

CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT

Guidelines

Background

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recognizes that students may have already acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that an existing course seeks to develop. Challenge for credit provides a process for students to demonstrate that they have achieved learning outcomes as defined in the *Public School Programs* and the curriculum guide for a directly-related course.

Policy

1. All students currently enrolled in a public school in Nova Scotia may challenge for credit.
2. Challenge for credit is applicable only to designated Nova Scotia senior high school courses.
3. Students may challenge for any number of credits, but no more than two credits at each grade level for a total of six will count towards a High School Graduation Diploma.
4. Courses for which students have already received credit are not eligible for challenge for credit. Challenge for credit is not intended as a way to improve a course mark. Similarly, challenge for credit is not intended as a process by which a student can challenge a lower level course in the same subject at the same grade level as another course which the student has not completed successfully.
5. Successful challenges for credit will be given a mark.

Guidelines

Challenge for credit will involve a four-step process: (1) notice of intent to challenge (2) consultation (3) evidence of learning (4) evaluation.

1. **Notice of Intent to Challenge**

A student completes a notice of intent form as prescribed by the school board.

2. **Consultation**

After a student has given notice of intent to challenge for credit, a meeting shall be held with the student, their parent or guardian (if applicable) and school personnel. If a number of students challenge for the same credit, the meeting may be held in a group format. The purpose of the meeting is to outline the process and the requirements for a successful challenge. Students should consider whether it is in their best interests to proceed with the challenge.

Schools may wish to provide a seminar for students and parents to outline challenge for credit requirements, process, and related procedures.

3. ***Evidence of Learning***

Students will provide evidence that they have acquired the learning necessary to meet the outcomes of the course. The evidence should be organized based on the prescribed outcomes and may include the following:

- (a) a portfolio containing the description of activities, experiences, readings, and other items as necessary which indicate the attainment of the outcomes
- (b) a demonstration or performance, if applicable
- (c) the written support of at least one person with recognized expertise in the area of the challenge

4. ***Evaluation***

Challenge for credit is intended to be a thorough process. To ensure adequate and valid evaluation of achievement, a variety of strategies should be used. Appropriate evaluation strategies include the following: reviewing a portfolio of student work; laboratory/skills demonstration; oral/aural performances; tests/exams; interviews; documented learning.

The evaluation of the challenge for credit is carried out by a school or teaching personnel of the region or school. Subject area specialists with acknowledged expertise outside of the school (e.g., artists, musicians, mathematicians) may be invited by the board or school to assist teaching personnel responsible for the evaluation.

Time Frame

School Board policy may establish specific times for accepting and reviewing challenge applications. Regions may opt for a “Challenge Week” at the start of the school year or a semester. Others may decide challenges must be completed at specific times so that courses can be planned for the upcoming year. If a small number of students are requesting challenge, scheduling the challenge process at the convenience of all participants may be more manageable than setting specified times.

It is recommended that schools provide a seminar on available opportunities for challenge for credit for students and parents so that they can become familiar with requirements, student responsibilities, the challenge process, and related procedures.

It is recommended that the time frame for the process should not normally exceed four weeks from the time of the consultation step.

Exceptions

Externally developed courses recognized for credit by the Department are not eligible for the challenge for credit process (e.g., International Baccalaureate Program).