

# Alberta Dual Credit Framework





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Alberta Dual Credit Framework

Alberta Education, Government of Alberta

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# Introduction

This document provides background information on dual credit in Alberta, in particular under the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy, and details the *Alberta Dual Credit Framework (Framework)* that includes an approved description of dual credit, guiding principles, and funding information.

Education for students in the 21st century takes place beyond the four walls of a school. Through optional career-based high school programming, such as dual credit, Alberta's students engage in post-secondary learning experiences that can assist them in completing their high school education and in making meaningful transitions from high school to post-secondary and/or the workplace. Finishing high school is an important step for young people to create a positive future for themselves, their families, and their communities (see [High School Completion](#)).<sup>1</sup> Dual credit programming may help improve high school completion rates, help increase the accessibility of [Alberta's adult learning system](#), and help students develop the skills required to succeed in today's workplace.

The *Framework* serves as a provincial guide for the Government of Alberta; school authorities and First Nations/First Nation Education Authorities; Alberta Learner Pathways System member institutions, including publicly funded Alberta post-secondary institutions and First Nations colleges; business/industry; and the community to implement dual credit under provincially established guiding principles. The provincial *Framework* is led and managed by Alberta Education on behalf of the Government of Alberta.

The *Framework* provides high-level direction for implementation of Alberta Education-authorized dual credit programming<sup>2</sup> in Alberta. It informs decision making at the provincial and local levels to promote equitable access to dual credit for high school students and to ensure applicable resources are in place for provincial implementation.

While the *Framework* highlights the role of the school authority with regard to provincial funding and implementation of dual credit, it applies to all partners to help guide the collaborative implementation of dual credit programming in Alberta. The *Framework* also addresses stakeholders' well-documented recommendations for the need for a provincial approach to dual credit in Alberta.

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta Education, 2017d.

<sup>2</sup> Authorized dual credit programming meets Alberta Education's criteria as outlined in this *Framework* and in supporting implementation resources.

Dual credit implementation resources are available on [Alberta Education's Dual Credit web page](#) for dual credit partners and other stakeholders to access. Implementation resources provide further information and details (i.e., the *Dual Credit Implementation Guide* and relevant tip sheets) to assist all dual credit partners in the set-up, implementation, and maintenance of dual credit in Alberta and will allow for flexibility to fit local contexts.

## Background

For many years, dual credit opportunities have been available to high school students in some school authorities in Alberta; however, these opportunities were not always available or available for all students.

Between 2008 and 2011, the Government of Alberta funded several dual credit pilot projects, while at the same time, individual school authorities and post-secondary institutions negotiated separate, non-government funded dual credit articulation agreements. Feedback from stakeholders involved in the pilot projects, along with other research, identified a need for greater consistency of support for dual credit programming across the province. In response, the government developed and implemented the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy in 2013 “as a ‘Call to Action’ for school jurisdictions, post-secondary institutions, and business and industry to expand their collective effort to develop engaging and relevant learning experiences for all Alberta students so they can reach their full potential”.<sup>3</sup> (See Appendix A for historical information.)

In addition to the Government of Alberta, management and implementation of the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy was supported by the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and the Provincial Dual Credit Steering Committee (see Appendix A). Management at the local level was maintained through formal partnerships established among dual credit partners who collaborated to develop and deliver dual credit opportunities for students.

Based on evidence collected through provincial data collection processes<sup>4</sup>, the goals and supporting actions of the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy were achieved through its implementation and is demonstrated through the 51 dual credit partnerships created across the province between 2013 and 2016.

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Alberta, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Alberta, 2017b; Burger, 2017.



# Shaping Dual Credit in Alberta

## Research Supporting Dual Credit Programming

Research from across the United States (US) and within Canada substantiates the purposeful implementation of **learner pathways**<sup>5</sup> between high school and post-secondary education and/or workplace training. Dual credit programming is a valuable and viable pathways option for high school students.<sup>6</sup>

*By fusing secondary and post-secondary education, and successfully leveraging this fusion to smooth students' pathways to [post-secondary] completion, dual enrollment programs demonstrate the potential efficacy of a new, more streamlined education system.<sup>7</sup>*

In the US, all 50 states offer some type of dual credit programming for high school students. The benefits for students are nationally recognized, and as students are better prepared for their futures, the greater society benefits. To guide implementation, 47 states have dual credit policies that outline key features of programming, such as prescriptiveness, oversight, target population, admission requirements, location, student mix, instructor qualification, course content, tuition, and funding.<sup>8</sup>



In Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario have established direct support in their public-facing documents for provincial implementation of dual credit. While Alberta has formally supported dual credit via the Strategy since 2013, dual credit programming has been available in the province, predominantly through the Career and Technology Studies (CTS) programs of study, since 2005.

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<sup>5</sup> Different routes that individuals take to progress into, within, and out of the post-secondary education system. Learner pathways are used to describe the recognized mobility options available to different learners.

<sup>6</sup> FitzGibbon, 2015; Watt-Malcolm, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Karp, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, Borden, & Park, 2015.

British Columbia began supporting dual credit in 1998 and has several policy statements on their Ministry of Education website, including [Recognition of Post-Secondary Transition Programs for Funding Purposes](#), that govern programming. Ontario has supported dual credit since 2005 and in 2013 introduced [Dual Credit Programs: Policy and Programs Requirements](#) to guide programming. Manitoba has supported dual credit since 2000 and in April 2017 established a [Policy for Recognizing Post-Secondary Courses for Dual Credit](#). Saskatchewan provides guidance on alternative pathways to graduation through a 2015 [Dual Credit Policy](#).



While there are distinct differences across the provinces, they share similar goals: to boost graduation rates; to provide students with more individualized learning; and to build more seamless access to learner pathways between secondary and post-secondary education and/or workplace training.

*Participating in dual credit increases student confidence, increases awareness of post-secondary opportunities, narrows interests, and highlights labour market and future career opportunities that students may not have originally considered.<sup>9</sup>*

Research gathered through provincial dual credit data collection processes,<sup>10</sup> including Government of Alberta dual credit pilot project feedback, the CASS survey template and literature review, and the Government of Alberta's implementation evaluation, validated the development of a provincial dual credit framework.

## Developing a Framework for Dual Credit in Alberta

While the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy provided early guidance on the implementation of dual credit in Alberta, dual credit stakeholders<sup>11</sup> have indicated that Alberta's students would be best served by a provincial dual credit framework.

*A provincial framework should be made for implementation, curriculum, sustainable funding, policy and awareness of programs, given the evidence that dual credit is a positive initiative for students with enhanced relevant learning opportunities.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Government of Alberta, 2017b.

<sup>10</sup> Alberta Education, 2011; Burger, 2017; Government of Alberta, 2017b.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Alberta, 2017b; Burger, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Burger, 2017.

The *Alberta Dual Credit Framework* builds on the successes of already existing dual credit opportunities and expands on the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy’s vision, goals, and guiding principles. The *Framework* encourages equity of access for students; quality of programming; access to learner pathways and transferability; strong partnerships; flexibility; and predictable, sustainable funding.

Additionally, the *Framework* aligns with the Government of Alberta’s priority to grow an educated, strong, and diverse workforce. This goal can be achieved by providing opportunities for all Albertans to have the skills they need to succeed in a changing economy. The *Framework* advances government objectives across departments, is supportive of the principles of accessibility and coordination of Alberta’s adult learning system and aligns with the labour market needs of business/industry, both at the provincial and local community level. In this way, students are ready for the future and prepared for rewarding careers.

## Implementing the *Alberta Dual Credit Framework*

<b>Framework Vision</b>	
<b>Students have access to dual credit opportunities to personalize their high school experience and build on or discover their career passions and interests.</b>	
<p><b>Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase learner retention and high school completion rates.</li> <li>• Increase participation of young adults in post-secondary programs.</li> <li>• Assist students in making meaningful connections to the labour market.</li> <li>• Effectively operationalize, support, and foster sustainable dual credit programming.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guiding Principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-centred: Students are the focus of all decisions pertinent to dual credit.</li> <li>• Flexibility: Students have increased choice for their learning.</li> <li>• Accountability: Student success is accurately captured and reported.</li> <li>• Sustainability: Students are assured stability and continuity of dual credit opportunities.</li> <li>• Excellence: Students benefit from the integrity of secondary and post-secondary education systems.</li> </ul>

## Dual Credit Management

During the term of the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy, management of dual credit at the provincial level was primarily shared by the ministries of Education, Advanced Education, and Jobs, Economy and Northern development (formerly Labour (2018)). Under the *Framework*, Alberta Education assumes management of dual credit, as dual credit programming in Alberta serves high school students.

Dual credit opportunities are authorized and managed in accordance with this *Framework*, the *Dual Credit Implementation Guide*, the *Funding Manual for School Authorities*, and the *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*.

Other Government of Alberta ministries, including Advanced Education, Skilled Trades and Professions (formerly Labour and Immigration (2019)) and Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism (formerly Economic Development and Trade (2018)) and Indigenous Relations (2018)), were supportive of the Education-led *Framework* and its application to all dual credit partnerships in alignment with this *Framework* and in alignment with their own ministry's priorities and stakeholders' needs.

At the local level, dual credit management will be the primary responsibility of the school authority who will work with post-secondary and/or business/industry partner(s), as applicable, to develop and implement dual credit programming in alignment with the *Framework* and supporting implementation resources.

Implementation resources are available on the Alberta Education Dual Credit web page and provide information

- to help guide the use of the *Framework*
- on dual credit partnership roles and responsibilities, implementation, and funding
- on the application process to receive Alberta Education dual enrolment course codes for post-secondary programming
- on the process and details associated with the maintenance of provincial CTS dual credit pathways, including CTS Apprenticeship Pathways
- on the application process to assist eligible school authorities in applying for start-up funding for new dual credit opportunities

The *Framework* and supporting implementation resources will provide a provincial level of consistency and at the same time will allow partners the flexibility to customize dual credit opportunities to meet the needs and interests of students, schools, and communities.

## Dual Credit Description and Structure

For the purposes of this *Framework* and to support sustainable dual credit programming in Alberta, dual credit is described as

Programming authorized and funded by Alberta Education in which grade 10, 11, or 12 students can earn both high school credits and credits that count toward a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, including a journeyperson certificate.<sup>13</sup>

While the description of dual credit under the Provincial Dual Credit Strategy was broad, the description in the *Framework* has been refined to differentiate amongst the various career-based learning opportunities available for high school students.

Those provincial courses or pathways that do not meet the refined description of dual credit (e.g., some preferred placement<sup>14</sup> and workplace certification<sup>15</sup> opportunities) will continue to be available to students and funded as per Alberta Education’s current [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#).

Students will continue to receive recognition on their high school transcript for external credentials achieved through workplace certification pathways (e.g., CompTIA Network+, First Aid in Child Care). Other career-based learning opportunities for high school students, such as off-campus education programming (e.g., Green Certificate, Work Experience, and Registered Apprenticeship Programs), are not considered dual credit under this *Framework* and will continue to be supported and managed by Alberta Education as described in the [Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12](#) and the [Off-campus Education Handbook](#).

Dual credit courses are categorized in two ways: single enrolled and dual enrolled.

- 1) A **single enrolled course** is typically instructed by an Alberta certificated teacher who has the credentials to teach the course. Single enrolled courses are generally CTS Apprenticeship Pathways courses for which students receive credits on their high school transcript.

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<sup>13</sup> Neither continuing education courses nor high school upgrading courses completed at a post-secondary institution are considered as “counting toward a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree.”

<sup>14</sup> Post-secondary institutions exempt students from courses (often at the first-year level) in recognition of coursework completed in high school (e.g., child development assistant). Please note: CTS Apprenticeship Pathways are recognized as dual credit under the refined description.

<sup>15</sup> Provincial high school curricula provide students with opportunities to achieve workplace certification through CTS Credentialed Pathways (e.g., medical first responder, Adobe Certified Expert).

For example, the CTS Plumber First Period Apprenticeship courses are taught in a high school by an Alberta certificated teacher who is also a journeyman plumber. Students will receive the appropriate CTS courses on their high school transcripts. Students may also receive credits, exam eligibility, or advanced standing at a post-secondary level.

- 2) A **dual enrolled course** is one that is instructed and/or supervised by both a post-secondary instructor and an Alberta certificated teacher. Students may receive credits on both their high school and post-secondary transcript if all assessment requirements are met under the *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12* (for high school credit) and under the post-secondary controlled assessment process (for post-secondary credit).

For example, CTS Health Care Aide (HCA) courses are taught in partnership with a post-secondary institution (PSI) with instruction provided by the PSI's qualified instructor in collaboration with an Alberta certificated teacher. Students will receive the appropriate CTS HCA credits on their high school transcripts and will receive the appropriate post-secondary credits on a post-secondary transcript.



## Bridging Curriculum

To simplify and streamline processes, aligning post-secondary curriculum with high school curriculum outcomes (i.e., curriculum mapping/articulation) will no longer be required. Instead, **unique dual credit course codes** will be created by Alberta Education within the CTS program area for post-secondary programming that meets the *Framework's* description of dual enrolled courses and is considered authorized dual credit programming under the *Framework*. Course codes will be assigned by Alberta Education through an online application process.

Existing CTS Apprenticeship Pathways and other provincial CTS dual credit pathway courses will continue to be maintained by Alberta Education, and their associated course codes will continue to be utilized. New CTS Apprenticeship Pathways will continue to require stakeholder recognition provided through Apprenticeship and Industry Training and Skilled Trades and Professions.

## Dual Credit Partnerships

A dual credit partnership may consist of a school authority or a First Nations/First Nation Education Authority, an eligible Alberta Learner Pathways System member institution (including publicly funded post-secondary institutions and/or First Nations colleges),<sup>16</sup> and a business/industry partner (including professional regulatory organizations, companies, businesses, chambers of commerce, and boards/councils).

However, not all dual credit opportunities require a post-secondary partner to deliver dual credit. For example, [CTS Apprenticeship Pathways](#) include apprenticeship courses most often taught in a high school by an Alberta certificated teacher who is also a journey person. In this case, a post-secondary partner is not required. Alberta Education works with Apprenticeship and Industry Training and Skilled Trades and Professions to receive recognition for apprenticeship courses that are taught within high schools.

As well, business and industry involvement is strongly encouraged for the many benefits these community-based partners can bring to a dual credit opportunity, but a business/industry partner is not required under this *Framework*.

Where a post-secondary partner and/or a business/industry partner is included, **a formal dual credit partnership agreement** is required to ensure alignment with the *Framework* and the *Dual Credit Implementation Guide*, and to identify each partner's roles and responsibilities.

Dual credit partners have the flexibility to customize their roles and responsibilities to optimize student learning. Experienced dual credit stakeholders have suggested several key components related to roles and responsibilities that may be included in formal dual credit partnership agreements: planning and recruitment; coordination/coordinator; curriculum development and mapping; off-campus provisions; supervision; duty of care and liability insurance; student attendance and participation; student accommodations; communication with parents; instruction; assessment/evaluation; and grades and reporting.<sup>17</sup>

*The values of dual credit [are] broad and [include] benefits to students, to partnerships, and to the local community. Values reported through the CASS template [include] enabling students to gain workplace experience, enhancing local partnerships, and helping develop the community.*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A list of eligible post-secondary institutions can be found on the Alberta Education Dual Credit web page.

<sup>17</sup> Burger, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Government of Alberta, 2017b.



## Dual Credit Delivery Models

Dual credit partners have the flexibility to determine delivery models that most effectively fit within their local context and suit their students. Flexible dual credit opportunities can be offered through a variety of environments, including face-to face, distributed learning, blended learning, and e-learning. Instruction and assessment will vary depending on the dual credit structure and/or the delivery model used.

Supervision and guidance by an **Alberta certificated teacher** is a key requirement that leads to student success in a dual credit opportunity, regardless of the delivery model. In all dual credit opportunities, certificated teachers provide students with ongoing guidance and assessment, even if they are not providing direct instruction.

Dual enrolled opportunities will also include post-secondary instruction and assessment as a requirement for success. Collaboration by and contributions from all partners (school authority, post-secondary, and/or business/industry), as appropriate to the specific delivery model, also contribute to student success.

## Meeting the Diverse Needs of Alberta's Students

It is crucial to ensure that all students are learning in welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments and are not discriminated against, for any reason.<sup>19</sup> Alberta Education takes into account learners' diverse backgrounds, interests, and experiences to develop the foundation needed for lifelong learning. It is important that unique differences among learners do not impede participation in school and community, academic achievement, or capacity to access further study and careers that lead them to become contributing members of society. By helping students learn about themselves in relation to others and function as citizens in a society that values diversity, students gain a stronger understanding of how diversity and differences enrich lives and are essential to creating healthy communities.<sup>20</sup>

### Francophone Cultures and Perspectives for Dual Credit

As representatives of the linguistic duality of Canada, Francophone communities in Alberta continue to grow and actively contribute to Alberta's economy, cultural mosaic, and society as a whole.

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<sup>19</sup> Alberta Education, 2017e; Government of Alberta, 2017a.

<sup>20</sup> Alberta Education, 2017c.

When appropriate, Francophone students may access dual credit opportunities that more closely meet their linguistic, cultural, and educational needs.

## **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Cultures and Perspectives for Dual Credit**

Authentic dual credit learning opportunities that incorporate and reflect culturally relevant perspectives and experiences help First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students see purpose in their learning and engage them in their program selection.

Opportunities to personalize education plans create stronger relationships for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and the broader community, while providing various career options to support increased graduation rates.

When appropriate, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students may access dual credit opportunities from First Nations colleges and other eligible publicly funded post-secondary institutions that meet their linguistic, cultural, and educational needs.

## **Data Collection and Management**

The dual enrolment flag (DEF) in PASI allows Alberta Education to effectively collect high school course enrolment data to inform ongoing dual credit programming across the province. This data can be used to better understand post-secondary enrolment and related information, such as transition rates and completions. Alberta Education may also collect dual credit information annually from schools.

Dual credit agreement-related data will also be collected by Advanced Education through the Alberta Learner Pathways System in partnership with the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT). This system will allow identified stakeholders to share and manage their targeted student-facing and partnership-facing dual credit agreement-related data.

Advanced Education will also work collaboratively with Alberta Learner Pathways System member institutions, including Alberta publicly funded post-secondary institutions and First Nations colleges, to identify a separate, relevant reporting mechanism(s) related to dual credit. The mechanism(s) may involve monitoring student transition and completion rates between school authorities and post-secondary institutions through the use of the DEF.

## Communication

Alberta Education’s communication with dual credit partners and stakeholders is a key element in support of dual credit programming implementation. Dual credit information is communicated through this *Framework*, the *Dual Credit Implementation Guide*, the Alberta Education Dual Credit web page, the *Funding Manual for School Authorities*, and the *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*.

Advanced Education provides dual credit learner pathways information for students and other stakeholders through the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) [Transfer Alberta website](#) in alignment with the *Framework*. Information regarding dual credit agreements is planned for the Transfer Alberta Search Tool/Mobile App, which already tracks transfer agreements/decisions related to Alberta Learner Pathways System post-secondary institution members’ courses and programs. Additionally, the ACAT Dual Credit Articulation Committee continues to foster collaboration among dual credit stakeholders, including information provided on the [ACAT website](#).

School authorities are responsible for communication with students and their parents/guardians regarding dual credit opportunities. For more information, see the *Dual Credit Implementation Guide*.

## Conclusion

This *Framework* is built on years of data collection,<sup>21</sup> the expertise of key stakeholders, and best practices of already existing dual credit opportunities. As such, this *Framework* is intended to support increased learner retention and high school completion rates, increased participation of young adults in post-secondary courses, increased ability of students to make meaningful connections to the labour market, and greater sustainability for dual credit programming.

The Government of Alberta is committed to providing Alberta’s youth with every opportunity to succeed and to gain valuable hands-on learning experiences while still in high school. This *Framework* provides a provincial guide to all dual credit partners and positions school authorities to work with post-secondary and/or business/industry partners to provide students a wide range of rewarding learning opportunities so that they can explore and pursue their career interests and gain access to [Alberta’s adult learning system](#) and labour market.

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<sup>21</sup> Alberta Education, 2011; Burger, 2017; Government of Alberta, 2017b.

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