

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Off-Site Courses: Internships and Service-Learning

The purpose of this FAQ document is to assist NYCDOE high schools in understanding and effectively implementing policy clarifications regarding off-site courses, including internships and service-learning.¹ This FAQ document supplements existing resources on graduation requirements and policies for awarding high school course credit. Refer to the [High School Academic Policy Reference Guide](#) for additional information.

Internships and service-learning are among the many alternative delivery mechanisms for high school courses. Other delivery mechanisms include [blended and online courses](#). For support implementing alternative course delivery mechanisms, contact your network's [academic policy point](#).

Click the links below to find answers in the following areas:

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DEFINITIONS

1. What is the definition of a credit-bearing course?

According to New York State Commissioner's Regulations, all credit-bearing courses must:

- address [high school commencement-level standards](#)
- meet instructional time requirements (minimum of 180 minutes per week throughout the semester/school year, or the equivalent of 54 hours per credit), and
- be taught by a teacher with a New York State secondary certification in the course's subject area

2. What are commencement-level learning standards?

The New York State Education Department has commencement-level learning standards in the following subject areas:

- English Language Arts
- Social Studies
- Mathematics
- Science
- Technology
- The Arts (including visual arts, music, dance and theatre)
- Languages Other Than English
- Health

¹ The policies and guidance provided in this document do not apply to physical education courses. For support implementing off-site physical education courses, contact the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#).

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- Physical Education
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Career Development and Occupational Studies

See the [New York State Education Department website](#) for specific standards in each subject area.

3. What course components can be included in the 180 minutes per week (54 hours per credit) of required instruction?

Learning experiences that take place outside the traditional classroom and school day may be considered as *inclusive* of the 180 minutes of instruction per week throughout the school year, or the equivalent of 54 hours per credit, including:

- online learning experiences; and/or
- learning experiences that take place inside and/or outside the classroom or school building in non-virtual settings, such as structured work experiences designed to address New York State commencement-level learning standards as a component of a course.

For courses incorporating off-site components, schools should maintain documentation evidencing that courses provide students the opportunity for 180 minutes per week of instruction, or the equivalent.

Schools may use and adapt the [Unit of Study Evaluation Form](#).

Provided they meet the criteria for credit-bearing courses outlined above, the following delivery mechanisms are permitted in addition to traditional classroom courses:

- Blended/online learning
- Internships
- Service-learning

Refer to the information throughout this document for specific requirements for internships and service-learning. For additional information on blended and online courses, see the [Blended and Online Courses FAQ](#).

4. What is the definition of an internship?

Internships provide students the opportunity to connect knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to structured, authentic work environments outside the classroom. Internships are often used to help students develop career skills and competencies they can transport to the workplace or postsecondary educational experiences.

5. What is the definition of service-learning?

Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with classroom curriculum, allowing students to connect academic studies with real-life solutions to strengthen communities. Students identify community needs, apply their skills and studies to research solutions and plan service activities, implement the activities, and evaluate and reflect on the experiences and outcomes. For additional service-learning resources and opportunities, see the [NYCDOE website](#).

POLICIES

6. What are the requirements for credit-bearing internships and service-learning courses?

Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, internships and service-learning courses that bear credit should:

- align to New York State commencement-level standards;
- include a classroom/seminar/workshop component in addition to learning time spent in an educational internship or structured service activities;
- have a syllabus that clearly outlines the standards addressed, how student learning is assessed, and expectations for students in both the classroom and internship or service components of the course; and
- be overseen by a subject-certified teacher, in collaboration with a supervisor at the student's internship site or service-learning site, if applicable.

7. How much time should be spent in the classroom/seminar/workshop component, at the site, and in other course components?

The 180 minutes per week (54 hours per credit) of required instruction may include the classroom/seminar/workshop component, time spent at the internship or service-learning site, and other course components. There is no required minimum for the amount of time spent in the classroom/seminar/workshop component; this component should provide sufficient time for meaningful teacher-student interaction. The distribution of instructional time among various course components should be clearly documented; see question [22](#).

8. What activities should be included in the classroom/seminar/workshop components of internships and service-learning courses?

Schools may determine the structure and content of the classroom/seminar/workshop component, including the instructional time provided. Expectations for all course components should be clearly outlined in the course syllabus. Examples of activities that might occur in the classroom/seminar/workshop component include instruction, reflecting on off-site learning experiences, providing feedback on student progress, assessing student mastery of course outcomes, and connecting off-site learning experiences to academic skills and knowledge learned in the classroom.

9. What are the responsibilities of the subject-certified teacher overseeing an internship or service-learning course?

The subject-certified teacher overseeing an internship or service-learning course is responsible for overseeing the syllabus, monitoring and assessing student progress, overseeing the classroom/seminar/workshop component, and awarding the course grade. Teachers do not need to accompany students to off-site course components, but they should work closely with individuals at the site to monitor student performance and the alignment of off-site activities to the expectations defined in the course syllabus.

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10. What other individuals may support or interact with students completing an internship or service-learning course?

In addition to the subject-certified teacher, other individuals at the school may support the internship or service-learning experiences of students, such as school internship coordinators who manage program logistics. Additionally, students may interact with various personnel at the internship or service-learning site. None of these individuals replace the subject-certified NYCDOE teacher overseeing the course as described in question [9](#).

11. Can outside instructors, such as college professors, guest lecturers, and other professionals, provide instruction during the classroom/seminar/workshop component?

Other individuals may supplement the learning experiences provided in the course, but the subject-certified teacher is ultimately responsible for overseeing the syllabus, monitoring and assessing student progress, overseeing the classroom/seminar/workshop component, and awarding the course grade.

Please note: non-NYCDOE individuals who regularly interact with students at NYCDOE sites must be fingerprinted; see question [27](#).

12. Can the school's internship/service-learning coordinator teach or oversee an internship or service-learning course?

The internship/service-learning coordinator can teach or oversee the course if he or she is certified in the subject area of the course. In some cases, the individual coordinating the internship/service logistics may also be the subject-certified teacher overseeing the course. In other cases, these may be different individuals. In all cases, internships and service-learning courses must be overseen by a subject-certified teacher in addition to any other faculty and staff involved in the program.

13. How should student learning be assessed in internships and service-learning courses?

The subject-certified teacher overseeing the internship or service-learning course should design assessments that align with the standards and learning outcomes outlined in the syllabus. As in other courses, assessments may include projects, exams, portfolios, and other measures of student mastery.

14. How should internships and service-learning courses be graded?

As for any course, schools may establish grading policies at the school, department, grade, or course level. Determinations of passing or failing should be based on student mastery of the learning standards and competencies addressed in the course. The subject-certified teacher overseeing an internship or service-learning course is responsible for assessing student mastery and awarding the final course grade; the course grade may be informed by consultation with individuals at the internship or service-learning site. Grading policies should be documented prior to the commencement of a course and be clear to students, families, and staff. For additional information on grading policies, see [the memo on high school grading policies](#).

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15. How do these policies apply to internships offered by Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and programs?

Specific policies and structures exist for students participating in CTE programs and other State-approved programs; see information from the [NYCDOE website](#) and the [New York State Education Department website](#).

16. Can students receive credit for paid internships?

Any internship that meets the requirements outlined in question [6](#) may bear credit, regardless of whether the experience is paid or unpaid.

17. Should credit-bearing internships and service-learning courses be awarded core credit or elective credit?

Given the specific New York State graduation requirements in core subject areas, internships and service-learning courses are often offered for elective credit. It is possible to design an internship or service-learning course that aligns with New York State commencement-level learning standards for core courses required for graduation. Schools should thoughtfully evaluate the extent to which these courses are of comparable scope and rigor to the traditional sequence used to fulfill graduation requirements.

18. What if students participate in internships or service-learning experiences which do not meet one or more of the requirements in question 6, but are nonetheless valuable parts of students' academic experiences?

Internships and service-learning experiences that do not fulfill one or more of the criteria in question [6](#) may be offered as non-credit bearing courses. These experiences may be integral to students' academic experiences despite not bearing credit.

19. Can students receive credit for an internship experience completed on-site at the school, such as assisting with office tasks?

Students can receive credit for the internship if it addresses New York State commencement-level learning standards, provides a minimum of 180 minutes per week of instruction (or the equivalent of 54 hours per credit), and is overseen by a subject-certified teacher as described in this document. These requirements apply to internships completed both off-site and on-site. The experience must include a classroom/seminar/workshop component in addition to learning time spent in the internship. In addition, the course should have a syllabus that clearly outlines the standards addressed, how student learning is assessed, and expectations for students in both the classroom and internship components of the course.

20. Can students receive credit for independently participating in a program at another educational setting or cultural institution, such as an after-school seminar at a museum?

The principal may evaluate independent educational activities and award transfer credit if the work is consistent with New York State commencement-level learning standards and is of comparable scope and quality to that which would have been done in the school awarding the credit.

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21. Are there graduation requirements related to community service?

While there are no high school graduation requirements related to community service, service opportunities can be a valuable part of students' academic experiences. See [Service in Schools](#) and [NYC Service](#) for additional information about citywide service initiatives.

22. What documentation should schools maintain while designing and offering internships and service-learning courses?

Schools should maintain systems and structures such as accreditation committees for regularly evaluating all new and existing courses, including internships and service-learning. Schools may use and adapt the [Accreditation Committee Course Proposal/Review Form and Unit of Study Evaluation Form](#) to document the alignment of internships and service-learning courses to the policies described above, including the 180 minutes per week (54 hours per credit) of required instruction.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR OFF-SITE COURSES

The following considerations apply to internships and service-learning courses:

23. How should schools monitor student attendance for internships and service-learning courses?

Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, schools adopting learning models that include off-site components during the school day must:

- establish protocols for teachers to document student attendance during off-site and/or virtual coursework;
- record student attendance in ATS. When a student is present at an off-site location, schools enter reason code 72 in ATS in CIND for daily or AM or PM attendance, or in PACH for period attendance, as appropriate; and
- document the school's protocols for tracking and documenting student attendance at off-site and/or virtual locations in the school's Attendance Plan (as part of the Consolidated Plan).

24. How many students can a teacher oversee in an internship or service-learning course?

All contractual class-size limits apply to internships and service-learning courses. Teachers may oversee no more than 34 students in any internship or service-learning course, even if students are off-site for parts of the course, subject to the exceptions set forth in the collective bargaining agreement.

25. How should schools determine whether off-site environments are suitable for students?

Principals or their designees are responsible for the evaluation, through in-person examinations and interviews, of the following:

- the state of the facilities where the off-site credit-bearing instruction or program is being offered to assess the suitability of the site for students; and

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- the instructors and other personnel who will be working with students at the off-site location to assess whether these persons are an appropriate fit for a role involving interaction with students.

26. Should NYCDOE teachers accompany students to off-site locations?

No. NYCDOE teachers do not need to accompany students to, or remain with students at, off-site locations. Schools must verify that students participating in course activities at off-site locations are supervised at all times by the personnel at the site.

27. Should individuals interacting with students at off-site locations be fingerprinted?

Non-NYCDOE instructors and personnel are not fingerprinted by the NYCDOE if they are providing educational services to NYCDOE students at off-site locations. Non-NYCDOE instructors and other personnel from off-site programs must be fingerprinted if they regularly are at a NYCDOE site. Principals may want to consider this in their assessment of the suitability of the site.

28. What considerations apply regarding the cost of off-site courses?

Schools must pay for any costs associated with credit-bearing instruction or programs, including off-site courses. As in any other course, the school must provide students with the needed materials to complete the course. Schools must also arrange for student transportation between the site and the school; see question [31](#).

29. How should schools determine student readiness to participate in internships, service-learning, and other off-site learning experiences?

In determining whether to approve student participation in a course, the principal should consider whether students would benefit from such a program and could successfully perform the required tasks of a particular off-site or online course. For example, schools may wish to consider the extent to which participating students have developed the skills and knowledge necessary to interact professionally with individuals at the organization providing the internship.

30. What considerations apply for the participation of students with disabilities in internships, service-learning courses, and other off-site learning experiences?

Students with disabilities should have full access to internships, service-learning courses, and other off-site learning experiences to the maximum extent appropriate. The school's IEP team should ensure that all relevant sections of the student's IEP (e.g., transition activities and goals, annual goals) reflect such participation and include the necessary goals and supports to be provided in order to maximize the student's success. Please note that the student's IEP recommendations, including related services and transportation, must continue to be implemented, regardless of student attendance to off-site programs. See question [31](#) for more information about transportation.

31. How should schools arrange for student transportation to off-site learning experiences?

Principals must accommodate students' needs for transportation to and from the school and the site. In

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many cases, transportation to and from the site may be accommodated through the use of student Metrocards. High schools should contact the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) if additional Metrocards are needed to support the program. Metrocards to be used for off-site courses should only be requested for participating students and should be returned to OPT in the event a student stops participating in the program.

For students with IEPs specifying the need for transportation and who need transportation to participate in the program, schools may contact OPT to request transportation during the school day provided that buses are used after they complete their morning runs and return to their assigned school to start their afternoon runs on time. For further assistance, schools may contact their network's [transportation point](#).

32. What should schools do if a student is involuntarily dismissed from an internship or service-learning experience?

If a student is prevented from completing an alternative credit-bearing program for any reason other than voluntary withdrawal (e.g., the program discharges the student for misconduct, or the organization stops providing internship opportunities), the school must provide an alternative mechanism allowing the student to earn the credit he/she would have otherwise earned by completing the internship or service-learning experience.

33. What documentation should schools maintain for students completing off-site activities as part of credit-bearing courses?

Schools should use the [Off-Site Coursework Agreement Form](#) to establish student and parent expectations for off-site coursework.

34. How should internships and service-learning courses be coded in STARS?

These courses should be coded in the same way as traditional classroom courses. Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, schools should use new STARS standardized course codes for all courses. Schools should use a specific indicator in STARS to identify internship courses. For support, schools can contact their network's [data/applications specialist](#).

RESOURCES

High School Academic Policy Reference Guide
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/27BF8558-B895-407A-8F3F-78B1B69F030A/0/AcpolicyHighSchoolAcademicPolicyReferenceGuide.pdf>

Academic Policy Resources Intranet Page
<http://intranet.nycboe.net/Accountability/APR/GradRequirements.htm>

Sample Form for Documenting Course Evaluation and Approval



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<http://intranet.nychoe.net/NR/ronlyres/343FC0FD-9202-4389-9C53-50DB8392CC33/0/Acpolicysampleforms.docx>

Service in Schools

<http://schools.nyc.gov/community/sis/aboutus/default.htm>

New Standardized STARS Course Codes FAQ

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/D7AA35E1-BF55-442A-9181-708A87642ACB/0/AcpolicycodeFAQ.pdf>