

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Certificate of Completion
October, 2017

<p>IMPORTANT NOTE:</p>	<p>Information and resources related to the changes in the Certificate of Completion can be found on the Student Services Academic Guidance page on the Indiana Department of Education's website. This page will be updated regularly as new information becomes available.</p>	
<p>What is the link to COC resources?</p>	<p>Link to the Certificate of Completion Resources webpage (DOE) https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/coc</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>Why is the Certificate of Completion being changed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased equity for all students: The recent Dear Colleague letter on the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education and passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) at the federal level emphasize the requirement for challenging academic content standards to apply to EACH AND EVERY public school student. Students who are not on diploma track still have the right to learn academic content. • Workforce readiness: Many students with disabilities who have had appropriate academic and vocational instruction and leave high school without a diploma are capable and willing to work; however, the existing Certificate of Completion is not recognized as a meaningful document by the employment community. The vague nature of Certificate of Completion requirements across districts provides employers and adult service providers with little information about the student's employability. 	<p>General</p>
<p>How was the new Certificate of Completion framework developed?</p>	<p>A workgroup comprised of representatives from school personnel (including teachers), Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Development, Family and Social Services Administration, ARC of Indiana, ICASE, IN*SOURCE, Indiana Resource Network, the Indiana Manufacturers Association, and the Indiana Department of Education began meeting in September 2015. The group worked with IDOE's Office of Academic Guidance to develop a course of study that mirrors the general diploma course of study. The Certificate of Completion course of study has been revised several times to reflect feedback from teachers and administrators. There is an emphasis on employability skills and development of a transition portfolio to better showcase what students who graduate with a Certificate of Completion will be able to do in post-secondary employment settings.</p>	<p>General</p>

Does this mean more students should be receiving a Certificate of Completion?	Absolutely not. A student should be working toward a diploma until the Case Conference Committee determines that they should be placed on the certificate track. Students who are not on diploma track still have the right to learn academic content.	General
What are the benefits of the new Certificate of Completion?	The new Certificate of Completion provides a framework for providing a free appropriate public education to students who are not on a diploma path. It allows increased access to the general education curriculum by providing flexibility in earning credits and/or applied units. It also guides schools in developing appropriate applied classes based on alternate achievement standards.	General
What does the law say about making the decision about diplomas v. certificates of completion?	The Case Conference Committee should make the decision as to whether a student with a disability will earn a diploma or a certificate of completion (COC), and if a diploma, the type of diploma the student will earn. These decisions begin at least with the development of the transition IEP that will be in effect when the student enters 9th grade or becomes 14 years of age, whichever occurs first. 511 IAC 7-43-4. Additionally, I.C. 20-30-4 requires that all students have a graduation plan. This begins in grade 6 with a statement by the student and parent. This plan is further revised in consultation with the student’s guidance counselor no later than the end of grade 9. Any decisions regarding the graduation plan for a student with a disability shall be made in accordance with the IEP. I.C. 20-30-4-3. Decisions about whether a student with a disability is eligible to receive a Core 40 diploma with a waiver is to be made by the CCC (I.C. 20-32-4-5) and decisions as to whether a student with a disability is exempt from the Core 40 requirements and eligible for a general diploma are also to be made by the CCC (I.C. 20-32-4-7). More information regarding the graduation plan can be found here: https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/gradplan.pdf .	General
Is there an attendance requirement to earn a unit or receive a Certificate of Completion?	No	General
Can the name “Certificate of Completion” be reconsidered? (Alternatives: Work Ready Diploma, Alternate Diploma, Completion Diploma. Many parents are concerned that their child cannot mark “diploma” on job applications, even if able to perform the required job tasks.)	Currently, the term Certificate of Completion is referenced in both state statute and in Article 7. The state of Indiana has not approved the development of an alternate diploma. The term “diploma” can only be used to reference a document that certifies the completion of high school graduation requirements, which includes meeting academic standards that are not modified. The COC stakeholder group did consider changing the title, but agreed to keep it as it currently exists for now.	General

<p>What happens if a district does not implement the Certificate of Completion course of study?</p>	<p>Given ESSA and the OSEP Dear Colleague Letter on the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the department would consider the district in violation of the student's right to FAPE.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>What professional development and support will be provided to support schools implementing the new certificate of completion?</p>	<p>The Office of Special Education has provided guidance documents and videos in the form of "Coffee Talks" that are posted on the website (https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/coc). In addition, the School Counselor regional trainings held in the fall of 2017 included a presentation on COC changes. An update was also provided at the regional IEP transition meetings held during the fall of 2017, and the ICASE fall conference had a break-out session. Project SUCCESS has been and will continue to provide support to districts and teachers in teaching content connectors and designing instruction in courses identified in the Course of Study.</p>	<p>PD</p>
<p>Is having a Cognitive Disability part of the criteria for being on the COC?</p>	<p>No. The Case Conference Committee (CCC) determines whether the student will be pursuing a Certificate or a Diploma. If the CCC determines that the student cannot obtain a diploma the student is removed from that path and will work toward earning a Certificate of Completion. A student who has been removed from a diploma path does not have to be a student with a significant cognitive disability as defined for the alternate assessment.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>How will the COC revisions affect students who are currently enrolled and working toward a certificate of completion who will go beyond the four years? For example, a student with a disability can go to school until the age of 22, so if a student has already been enrolled in high school for 2 years and will be graduating with the class of 2022. What guidelines would this student need to follow?</p>	<p>The new Certificate of Completion (COC) requirements go into effect with the 2018-19 cohort, so a student who has been in high school for 2 years would not need to meet the 40 credit/applied unit requirement in order to receive a COC.</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that rigorous programming for students who have been taken off a diploma path begin immediately, regardless of cohort. They may not earn the 40 credits and/or applied units, but ESSA is already in place and students should be held to high expectations and make progress toward grade level standards.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>What is the difference between certificate of completion and certificate of attendance?</p>	<p>The DOE memo defining Diplomas and Certificates can be found here: https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/certificates-and-diplomas-memo-july-2017-final.pdf It is a local decision to offer a certificate of attendance. The certificate of attendance does not imply or carry any indication of academic skills or achievement - and should not be used as a measure of accomplishment.</p>	<p>General</p>

<p>Are there any changes in K-8 resulting from the high school change?</p>	<p>There are not changes specifically defined to K-8 in regard to the COC revisions. However, there are changes that must occur as early as Pre-K to address the requirement that all students work toward grade level standards as outlined in ESSA and the FAPE Dear Colleague letter authored by the USDOE in November 2015. It is recommended that you visit the IN-DOE Office of Special Education website and review the “Short Shares” and other resources regarding high expectations, shared responsibility, access to standards, etc. We want to ensure that each student has equitable access to an appropriate education. If this occurs from the beginning of a student's education, outcomes will improve.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>How are non-public schools being informed/included in these changes?</p>	<p>Non-public schools that access the SAMs/PAM's, counselor talk listserv, website, and attend conferences and workshops will receive this information. District staff are also encouraged to share the information with local non-public schools as well.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>You need to talk directly to teachers, resource teachers and gen ed - they are in the 'daily grind.' I think great plans are often created without consulting the people who implement them --</p>	<p>Agree. A group of stakeholders have been meeting for the past two years to develop this framework for the Certificate of Completion. Teachers have been a part of this team from the very beginning.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>Are students on Certificate of Completion track able to walk through graduation with their class?</p>	<p>This is a local school corporation decision.</p>	<p>General</p>
<p>Is a COC only applicable for students with an IEP or can those students without an IEP also meet criteria for a COC?</p>	<p>The term “Certificate of Completion” may only be used to refer to a document awarded for completion of the special educational program outlined in a student’s IEP and may not be used in any other circumstances. (Excerpt from the document found at https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/certificates-and-diplomas-memo-july-2017-final.pdf)</p>	
<p>On the 4 year plan example it appears that students on COC track are taking two years of Algebra, Geometry, and Business Math. Is this accurate for students on COC track?</p>	<p>Students earning COC are required to take a math class each year. The courses mentioned (Alg, Geo, Bus. Math) fulfill this requirement and can be taken as an applied course (modified curriculum) focused on skills in the Content Connectors (alternate standards) and application of those skills.</p>	<p>4/6 Year Plan</p>

On the sample plans, the applied courses use the same course number as the high school credit bearing courses. Is that the intent?	The courses are the same course number but with an "A" next to it for applied unit.	4/6 Year Plan
What if a student achieves a Certificate of Completion before mastering all IEP goals and/or aging out of school?	All students may earn more than the required number of credits in order to graduate. The same is true for students who are earning applied units or a combination of credits and applied units. Courses may be repeated with new goals, if appropriate. Refer to sample four- and six-year plans that include sample plans for students with the most significant needs and students who transitioned from diploma track to Certificate of Completion. The plans will highlight a combination of credits and units and multiple courses for employability/and the transition portfolio requirements.	4/6 Year Plan
Some teachers have asked if a student would ever be prevented from earning a Certificate of Completion if they did not earn a "mastery/pass" score on alternative assessment (ISTAR).	No, a "passing" alternative assessment (ISTAR) score is not connected to whether or not a student earns a CoC.	Assessment
Can you clarify the graduation exam requirements for a student on a Certificate of Completion track who does not meet the cognitive criteria for the alternate assessment?	The student would be taking ISTEP (2018) or ILEARN after 2018.	Assessment
Is a student on a non-diploma track required to continue to retake the ISTEP+ assessment as a student on a diploma track would be, or does taking the assessment one time satisfy the requirement for a waiver?	A student on non-diploma track does not need a waiver to earn a Certificate of Completion. Only a student on diploma track would need to qualify for a waiver (if they do not pass the graduation examination) to receive a diploma. A student on non-diploma track would not be required to re-test.	Assessment
Will students on a COC be tested with an alternative assessment (ISTAR)?	The decision on which assessment a student will be taking is up to the CCC. The alternate assessment can only be taken by students with significant cognitive disabilities (IIEP has a drop down with the requirements).	Assessment
What are Applied Courses? How were Applied Course Descriptions developed?	A core team reviewed existing course descriptions for credit-bearing courses and developed applied versions to meet the applied unit requirement of the new Certificate of Completion. Applied courses target related Content Connectors (Indiana's alternate academic standards assessed on an alternative assessment (ISTAR) as well as Workplace Essentials (skills assessed by the Department of Workforce Development).	Course of Study

How will students be graded on Certificate of Completion track? Can courses be completed on a pass/fail basis?	Grading policies are district level decisions and may include letter grades, pass/fail, and standards based reporting, but should mirror general education policies. Students who earn letter grades may also have a grade point average, but may be exempt from class rank.	Course of Study
How do I know what courses students should be taking?	Course selection should be driven by the transition IEP and individual goals of students. General education courses should be accessed when possible to fulfill the Certificate of Completion Course of Study. Students can participate in the general education course for credit, or for an applied unit if modified curriculum is utilized within the general education course.	Course of Study
Does the Certificate of Completion have to be completed in four years?	No – a student can attend school and receive special education services until the age of 22. Courses may be repeated with new goals if appropriate, and more than four years may be needed for completion. Refer to the sample six-year plan for an example.	Course of Study
What will happen if a student is unable to complete the required 40 credits/units?	The Certificate of Completion is designed so that each and every student is able to meet the requirements. The Course of Study allows flexibility in earning applied units because the content, instruction and assessment may be modified to meet the individual needs of the student, providing the highest level of access as possible.	Course of Study
If the student meets the criteria for ISTAR, can they still have grade level standards for some classes/goals.	Yes. The COC can be a mix of credits and applied units - individualized for the student.	Course of Study
What happens if a student fails a general education class at the time they are on diploma track? Will it count as a 'unit' if they later switch to certificate?	Yes, if the Case Conference Committee recommends the student be placed on a Certificate Track, a previously attempted credit can be counted as an earned applied unit. This should be the recommendation of the case conference committee.	Course of Study
What happens to the students who are on a diploma track and cannot pass the ECA/ISTEP tests during their senior year of school? They did not get 10 employability credits, nor did they have a portfolio. Do they still get a COC?	First, it would need to be determined if the student qualifies for a graduation exam waiver. If not, the student could continue to take the exam not passed and the Case Conference Committee could determine eligibility for a COC.	Course of Study
Is there a definition of what a course is, including the length of course and how many weeks it's offered?	See the DOE Course Titles and Descriptions (https://www.doe.in.gov/ccr/course-titles-and-descriptions). It is a local decision as far as schools being on a semester/trimester, block period schedule, etc.	Course of Study

Do job shadowing and/or online job training experiences count as employability units?	Applied units are earned by taking the courses outlined on the course of study. Job shadowing and online job training would likely be components of the curriculum in a variety of different courses.	Course of Study
May a general education teacher issue an earned applied unit to Student A and earned credit to Student B for participation in the same course - when Student A utilizes content connectors and Student B utilizes standards?	Yes	Course of Study
Where are daily living skills targeted in the certificate of completion requirements?	Daily living skills are integrated into many of the courses as application of academic tasks. Several courses within the Family and Consumer Sciences, Health, Business and Technology departments lend themselves to a curriculum designed for supporting self-advocacy and independent living skills.	Course of Study
When will the DOE Course Titles and Descriptions be posted?	The DOE P-16 Office anticipates posting some time in November, 2017. NOTE: the DRAFT Course Titles and Descriptions for the COC are posted on the COC guidance webpage.	Course of Study
If a student is enrolled in school for 5 or even 6 years, are they required to be enrolled in a math course each year as it states that a student must take math or applied math each year of high school on the course of study?	This is a local decision and should depend on the student's post-high school aspirations and levels. It should be a CCC decision as part of the discussion to extend a student's time in school to age 22.	Course of Study
Is there a notion of "seat time"? Meaning--do all the "applied units" need to fill an entire class period like a credit would?	Because credits no longer require seat time, there is no requirement for seat time for the COC.	Course of Study
Has or will the requirements for the general diploma change?	We are unaware of any proposed changes to the General Diploma at this time. (The State Board Of Education, Graduation Pathways Committee is currently meeting and recommendations to the board are expected to be made in December).	Diploma

<p>When should a student opt-out from diploma to certificate track?</p>	<p>This is a Case Conference Committee decision. Per Article 7, the decision is to be made when the student enters 9th grade or becomes 14 years of age. However, the CCC is encouraged to maintain the student on a diploma path until evidence clearly reflects the difficult decision to take the student off of a diploma path. It is recommended discussion should include topics such as: why it is believed the student cannot meet the diploma standards; what supports/accommodations have been provided; can the diploma requirements be achieved by age 21 and other topics specific to the student.</p>	<p>Diploma</p>
<p>How will we report students who earn the COC on the graduate report?</p>	<p>No change from how students with a COC are currently reported.</p>	<p>DOE Reporting</p>
<p>What kinds of considerations should school counselors take into account in their planning for the 17/18 school year?</p>	<p>See the School Counselor document located on the DOE Certificate of Completion (COC) Resources webpage.</p>	<p>Guidance Documents</p>

<p>How do teachers help a SpecEd student that is 2 or more grade levels behind when they are being told to only teach grade-level content?</p>	<p>*Many special education directors are knowledgeable and well versed in programming for unique student needs. Also, Professional Development can be arranged, much of it free from the Indiana Resource Network.</p> <p>*The expectation is for all students to have access and, at a minimum, exposure to grade level standards. For most students with disabilities, the expectation is that they will be able to meet grade level standards given appropriate accommodations. For example, a student with average intellectual ability, in 6th grade has been identified with a reading disability and is only able to read at around the 3rd grade level. She understands the content presented in science class, but struggles to read the material. Her disability needs to be accommodated by giving her another avenue for accessing the science content (books on tape, books on her reading level, video streaming, and content read to them or explained orally). At the same time, her reading difficulties could continue to be addressed through specialized reading instruction at her own reading level. This may occur with a special reading teacher, in a reading lab, or with specialized instruction from a special education teacher.</p> <p>*If a student has been identified with a moderate or severe cognitive disability and cannot grasp all of the general education science standards, the course expectations could be modified in the general ed setting, for example expecting her to identify the 20 primary bones in the body rather than all 206 bones. If it is clear, after applying accommodations or modifications, that being in a general education setting is not appropriate due to a student’s disability, the next option might be to provide a self-contained science class where the same grade level concepts are taught using alternate achievement standards.</p> <p>*The expectation is that students will progress toward grade level standards no matter what the disability is.</p> <p>* It is critical that teachers understand all of the skills and knowledge within the grade level standards to determine where barriers exist and to identify access points. Although a student’s performance may be several grade levels below expectation, there are likely skills closer to grade level that can be a starting point for higher levels of exposure to grade level content.</p>	<p>Instruction</p>
<p>Do special education teachers need to be certified in specific content areas in order to teach courses for applied units?</p>	<p>No. Teachers need to be certified only if the student is receiving credit for the course. Teachers do not need to be certified in the content area in order for students to earn applied units. Teachers should be appropriately licensed special education teachers.</p>	<p>Licensing</p>

<p>Will the transition portfolio be transferable for students that move between districts? What about movement from other states?</p>	<p>The COC core group is researching an electronic portfolio that could be part of the IIEP system. All states have the IDEA requirement of a summary of performance, but it is unknown how districts in other states have complied with that expectation.</p>	<p>Portfolio</p>
<p>How does the Work Ethics piece fit in?</p>	<p>This is currently a local decision - information can be found at: http://www.in.gov/dwd/workethic.htm</p>	<p>Portfolio</p>
<p>What will the transcript look like?</p>	<p>Transcript guidance can be found on this page: https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/student-assistance/indiana's-common-electronic-transcript . In the 'Common Transcript Data Elements' excel document, field 39 specifies diploma type with the options being: General, Core 40, Core 40 with Academic Honors, Core 40 with Technical Honors, Certificate of Completion, International Baccalaureate, locally defined certificate (or other), or Core 40 with Academic and Technical Honors.</p> <p>The common electronic transcript team is currently discussing how applied units will be included on the transcript. Once this decision is made, messaging will be sent to SIS vendors and schools.</p> <p>On the electronic transcript there is a state course title and code field and a local course title and code field. In the state course field, schools are required to use state approved course titles and numbers and in the local field they can add any locally developed identifiers for courses (honors or section a, b, etc., for example).</p>	<p>Transcript</p>
<p>How should we designate credits vs. units on the high school transcript?</p>	<p>The common electronic transcript team is currently considering whether a new 'units' field will be added to the e-transcript data schema or issuing guidance regarding the enumeration (unit) being selected in the already-existing credit field. Guidance will be forthcoming and will be communicated to SIS vendors and schools.</p>	<p>Transcript</p>
<p>Can you clarify the graduation exam requirements for a student on a Certificate of Completion track who does not meet the cognitive criteria for the alternate assessment? Is a student on a non-diploma track required to continue to retake the ISTEP+ assessment as a student on a diploma track would be, or does taking the assessment one time satisfy the requirement for a waiver?</p>	<p>A student who has been taken off of a diploma track wouldn't need a waiver to earn a Certificate of Completion. Only a student on diploma track needs to qualify for a waiver (if they can't pass the grad exam) to receive a diploma. So, the student would not need to re-test.</p>	<p>Assessment</p>