![Pennsylvania Department of Education logo]

Frequently Asked Questions

Resource for Schools Requesting Approval for a CTE Program

This resource offers expanded information to school administrators who are completing the application required to offer a career and technical education (CTE) program.

1. **A Local Advisory Committee (LAC) is in place and charged with providing advice regarding the delivery of career and technical education that is most important to the economic development of the local area.**

   Question: Who should be a member of the LAC?

   Answer: The LAC offers guidance pertaining to *all* CTE programs offered within the LEA. Membership on the LAC consists of multiple stakeholders such as business and industry representatives, public sector employers, labor organizations, community organizations, postsecondary education institutions, the public, representatives authorized by the workforce investment board and civic organizations. Membership should also include an Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC) member from all program areas.

   Question: What evidence of the LAC's work should be documented?

   Answer: A membership list that includes names, titles, and companies/organizations as well as LAC meeting dates and minutes should be documented.

2. **Evidence of program need is supported by data from the regional Workforce Development Board and LAC members.**

   Question: What type of data is required? Where is this data found?

   Answer: The program should align to a top industry in order to demonstrate program need. Each region's local Workforce Development Board (WDB) collects pertinent data, some of which is shared on the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry Center for Workforce Information and Analysis website. For example, the "Top 50 Jobs" for each WDB region is updated quarterly. Documents such as these serve as evidence of program need. Secondly, programs should have least two letters of support from local employers who agree that the program prepares graduates to be qualified employees and the program meets their needs as well as

the needs of the community. Letters must be signed, dated, and written on company letterhead. Schools should keep these documents on file.

Question: Is a formal feasibility study required?

Answer: No. However, as noted previously, the LAC works with the WDB and employers to determine need.

3. **The Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) should discuss the feasibility of jointly offering the new program.**

   Question: Who is a member of the PAC?

   Answer: The superintendent from every school district belonging to the career and technical center should be a member of the PAC.

4. **Resources for program are available (e.g., finances, certified staff, major equipment, tools, software).**

   Question: What are the most common resources for a program?

   Answer: Funding, staff, major equipment, tools, and industry software are examples of common resources. The PAC, school board/joint operating committee, LAC, and occupational advisory committee should offer input. If needed, it is recommended that a team visit a similar program at another school to review the resources they utilize.

5. **Occupational analysis has captured the major duties, related tasks, necessary knowledge, skills, and traits for a competent employee in the occupations associated with a CTE program.**

   Question: What is an occupational analysis?

   Answer: It is a method of identifying the specific skills and sub-skills associated with an occupation. It is a determination of the specific duties and tasks that competent workers must perform. There are various methods.

   Question: If the program is already state approved, is this required? Or, can we adopt the task list provided by the Bureau of Career and Technical Education?

   Answer: Yes, an occupational analysis is required even when the POS task list is used.

   Question: What are the methods of identifying specific duties and tasks that competent workers perform in an occupation?

Answer: The incumbent workers serving on an OAC can review and validate the state's program of study (POS) task grid, or [PDE](#), and other existing occupational analysis databases such as [O*Net Online](#). Based on the analysis, any additional tasks the incumbent workers on the OAC deem necessary for competent workers in their occupation can be added to the state POS task grid.

Once the skills are identified, learning objectives and performance objectives are developed. The next step is to develop a curriculum guide, lesson plans, and course assessments. All OAC members are engaged in this process.

6. **Once the skills for a competent employee have been identified, learning and performance objectives are developed.**

   Question: What is a performance objective?

   Answer: A performance objective has three components.

   1. The conditions under which the task will be performed—the materials and supplies provided;
   2. A description of the task; and
   3. The standard for how well the task shall be performed.

   Question: Is there a bank of these available? If not, how are they developed?

   Answer: A bank of these is not available. The CTE instructor along with OAC members should identify the performance objectives. They should use the specific duties and tasks identified in the occupational analysis.

7. **The next step is to develop a curriculum guide, lesson plans, and course assessments that are aligned to industry standards, allowing students to sit for industry certification exams. Safety practices are integrated.**

   Question: Is there a bank of these available? If not, how are they developed?

   Answer: Teacher certification programs cover curriculum development in their programs. If the school employs a curriculum coordinator, the teacher should work with the curriculum coordinator or the instructional leader.

   Question: What evidence proves that the curriculum guide, lesson plans, and course assessments are aligned to industry standards?

   Answer: The instructor and curriculum coordinator and OAC members should review the [Industry-Recognized Credentials for Career and Technical Education Programs](#) and determine which industry certifications are aligned to the program. It is recommended that administrators use the [task grid academic crosswalks](#), and add a

column for each industry certification the new program will offer students. In that column, identify which tasks align to these certifications.

Question: What is the process to have additional industry certifications recognized by PDE?

Answer: Refer to page 84 of PDE's resource guide "[Industry-Recognized Credentials for Career and Technical Education Programs](#)*"* (May 2017).

Question: How should we demonstrate that safety practices are integrated?

Answer: There are different methods of integrating curriculum across content areas. It could be theme-based units or project-based learning. The instructor should work with the curriculum coordinator or instructional leader and OAC to ensure safety is covered throughout the program.

Evidence that safety is addressed in a CTE program includes the following items:
- Lesson plans
- Unit plans
- Learning guides
- POS task-grids where safety is identified
- Occupational advisory committee minutes and recommendations
- Evidence of how the teacher documents that each student has received safety training
- Documentation that performance objectives include safety instruction
- Documentation of appropriate safety-related certifications (i.e. OSHA, Department of Agriculture, Insurance Inspection Reports)
- Equipment guards and personal safety devices in place
- Visual inspection of the classroom and laboratory
- Location of Material Safety Data Sheets
- Storage policy
- Visual inspection
- Appropriate documentation of storage requirements as per 34 Pa. Code Part I

8. **A PDE-approved assessment (e.g., NOCTI, NIMS) is identified and will be administered to qualifying students.**

   Question: Will BCTE approve new NOCTI exams? If so, what is the approval process?

   Answer: New NOCTI assessments are developed when a new program of study (POS) is developed and the test alignment determines a national NOCTI does not align to the POS.

9. **A program of study is developed in which CTE courses are planned, progressively sequenced, and meet minimum technical instructional hours.**

Question: What does it mean to plan and progressively sequence courses?

Answer: It is the organization of the course content. Courses are organized to provide students with foundational knowledge, moving to the next higher level of course. The occupational analysis determines what order the performance objectives should be taught. Courses are taken in a specific order, where the earlier course are generally prerequisites for later course.

Question: What are the minimum required technical instructional hours?

Answer: A minimum of two classes per year are required, and the total hours must equate to the following number of hours:
* One-year sequence program (senior only program) - minimum 720 hours;
* Two-year program – minimum 720 hours;
* Three-year program - minimum 1,080 hours; or
* Four-year program - minimum 1,320 hours.

10. **Necessary equipment is identified. It will be purchased and operational when the program launches.**

    Question: How do we determine if the equipment is deemed necessary?

    Answer: OAC members should make recommendations and these should be documented in meeting minutes.

    Question: Must all necessary equipment be purchased prior to the launch of the program?

    Answer: For the first year of the program, the equipment needed to complete level one tasks must be purchased. If level two (year two) tasks require additional equipment, it must be purchased and in place at the start of the school year. The process of adding equipment may align with the first cohort of students' progression through the program.

11. **The planned curriculum, instructional strategies, and administrative procedures link the program to an aligned CTE postsecondary education program. The articulation ensures secondary students graduate with the ability to transition from secondary school to a postsecondary institution without experiencing delays in or duplication of learning.**

    Question: Where is information regarding current SOAR program articulations available?

    Answer: Visit the PA SOAR pages on CollegeTransfer.Net.

    Question: How many articulation agreements is the school responsible to arrange?

Answer: School districts and CTCs are responsible to develop a minimum of one articulation agreement for Tech Prep programs. The state has developed articulation agreements with the Perkins postsecondary recipients and SUNY. The statewide articulation agreements are part of POS. Schools offering POS are encouraged to create additional articulation agreements with local postsecondary institutions to provide their students with greater opportunities.

12. **Program instructor(s) are hired and meet the certification and professional standards and requirements for CTE teachers.**

    Question: How do I determine if an individual is certified to teach the CTE program?

    Answer: The certification requirements are listed with each classification of instructional program (CIP), listed on the Department's website. Administrators should look at the applicable description for certification requirements.

13. **Support services for students with special needs are identified and in place prior to program start.**

    Question: What types of support services are required?

    Answer: Supports outlined in students' IEPs must be in place. The CTE instructor must be a member of the IEP Team.

14. **A program admission policy is in place and is not discriminatory.**

    Question: Our school entity does not have a program admission policy. Where can we find one to review?

    Answer: The Department does not retain copies of admissions policies. Schools can contact colleagues to review their admissions policies and seek input from the school solicitor.

15. **A Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) aligned with the program has been identified, and curriculum and lessons are developed for the required content.**

    Question: Because CTSOs are integrated into the coursework, what content should be covered in the CTE program of study?

    Answer: Approved CTE programs must integrate CTSOs in the CTE program of study. CTSO related curriculum content includes human relations skills and knowledge of occupations. Leadership and positive attitudes, along with fulfilling occupational, civic, social and community responsibilities, are also included.

16. **School personnel must provide guidance services that ensure that all students are assisted in selecting vocational programs and developing career plans. Students must be provided with occupational and education information needed for career planning.**

Question: What guidance services must be provided?

Answer: Schools must assist students in selecting the CTE program that meets their needs, making education career plans, providing occupational and education information for career planning, orienting students interested in CTE, providing placement services, and conducting follow-up studies. Cumulative records also must be maintained and exchanged in accordance with Chapter 12.

17. **The school entity must analyze required accountability measures to bring about increased performance for each program and on each defined indicator.**

Question: What are the performance measures?

Answer: There are 8 secondary performance measures.

1S1 Reading
1S2 Math
2S1 Skills Attainment
3S1 Diploma Attainment
4S1 Graduation
5S1 Placement Survey
6S1 Nontraditional Participation
6S2 Nontraditional Completion

18. **A re-approval process takes place every five years in the CATS system and may or may not coincide with an onsite approved program evaluation which occurs every five years as well.**

Question: What is the difference between re-approval and program evaluation?

Answer: Evaluation is a review of the approved CTE program to ensure it follows Chapter 4 and 339. It requires an on-site visit and preparation of a report that identifies areas that are not in compliance with statutes, regulations, and guidelines. A school is required to prepare a compliance plan when non-compliance is found.

Re-approval is the opportunity for a school to continue to hold approval of a CTE program. Program approval lasts no more than five years and schools must seek approval after a 5-year period.