.

Credit Flex …

•

Offers learning opportunities not found in

the one-size-fits-all factory process model.

•

Focuses on performance, not counting seats

and hours.

•

Acknowledges and addresses students’

differing learning styles, paces and interests.

•

Offers students opportunities to demonstrate

creativity, explore academic and career interests, and practice critical thinking.



## Focus Credit Flexibility General Guidelines & Understandings

### Process

* + Any student interested in pursuing a course through Credit Flexibility should do the following:
  1. Make an appointment with the Academic Advisor to learn about the Credit Flexibility process and guidelines
  2. Complete a FOCUS Credit Flexibility Application
  3. Submit completed application to school\* Credit Flexibility Committee for review

\**Each Focus location will have a Credit Flexibility Committee*

* + The Credit Flexibility Committee will meet on a monthly basis to review requests and will notify students accordingly
  + If a Credit Flexibility Application is not approved by the committee, the following will occur:
    - Feedback/recommendations will be given so the student may revise and resubmit the application one additional time.
    - If the credit flexibility application is not approved a second time, the following options will be offered to the student:



* + - * The student may request a meeting with the Credit Flexibility Committee and the school director to appeal the denied application. All decisions from this meeting will be FINAL.
      * The student may ask to be put in the traditional academic course in Blackboard for review purposes.

Grading

* + Course grading will depend on the traditional course offering credit value (A-B-C-D-F versus Pass/Fail)
  + A minimum grade of 80% is required to pass the test-out option for all courses.

Timeline for Credit Flexibility Option

* + Test-Out Option
    - Students will have the option of testing for a ½ or full credit.
    - The test-out option will be offered twice a year
    - For the 2019-2020 school year, the following dates apply:



* + - * Dec 17, 2019 application deadline for winter testing
      * April 20, 2020 application deadline for spring testing
  + Educational Option(s)
    - The student will have 120 days to complete the credit flexibility action plan approved by the Credit Flexibility Committee.
    - At 60 days and 90 days, a progress review will take place. If the teacher of record feels that the student is not making adequate progress the student may be withdrawn with penalty from the course.
    - If the student is making adequate progress but needs more time, the teacher of record can elect to extend the timeline up to 180 days.

Other Important Information

* + For each attempted course a student would like to use credit flexibility for, a new application and action plan must be submitted for review.
  + The NCAA does not currently recognize/accept credits earned through Credit Flexibility.



Focus

Credit Flexibility Educational Options

* + Demonstrating Proficiency
  + Flex Plan for a non-Focus course offering
  + Educational Option o Project(s)
    - Performance/Labs
    - Portfolio
    - Presentation
    - Internship
    - Travel
    - Performance Indicators
    - Community Service
    - Research Paper/Project
    - Correspondence Course
    - Culminating Project

**FOCUS**

##### Application for Credit Flexibility

**STUDENT INFORMATION**



Student's Name: ---------------Grade:

Address: Apt #: \_ City: State: Zip: \_

Date of Birth:-------- Parent/Guardian Name: --------- Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: 



|  | YES | NO |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Please indicate if you are on an IEP, 504 or Intervention Plan. |  |  |
| Please indicate if you receive English as a Second Language services. |  |  |
| Will this decision affect your athletic eligibility? |  |  |

**COURSE INFORMATION**

Course Title: Credit Value:

**-**

#### Type of Course:

Required Credit -Elective Credit



Teacher Advisor: -------- Teacher of Record:---------- What prerequisites have you taken to prepare for this course?---------





###### FLEXIBILITY PLAN

Plan Option: Please check one. A new proposal form must be completed for each course.

A. Demonstrating proficiency of an existing Focus course.

B. Create Flex Plan for a new course not currently offered at Focus.

C. Pursue Focus approved Educational Option (Internship, Independent Study, on-line option, etc.).

If you choose Option B or C, please indicate the assessment method you will use to earn flexible credit: (you may choose more than one):

Project(s) \_\_\_\_Presentation Community Service

\_\_\_\_Performance/Labs Internship Research Paper/Project

\_\_\_\_Portfolio \_\_\_\_Travel Correspondence Course

\_\_\_\_Performance Indicators \_\_\_\_Culminating Project Timeline of Study (based on the duration of the course):

D Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_

###### D Progress Check 1: \_

D Progress Check 2: \_

D End Date: --

###### List the name and contact information of the organization and/or individual supporting your proposed credit activity: (if any):

Name: Organization: \_ Phone Number: ( ) Address: \_

\*Applications for testing out must be submitted one month prior to testing. Deadline dates are as follows:

December 17, 2019 for Winter Testing

April 20, 2020 for Spring Testing

**STUDENT ACTION PLAN**

**Learning Goals:**

###### Answer the question: Why are you interested in taking a Credit Flexibility course and how does it relate to your future goals?

*(Record on a separate sheet and attach to this form).*

Answer the question: What will I learn?

*(Learning Goals should completely identify the learning that will take place and should be tied to Focus curriculum maps as appropriate. Record on a separate sheet and attach to this form. Guidance from your Teacher Advisor is permitted).*

**Action Plan:**

Answer the question: How will I learn this curriculum?

*(Identify activities and action to accomplish the learning goals. Record on a separate sheet and attach to this form).*

**Assessment:**

Answer the question: How will I show I have learned the curriculum?

*(Identify the projects, presentation, written assignments, tests and/or other assessments to show what has been learned. Record on a separate sheet and attach to this form.)*

**Timelines**

All requirements and timelines must be defined by the student in the plan.

**STUDENT/PARENT CONTRACT**

The student and parent must initial each item below as indication of having read and accept the following terms:

Student Parent







The student holds primary responsibility for the overall success or failure of the course.

The student is expected to meet the timelines set forth by the teacher of record prior to completion of the flexible credit.

The student will have until \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to complete the course or the student may be withdrawn with penalty from the course.



The student's teacher and/or other school authorities have the right to cancel the credit/course option if: (1) The student does not regularly and actively engage with the teacher and course material; (2) The student does not meet progress monitoring check deadlines to complete the course. (3) The student does not meet attendance requirements set forth by the school.

The student has the right to appeal a grade or being withdrawn from his/her educational option. \*See Appeals

Process.

The student will be expected to independently fulfill the work required to complete the course.

The student must complete all work by the due dates agreed upon in this contract.

Focus Credit Flexibility may impact a student's athletic eligibility ...(NCAA highly discourages prospective Division I student-athletes from the Test Out component of credit flexibility).

The grade earned will appear on the student's transcript, regardless of the final grade.

I understand the Credit Flexibility Option is an intensive process designed to allow me to work at my own pace to complete this course.

Student Signature: Date: \_ Parent/Guardian Signature: Date: \_

Teacher Advisor Signature: Date: \_

Teacher Awarding Grade: Date: \_ Academic Advisor: Date:

School Director: Date:

Athletic/Activities Director: Date:

Community Mentor: \_ Date:

*(if applicable)*

**FOCUS**

**Student Credit Flexibility Application FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**



Student's Name: -------------Date of Birth: \_\_

 

###### Address: Apt #: \_ City: State: Zip: \_ Contact Number: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Date Application Submitted: \_

Received by: Position: \_

Submission Approval: Approved Reason(s) for Denial of Submission:

Denied







Resubmission Date: -----------

Signature of School Director: Date: \_



Focus

Credit Flexibility Communication Plan

|  | Building | District | Target Audience |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Website |  | x | Students, Parents |
| Staff Inservice | x | x | Staff |
| Bulletin Board | x |  | Students, Parents |
| School Newsletter | x | x | Staff, Students, Parents |
| Pamphlet | x |  | Students, Parents |
| Board of Education Meetings |  | x | Board of Education |



|  | Building | District | Target |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Audience |
|  |  |  |
| Facebook | x | x | Parents, Students, |
|  |  |  | Community |



**Focus Credit Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: What is Credit Flexibility?**

**A.** *Credit Flexibility gives high school students the opportunity to earn credit by completing traditional coursework, by testing out or otherwise demonstrating mastery of the course content, and/or by pursuing one or more educational option.*

**Q: What courses are available through Credit Flexibility?**

**A.** *All courses currently offered at Focus are available to pursue through Credit Flexibility.*

**Q: Is there a limit to the number of courses I can take through Credit Flexibility?**

A. *No, there is no limit to the number of courses a student may*

*pursue through Credit Flexibility.*

**Q: I am interested in Credit Flexibility -what do I need to do first?**

A. *Schedule an appointment with your Academic Advisor to discuss*

*The program, the course you may be interested in pursuing, and pick up an application. Once you fill out and return your application, your Credit Flexibility Application will be reviewed.*

**Q: Who reviews my Credit Flexibility Application?**

**A.** *Your Credit Flexibility Application is reviewed by the Credit Flexibility Committee at your respective school (Focus East or Focus Southwest). This committee will consist of the Academic Advisor and one or more teachers. \*Committee members may vary between Focus locations.*



**Q: Does the teacher of record for a Credit Flexibility option have to be a Focus teacher?**

A. *The teacher of record must be a Focus teacher who is licensed by the State of Ohio to teach the course being accessed through credit flexibility.*

**Q: I may choose to play sports in college- can I still pursue courses through Credit Flexibility?**

**A.** *The NCAA does not currently recognize/accept course credit earned through Credit Flexibility. If you are thinking of pursuing athletics in college, Credit Flexibility is not an appropriate option*

*for you.*