



Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Dual Enrollment for High School Substitutions

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Can TCAT dual enrollment be substituted for a general education high school graduation requirement?

Answer: State Board of Education (SBE) [Graduation Substitutions Policy](#) (3.103) allows Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and postsecondary institutions to determine if postsecondary standards are appropriate to award high school general education credit. Dual Enrollment Math and Science programs are listed among the appropriate general education course substitutions. SBE policy states:

In addition to the specific courses listed in this policy, pursuant to the State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-03.03 (7) LEAs shall accept postsecondary credits as a substitution for an aligned graduation requirement course, including general education and elective focus courses for those students who take and pass courses at a postsecondary institution for credit. The decision to permit a postsecondary course not contained in this policy to count as a substitution for graduation requirement course is to be determined at the local level based on a review of whether the postsecondary course covers the state standards for the graduation requirement course.

Question: Why has TCAT dual enrollment not been used as a substitution for a general education high school graduation requirement in the past?

Answer: The State of Tennessee requires that high school graduates earn [22 credits](#) across numerous subjects. Credit may be obtained through courses taught by high school teachers or concurrently through enrollment in a higher education institution (dual enrollment). In most instances, high schools have awarded high school credit for TCAT dual enrollment as fulfillment of an elective credit or credit issued as part of a CTE pathway. TCAT dual enrollment has generally not been utilized as a substitution for a core academic graduation requirement such as math or science. There are four primary reasons for this occurrence:

1. **Clock Hours and Credit Hours:** Unlike community colleges and universities, TCATs progress students through highly structured academic programs based on clock hours rather than credit hours; therefore, transcription of academic progress can look different between the two systems. Rather than a three-hour college course taken as dual enrollment transcribed as a one high school graduation requirement credit, TCAT students engage in a trimester worth of clock hours of instruction, typically 432 clock hours, that may represent sufficient rigorous content to substitute for a general education high school substitution.
2. **Academic Programs and Courses:** TCAT curriculum is structured to be industry-focused academic programs directly aligned with careers in which students progress over a series of trimesters to earn certificates as indicators of content mastery. TCAT curriculum is integrative and escalates in complexity over the course of the trimester. As a result, TCAT DE lacks the traditional naming convention that facilitates documentation of graduation requirement substitutions. The academic programs at TCATs contain rich, rigorous standards but may lack the naming convention to easily translate to a subject area identified as part of the typical high school graduation requirements.

- a. **University or Community College Dual Enrollment Course:** Traditional naming conventions like Math 1010 or Biology 1010 as a 3 semester credit out course make a clear high school course substitution for a math or science credit graduation requirement.
 - b. **TCAT Dual Enrollment Program:** TCAT dual enrollment centers around an academic program rather than a particular course. For example, the first trimester of the Industrial Maintenance Automation program includes significant study of electricity including electrical theory, transformers, meters and measuring equipment, and AC/DC voltages. However, it is less clear how the Production Machine Tender trimester could appropriately be used as a substitution for a high school graduation requirement based on the certification name and the fact that the necessary clock hours are earned over multiple high school academic years.
3. **Pedagogical Variations:** TCATs differ from community college and universities in the typical pedagogical engagement of students. TCAT academic programs are largely designed as competency-based programs that require both the knowledge of standards and the technical ability to consistently apply that knowledge in real-world settings. The expectation of students to both acquire content knowledge and demonstrate curriculum competency through safely and accurately completing workforce aligned tasks can be a significant variation from pedagogical practices seen in traditional secondary and postsecondary coursework.
 4. **Dual Enrollment Grant Structure:** Due to the clock hour-based structure of TCAT academic programs, progression through TCAT curriculum by high school students may extend beyond a single high school academic semester or year depending on the use of class scheduling in the school district. In the past, this was an issue for students using the state dual enrollment grant; however, grant requirements have been amended to allow students sufficient funding to reach the clock hours necessary to achieve a transferable credential while in high school (up to 1296 clock hours).

Tennessee High School Graduation Requirements*		
Credits	Subject	Example Course Sequences
4	Mathematics**	Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or Integrated Math I, II, and III and a fourth higher level math course
4	English	English I, II, III, and IV
3	Science**	Biology, Chemistry, and Physics or 3 rd lab science
3	Social Studies	U.S. History and Geography, World History and Geography, U.S. Government and Civics, and Economics
1.5	Physical Education and Wellness	
.5	Personal Finance	
2	World Language	2 credits (May be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus)
1	Fine Arts	2 credits (May be waived by the local school district for students, under certain circumstances, to expand and enhance the elective focus)
3	Elective Focus	3 credits consisting of Math and Science, Career and Technical Education, Fine Arts, or Humanities
22	Total Credits	

* Requirements noted as of February 2024.

**Computer Science may be substituted as 4th year mathematics or 3rd year science course.