

Dear Parents and Students,

Ohio's plan for Credit Flexibility is designed to broaden the scope of curricular options available to students, increase the depth of study possible for a particular subject, and allow tailoring of learning time and/or conditions. These are ways in which aspects of learning can be customized around students' interests and needs.

Credit Flexibility provides options for students with high school standing to earn graduation credits through alternative ways outside of regularly scheduled classes. Please use this Credit Flexibility Guidebook to help you understand what options are available. Each option requires a different level of student independence to successfully complete the coursework for credit. For this reason, all courses and students' interest level should be carefully considered. Students interested in accessing Credit Flex should detach and complete the Credit Flex Application and follow the requirements outlined in this guidebook.

### **What is Credit Flexibility?**

Credit Flexibility is intended to motivate and increase student engagement in learning:

- by allowing student-generated plans for learning in non-traditional ways;
- through access to a wide variety of learning resources, especially real-world experiences;
- with learning opportunities planned around individual student interests and needs; and
- for multiple measures of learning for students to demonstrate what they know, to apply their knowledge, and to present their learning to real-world evaluators.

### **Students may now earn graduation credit through one of the following options:**

- following a traditional schedule at Gateway Online Academy
- taking an online course
- proving mastery of course content; or
- developing an individual plan for an internship/field experience, community service, educational travel, or independent study.

### **Students are not limited in the number of courses or the number of credits earned through Credit Flex.**

- However, **approval of Credit Flexibility Plans and credits earned will be dependent upon the Gateway Academy capacity to implement them.** If Credit Flex Plans are approved, students may earn either required or elective credits or simultaneous credit in more than one academic area at a time or partial credit.

### **Credits earned through Credit Flex:**

- will result in a letter grade (4, 3, 2, 1, or 0) and will be included in the calculation of a student's grade point average (GPA);
- will be reflected on the student's transcript in the same way as traditional credits earned via traditional seat time with no distinction made between traditional coursework and Credit Flex coursework.
- will not be weighted.
- will not be available as Pass/Fail unless students earning credit in a traditional class have a pass/fail option, or as otherwise outlined in policy.

**Grades for online coursework will be recorded as submitted by the online instructor.**

- Grades earned through independent study, internships/field experiences, community service/service learning, or educational travel will result from collaboration between a GOA Teacher of Record (TOR) and/or approved mentor.

**Mastery Assessment**

Students may choose to demonstrate mastery of course content by passing a comprehensive course exam with 80% or greater and by demonstrating their ability to apply knowledge and concepts.

**Application Process\*:**

- Complete the Credit Flex Application, circling "Mastery Assessment" as the requested option.
- Meet with a Teacher of Record (TOR) to complete the Mastery Assessment process.
- Students will be given one attempt to demonstrate proficiency by completing a comprehensive exam covering essential content knowledge addressed in an equivalent GOA course.
- Students failing to score 80% or above on the exam will be reassigned to a traditional course.
- Students demonstrating 80% or greater mastery on the exam will also complete a project/problem-based assessment designed to prove their ability to apply their knowledge.
- Students will then present their work to the GOA Credit Flex Committee who will decide on the level of competency demonstrated for the purposes of assigning a grade and credit.

**MASTERY ASSESSMENT NOTICE:**

- Students may not select the Mastery Assessment option for courses which require students to work collaboratively to produce a final group product (e.g., band, orchestra, chorus, drama, journalism).
- Students may choose to use an Advanced Placement exam for their Mastery Assessment option providing a Credit Flex Application is submitted and all of the following conditions are met.
- All AP tests will be given according to The College Board schedule.
- Students choosing AP as their Mastery Assessment option must earn a score of 3, 4, or 5 on the AP test in order to get credit for the course.
- Scores are not official until they reach the school in July. Students using Advanced Placement Tests for the Mastery Assessment option will not be able to apply any credit earned until the following school year.
- Students are responsible for all fees associated with AP exams.

NOTE: College Board regulations do not allow AP exams to be taken more than one time. Students should understand that using an AP exam for Mastery Assessment means that this would be their only opportunity to take that AP test.

- Fees may be assessed based on the costs associated with this Credit Flex option.

**When the course is one that has a state End-of-Course Assessment for graduation, students are required to take the state test during the identified testing window, in addition to any Mastery Assessment plan the student completes. The state decides when these tests are given. Therefore, there may be a lapse between the time the student finishes this option and when the student sits for the assessment.**

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** If there is no Mastery Assessment or AP exam available for a requested course at the time of application, the district will provide an appropriate assessment in a timely

fashion and inform students when the assessment is ready. In cases where GOA does not have the capacity to generate an assessment, students will be encouraged to select another Credit Flex option for the course.

**Note: The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) does not permit credit for mastery assessment (testing out) of courses. Please reference the NCAA Eligibility Center for more information regarding specific course options**

### **NOTE TO STUDENTS:**

Please read carefully through all of the following information before beginning the Credit Flex Application Process. The Application requires you to verify that you have read this material and have followed all directions.

- Meet with a counselor to ensure that your Credit Flex Plan aligns with your 4-year high school plan and will provide both graduation credit and opportunities for enrichment of your career and college plans.
- Complete the Credit Flex Application in collaboration with your parents and your counselor.
- Students and parents must sign Application to indicate that you understand and agree to ALL Credit Flex guidelines.
- Submit the completed Application to your counselor.
- If not approved, make revisions to your Credit Flex Application and resubmit as directed.
- If approved, begin work on your course.
  - **For Mastery Assessment or Individual Plans:**
    - Communicate with your Teacher of Record.
    - If it is an Online Option, work independently and make sure your counselor has received the final grade from the online teacher.
    - If this course is a prerequisite to another course for original credit, you MUST complete the Credit Flex course PRIOR to being scheduled into the next course in the sequence.
- Take any End-of-Course assessments applicable to your course and as scheduled by the school within the state testing windows.

### **Students wishing to earn graduation credits through a Credit Flex Plan must work through the following process:**

- Meet with a counselor to determine the following:
  - whether Credit Flexibility aligns with your 4-year high school graduation plan
  - which Credit Flex option best fits your needs.
- Complete the Application (See GOA Application) in collaboration with your parents.
- Submit your Credit Flex Application and Plan to your counselor.
- Your counselor and/or the Gateway Credit Flex Committee will approve your application or return it to you for revision.
- You may appeal decisions regarding any part of your Credit Flex Application by submitting an appeal within 5 school days to the GOA Credit Flex Committee for further review.
- If you file an appeal, you and your parents/guardians will have an opportunity to present concerns and recommendations to the Committee. Appeals will be reviewed by the Committee within 10 school days from the date the appeal was submitted. Decisions of the Gateway Credit Flex Committee regarding appeals will be final unless overturned by the Superintendent or the Ohio Department of Education.
- Once your Individual Plan is approved, you will be expected to meet with your Teacher of Record and outside mentor\* (if applicable) weekly to check on the progress of your Plan.
- At the conclusion of your work, your online teacher or the Gateway Credit Flex

Committee will assign your final grade and credit(s).

- It is your responsibility to submit all final grades to your counselor.
- All credits you earn through Credit Flex will transfer between school districts in the same manner as traditional courses.

**\*Outside mentors must be fingerprinted and approved through the BCI background check process. All BCI documents must be included with the Application.**

Gateway Academy will communicate important information about Credit Flex to students and parents on an annual basis in a variety of ways: the district website, the High School Program of Studies, informational meetings, etc.

Credit Flex Plans for students participating in extracurricular activities governed by the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) shall include procedures for documenting ongoing participation and satisfactory progress on the part of the student for the Purpose of satisfying academic eligibility requirements established in OHSAA bylaws 441 and 448. Student athletes should check with the NCAA Clearinghouse or Eligibility Center for more information.

## **Important Information for Student Athletes**

**High School Athletes:** To be eligible to play interscholastic high school sports, students must meet the following requirements:

- be officially enrolled in school,
- be enrolled in at least five, one-credit courses or the equivalent, each of which counts toward graduation, and
- have received passing grades in at least five, one-credit courses or the equivalent, each of which counts toward graduation, during his or her last grading period.

Students enrolled in a Credit Flex option which counts as one of their 5 credits required for athletic eligibility must "pass" that Credit Flex option even though the Plan may not be complete. If they are not considered "passing," no credit toward the five required credits for eligibility can be awarded, and students will not be considered eligible.

**College Athletics:** Students planning to participate in athletics at the college level should be aware that some Credit Flex options may not be included as part of the NCAA Eligibility Center's qualifying core courses required for eligibility. For potential college student athletes, the NCAA eligibility requirements specifically address the types of learning opportunities available through Credit Flex. The NCAA does not allow the Mastery assessment (test-out) option for core graduation requirements. In addition, not all online courses are approved by the NCAA. **Again, student athletes should consult the NCAA Clearinghouse or Eligibility Center for more information.**

## **Appeals Process**

### School Credit Flex Appeal Process

- Counselors will provide a written explanation of the denial and include suggestions for the student to use in submitting the application. This may take up to 2 weeks. The written explanation will be sent via email to the parent/student and the grade level principal.
- The student will refile the application within 5 days to the Counselor. The Counselor will respond within 5 days in writing.
- If the second re-file is denied, the parent/student can begin the Credit Flex District Appeal process.

### District Credit Flex Appeal Process

- The student/parent can write an appeal within 5 days of the denial to the building principal. The appeal should describe why the Credit Flex project meets the spirit of the law, how it is

compliant with the State content standards, and how it fulfills the learning objectives of the student.

- The building principal has 5-10 school days to review and give a finding regarding the appeal.
- If the building principal upholds the appeal, the student/parent may submit within 5 days a written appeal to the Superintendent. These officials have 5-10 days to review and give a finding regarding the appeal.
  - If the building principal decides in favor of the student, the Credit Flex application will move forward.
- If the Superintendent upholds the appeal, the student/parent may appeal to the Ohio Department of Education.
  - If the Superintendent decides in favor of the student, the Credit Flex application will move forward.

## Credit Flexibility Application

You must complete all required pages of this application to apply for a Credit Flex option: Online Courses, Mastery Assessment, or Individual Plan. See the guidelines and directions outlined in the Credit Flexibility Guidebook (above) prior to completing this Application.

Date of Application:

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Student Name:

Grade:

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Student Email:

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Select Chosen Plan for Credit Flex:

Mastery Assessment

Individual Plan

Online Courses

Student, your signature below indicates that you:

- have read and agree to all of the guidelines, policies, and procedures set forth by the Credit Flexibility Guidebook (found online),
- have discussed this application with your parents,
- understand that this is a binding contract and that you are subject to all deadlines and drop dates, understand that your application is subject to approval by the GOA Flex Committee ,
- and that you will hold GOA harmless of any liability during times when you are not required to be at school due to an approved Credit Flex Plan.

If this course is a prerequisite to another course for original credit, you **MUST** complete the Credit Flex course **PRIOR** to being scheduled into the next course in the sequence. You will also be required to take all End-of-Course assessments applicable to your courses and at the times designated by your school within state testing windows.

*\*\*Note to athletes: The NCAA Eligibility Center does not accept the test-out option or BYU online courses for core credits. Please reference the NCAA Eligibility Center for more information specific to all Credit Flex options.*

Student Signature:

Date:

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PARENT/ Guardian, your signature below indicates that you:

- have read and agree to all of the guidelines, policies, and procedures set forth by the Credit Flexibility Guidebook (found online),
- have discussed this application with your student,
- understand that this is a binding contract and that your student is subject to all deadlines and drop dates, understand that your student's application is subject to approval by the GOA Credit Flex Committee,
- and that you will hold Gateway Online Academy harmless of any liability during times when your student is not required to be at school due to an approved Credit Flex Plan.

If this course is a prerequisite to another course for original credit, the student **MUST** complete the Credit Flex course **PRIOR** to being scheduled into the next course in the sequence. The student will also be required to take all End-of-Course assessments applicable to their courses and at the times designated by Gateway Online Academy within state testing windows.

Parent Signature:

Date:

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## Credit Flexibility Plan

Student Name:

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Title of Plan/Project:

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Subject Area to Record Credit(s):

Credit Requested:

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- Attach a detailed outline of the work scope of your project including due dates.
  - Attach a list of specific "artifacts" you teacher will assess, i.e. written exam, paper, video production, etc.
  - For PE courses: attach the appropriate grade-level standards chart from ODE
- Counselor/ Date:**

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Mentor Name(s) and Contact Information:

Cell #:

Mary Ford

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Email address:

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Mentor's Signature (if applicable):

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Mentor BCI Approval:

\*\*\*\*\*  
OFFICE USE ONLY:

Proof of BCI Approval:

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Cost to student:

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Individual Plan Approved:

Date:

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Student - Mentor Discussion Date:


The **Student** will:


The **School** will:


Successful Implementation includes:


## Credit Flex Plan Option Standards

Complete for Standards/Indicators of Subject Area indicated in Plan

More information on how to meet the standards is available through the Ohio Department of Education website: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards/Ohios-New-Learning-Standards>

List Standards/Indicators and how they are to be met: teacher/mentor must verify:

Standards:	Brief Description of how standards are to be met:	Initial to Verify:
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		