

Questions and Answers About the Local Designation of Honors Courses

What is the purpose of the honors designation application process?

Traditionally, selected academic and technical courses have carried honors weights. Now, however, schools and their communities are examining course rigor and realizing that an honors designation may apply to additional courses. The honors designation application process was developed in order to review secondary and post-secondary courses for consideration as honors courses.

What types of courses would qualify for a local honors designation?

The following categories of courses may be considered:

- Honors sections added to regular academic and technical education classes.
Example: An honors-level Journalism I class in addition to the existing regular level.
- Post-secondary technical courses taught either at a high school, technical center, or community college.
Example: Practical Nursing program
- Existing course offering is rigorous and deserving of honors credit.
Example: Financial Planning and Financial Operations are courses offered at the honors level only.

What criteria will be used to determine if a course rises to an honors level?

All honors-level courses will be held to the following standards:

- Concepts are developed at great depth and with rigorous applications.
- Pace is accelerated, leaving time for depth and breadth of content.
- Assigned readings are diverse, challenging, and reinforce the rigorous application of concepts.
- Writing components consistently require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Selected assignments require students to work independently on research, self-selected readings, and projects.
- Exit criteria include a performance demonstration.

Secondary and post-secondary technical courses requesting the honors designation must meet the above criteria in addition to the following:

- Facilities and equipment must meet minimum industry standards.
- Teachers must be certified in the assigned program and have the necessary qualifications and/or credentials.
- Courses must be part of a program that articulates to a technical center or community college.

Honors courses are rigorous; how is “rigor” defined?

The following are key components of “rigor” in all honors courses:

- The course may be differentiated from one at a regular-level by additional topics or outcomes as aligned to benchmarks where appropriate.
- The course addresses higher cognitive levels with activities focusing on problem solving, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- The course provides students with opportunities to assume leadership roles, including participation in co-curricular activities, competitions, and organizational involvement as applicable.
- The course requires students to show mastery of outcomes through portfolio or other performance demonstrations such as projects, multimedia presentations, and research reports.

What is the process for obtaining a local honors designation?

Step One:

School principal and/or district-level Curriculum Specialists identify course(s) appropriate for honors designation.

Step Two:

School principal and/or district-level Curriculum Specialists complete application for Local Designation of Honors Courses.

Step Three:

Applications submitted to the Director of Advanced Academic Programs no later than February 7, 2003 for consideration prior to the next school year.

Step Four:

Interdisciplinary Review Committee meets to review applications.

Step Five:

Approved applications forwarded to Dr. Earlean C. Smiley, Deputy Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction/Student Support, for approval. Unapproved applications will be returned to schools with appropriate comments.

Step Six:

Business Instructional Council reviews applications for approval.