

Challenge and Equivalency

Policy 6240

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The Board of Education supports the three basic principles that are the foundation of education in B.C.:

- people learn in different ways and at different rates
- learning is both an individual and a social process
- learning requires the active participation of the learner.

The Board acknowledges that relevant learning occurs outside the school building and that assessment is an integral part of the learning process. Crediting prior learning through the process of course challenge and course equivalency creates flexibility and greater opportunities for students to achieve their goals. The assessment of external learning for credit should be rigorous, maintaining the integrity of the curriculum and the standards of a quality education.

1. Challenge

Challenge is undocumented demonstrated prior learning and may be done if documentation is not available to do an equivalency review. Students are entitled to use Challenge to receive credit for ***Ministry-Developed*** or ***Board/Authority Authorized (BAA)*** Grade 10, 11 and 12 courses taught within the school district through an assessment of a student's prior learning. Prior to engaging in a challenge process, schools must review any documentation for prior learning that a student presents in order to determine if credit can be awarded through equivalency.

A student can challenge a course if he or she:

- is currently enrolled in the school district, registered as a home schooler, or is enrolled in the Distributed Learning School where the challenge is being requested.
- has not already challenged the course and received a passing grade, or completed the course through previous enrolment, or been granted equivalency for the course.
- can give compelling evidence that he or she will succeed in the challenge.

Responsibilities of the School District

- Boards must make challenge available for BAA courses taught within their districts. Ministry authorized grade 10, 11, and 12 courses must be available one year after full implementation of the IRP. School districts are not obliged to provide challenge for BAA courses taught in other school districts.
 - If the enrolling Board arranges with another Board to conduct a challenge assessment for a Ministry Authorized course not offered in the enrolling school district, then the enrolling Board must pay any fee charged by the non-enrolling Board to cover the costs of obtaining services in the non-enrolling school district.
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Provincial Challenge Process (Ministerial Order 302/04)

The challenge process begins when it is determined that credit cannot be awarded through equivalency and a student has given compelling evidence that he/she will succeed in a challenge assessment,

There is no limit to the number of credits that may be awarded through the challenge process.

Schools must document the challenge assessment delivered to each student, including a pre-challenge equivalency review. Documentation must be made available to Ministry of Education auditors if requested.

Students should be able to demonstrate their readiness to challenge a course based on factors such as a recommendation from a previous teacher, or from evidence that relevant learning has been acquired outside the regular classroom setting. The demonstration should not be an onerous process. School staff, in consultation with students and parents, should make the decision regarding readiness.

Examples of assessment strategies that could be used in a challenge process include, but are not limited to, such things as hands-on demonstrations, oral presentations, interviews, performances, written examinations, or presentations of portfolio of work.

Awarding credit through the challenge process should be based on the same standards used for students who have taken the course through regular enrollment.

To receive credit for a course that does not have a required exam, a student must:

- obtain at least a C- (50%) grade/score in the challenge assessment.

To receive credit for a course that has a required exam, a student must:

- complete a challenge process through the school district and have a passing school percentage to report to the ministry; and
- write the provincial exam at one of the scheduled exam times set by the Ministry; and
- obtain a final mark in the course of at least C- (50% minimum) based on the combination of school mark (based on the challenge) and exam mark. The minimum passing score is the same as for students enrolled in the course.

District Guidelines

- Typically, the challenge process will occur in the school that the student is enrolled in provided that the course the student is challenging is offered in that school.
- In most cases, students will be granted only one opportunity to challenge a specific course.
- The successful challenge of a course does not result in credit being granted for previous level courses. To obtain credit for a previous level course, student must enroll in the course or challenge it separately.

- A teacher may recommend a student for a challenge.
- The final decision for challenge will be the responsibility of a principal/vice-principal, in consultation with the student, parents, teachers, and other educators/mentors.
- The principal or vice-principal shall designate a “Challenge and Equivalency Coordinator” who is responsible for the administration, monitoring and reporting aspects of the challenge process.

School Procedures

1. A student interested in challenging a course should meet with the Challenge Coordinator and states the reason(s) for the challenge. If the Challenge Coordinator determines that the possibility of a challenge exists, the Coordinator will provide a copy of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the course to the student as well as a “Challenge Application” form.
2. Once the application form is submitted, the Coordinator will convene a panel to review the form and consider compelling evidence. This Review Panel shall include the career coordinator, the principal or vice-principal, and a teacher at the school who is familiar with the content of the course being requested to be challenged.
3. If the application to challenge is accepted, a “Challenge Agreement” form will be completed for the student. This form will indicate challenge details and the assessment criteria as determined at a meeting of the Review Panel.
4. If the student agrees to the details and assessment criteria on the “Challenge Agreement”, then the student will complete the “Checklist for Course Challenge” form. Once completed, this form will be presented to the Challenge Coordinator.
5. If the challenge is not approved at any step of the process, a letter detailing the reasons why the challenge is not approved is to be issued to the parents/guardians of the student.
6. Copies of all documentation pertaining to all course challenges shall be kept in the student’s file for audit purposes.
7. The assessment and evaluation strategies should be determined jointly by teachers, principal or vice-principal, the student, and his or her parents, and should reflect the range and depth of the ILOs for the course. As well, the assessment and evaluation process should include more than a single activity, and should be a process over time.
8. The final decision regarding the assessment and evaluation process shall rest with the principal or vice-principal.
9. The assessment and evaluation process must be completed at least four weeks prior to the start of the next semester exam schedule.

Reporting a Successful Challenge (Ministerial Order 302/04)

For reporting and transcript purposes, schools must assign a letter grade and percentage to all credits awarded throughout challenge processes, as well as ensure that the appropriate TRAX code is used in the “Course Type” field. To be funded by the Ministry, a challenge must be successful.

2. Equivalency

The purpose of Equivalency is to recognize valid credentials equivalent to the Grade 11 and 12 levels acquired by students from other educational jurisdictions and from institutions outside the regular school system. All students who can provide a credential or documentation to support their equivalency request are entitled to an equivalency review. The equivalency process is not intended to recognize undocumented prior learning. Equivalency credit will only be granted if the prescribed learning outcomes from provincial and locally developed courses are met to a satisfactory level.

2.1 Requirements for Equivalency

- 2.11 The credentials or documentation presented by the student must meet at least 80% of the ILO's of the course for which equivalency is sought in order for the course to be deemed equivalent for full credit.
- 2.12 All students are entitled to apply for a review of their credentials received from other educational jurisdictions and institutions outside the regular school system which match the ILO's from provincial or locally BAA courses.
- 2.13 Student Eligibility for Equivalency:
 - 2.131 Students are responsible for providing evidence of successful completion of a course or program of learning from other educational jurisdictions or institutions outside the regular system. Evidence may be in the form of official credentials, documents, diplomas, or certificates which show that the student has met the learning outcomes of the provincial or locally developed course for which equivalency is being applied.
 - 2.132 When equivalency is not recognized, students may challenge a course for credit.

2.2 Procedures for Equivalency:

- 2.21 Student applicants must meet with the Challenge Coordinator to discuss their application.
- 2.22 If necessary, the Coordinator will provide an Equivalency Application Form and any other pertinent information to applicants. Students may be required to provide a written explanation of how the Equivalency will meet the educational goals as set out in their Student Learning Plan.
- 2.23 The approval for equivalency must be made by the Principal in consultation with the Challenge and Equivalency Coordinator and subject area teachers.

2.3 Assessing Equivalency:

- 2.31 To gain successful equivalency, the student must meet the same standards as those expected of students who take the course through regular classes.
- 2.32 Students will be awarded credit for a successful equivalency and receive a letter grade and percentage mark for the course according to the Ministry Reporting Policy and Guidelines, and the Student Progress Report Order. If there is insufficient evidence to award a letter grade and percentage, “Transfer Standing” will be awarded.
- 2.33 The assessment process may include the following:
 - source of the credential submitted;
 - whether the work and expected learning outcomes of the two courses are comparable;
 - the amount of learning time by the student as well as the difficulty of the content;
 - the assessment and evaluation criteria used to award the credential;
 - the Student Learning Plan;
 - samples of student work and any test or examinations completed;
 - an interview between a subject teacher and the student; and/or
 - other strategies as deemed appropriate.
- 2.34 If the equivalency review is successful, a letter grade and percentage or “Transfer Standing” will be recorded for transcript and reporting purposes. The School will designate course credit through a predetermined transcript code provided by the Ministry.
- 2.35 The Equivalency assessment and evaluation process may occur throughout the school year.