

## **EARNING CREDITS THROUGH EXTERNAL CREDENTIALS, EQUIVALENCY, AND INDEPENDENT STUDIES POLICY**

### **Policy**

The purpose of students earning credits through equivalency, independent studies, and external credentials is to grant credit toward graduation for learning that has occurred beyond the scope of regular schooling and which meets or exceeds the provincial standards for course completion. Students may earn these credits as part of the 2004 Graduation Program in grades 10, 11 and 12. Within (or beyond) the 28 elective credits, there are no limits to the number of credits earned through equivalency, external credentials, independent directed studies, or board/authorized courses (BAA).

### **Policy Objectives**

1. To ensure that students earn credits towards graduation for “other” learning.
2. To regulate the awarding of credits to students for their “other” learning.

### **Administrative Procedures**

#### 1. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

**Challenge**: A formal process in which a student completes for credit, without taking the courses. The challenge process is outlined in another policy.

**Equivalency** (Documented Prior Learning): Equivalent Grade 10, 11 or 12 Ministry developed course from an educational outside the BC school system. School administrators will ensure that there are processes for students to provide appropriate documentation and for comparison of factors such as learning outcomes, general subject matter, depth or breadth of coverage of subject, matter and assessment methods. For equivalency to be granted, there should be a **match of approximately 80%** or more of the learning outcomes.

Procedures related to equivalency and external credentials are laid out in the Ministry Handbook in the section labeled “Earning Credits in the Graduation Program.”

**Independent Studies (IDS)**: Under the supervision of a teacher, students may initiate, develop and complete their own areas of learning based on the learning outcomes of Ministry – Developed or BAA Grade 10, 11 or 12 courses. Students pursue learning outcomes including or beyond those normally taught in the classroom, for 1, 2, 3, or 4 credits. One credit is earned for approximately 30 hours of study.

**External Credentials:** The Ministry authorizes certain courses or credentials for credit toward graduation that are developed outside the Ministry and taken by BC students. These external credentials will include music courses taken through the Royal Conservatory of Music, Dance courses, some sports level courses, the Duke of Edinburgh awards, etc. A complete listing is found on the Ministry of Education website.

## 2. PROCESS FOR OBTAINING CREDITS

### 2.1 External Credentials

- External credits approved by the Ministry of Education, based on an official list of the approved credentials and assessments provided annually to school in the Ministry's Course Information Book. In this book, some external credentials are classified as required courses and others as elective courses.
- The school vice-principal will meet with each student in the secondary program in Grade 10 to see if they qualify for an external credit. It is up to the student to provide the vice-principal with appropriate documentation in order to receive the credits.
- The Vice-Principal should annually update the credits for each student in Grade 11 and 12.
- There will be no fee charged for review or granting of these credits.
- For reporting and transcript purposes, the school will assign letter grades and percentage as appropriate.

### 2.2 Equivalency

- Courses taught outside the BC school system that substantially matches the learning outcomes of Ministry- developed or BAA Grade 10, 11 or 12 courses are eligible for credit through equivalency.
- The course must match approximately 80% or more of the prescribed learning outcomes of the Ministry Developed course.
- The student must provide documentation that the learning outcomes of the course were successfully completed (usually through a report card or transcript).
- Students who are coming in from a province or country outside of BC will meet with an administrator to discuss course equivalency, For example, a student having a Grade 10 level Social Studies course (i.e.) History 10 and/or a Science course (i.e.) Biology 10 on their transcripts should be given credit for Social Studies 10 or Science 10 respectively.  
**However the student must write the government exam (i.e.) Science 10 in order to complete the equivalency! See the Ministry Handbook for details.**

### 2.3 Independent Studies (IDS)

- To participate in an Independent Studies course(IDS), students must demonstrate the ability to work independently.
- If an IDS course is being proposed, it must be presented to the Board's Education Committee for approval at least one year ahead of implementation.
- Upon approval, a plan is to be developed plus a process for ongoing facilitation and assessment by the teachers overseeing the course. This overview is to be presented to the total Board **for information only** by the teachers in charge of the course.
- 2.3.1 How to document an IDS course:
  - o Reporting an IDS course: IDS must be reported on report cards, PR cards and transcript data sent to the Ministry. An IDS course title is composed of the prefix "IDS" followed by the regular course title of the related Ministry or BAA course.
  - o IDS courses are intended to allow students to pursue curriculum in more detail – that is, student receive course credit plus IDS credit. IDS courses can be one, two, three or four credits. One course credit represents the value attached to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that most students can acquire in approximately 30 hours of instruction.

Cross-referencing: Handbook of Procedures for the Graduation Program