Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility

Q: How does a student qualify for ASCENT?

A: ASCENT is for students to participate in concurrent enrollment in the year directly following their 12th grade year. A student is eligible for ASCENT if the student:

- Has completed, or is on schedule to complete, at least 12 credit hours (semester hours or equivalent) of transcripted, <u>credit-bearing, college-level</u> postsecondary coursework* prior to completing his/her 12th grade year. Remedial/developmental education college courses *do not qualify* as part of the 12 required credits.
- Is college ready, and not in need of basic skills coursework in accordance with the pathway in which he/she enrolls.
- Completes an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) prior to declaring intent to participate in ASCENT.
- Applies and is accepted into a postsecondary degree program at a qualified Colorado institution of higher education.
- Has been selected for participation by his/her high school principal or equivalent school administrator.
- Has not been designated an ASCENT program participant in any prior year (can only participate in ASCENT for 1 academic year).

*Does not include International Baccalaureate (IB), College Level Education Program (CLEP), prior learning, or experiential courses, unless these exams/experiences have been converted to transcripted credits on a college transcript. **See** ASCENT Q&A **for Advanced Placement (AP) courses.**

Q: Are all high school students eligible to participate in the ASCENT program?

A: No. Only students from participating LEPs who meet all requirements, are selected by their LEPs, and are funded by the state may participate. [C.R.S. § 22-35-108 (2), and ASCENT Guidelines]

Q: Does an ASCENT student have to meet the graduation requirements before the end of their 12th grade year to be eligible to participate?

A: No. It is not a state requirement that students meet LEP graduation requirements in order to be eligible for ASCENT. LEPs may have their own requirements in determining approval of students to participate in ASCENT.

Q: For ASCENT, if students are short the 12 college credits, but are close, when is the deadline for them to finish those college credits?

A: The law states that in order to be eligible for ASCENT, a student must complete 12 eligible college credits prior to the completion of his/her 12th grade year. Only transcripted, credit-bearing, college-level postsecondary coursework count toward the 12 credit hour ASCENT requirement. The end of the

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12th grade year is determined by the academic calendar of the LEP.

Q: Do basic skills courses count towards ASCENT eligibility?

A: Eligible 12th graders may take basic skills courses if allowed by their LEP, but basic skills coursework does not count toward the 12 credit hours of college coursework required for ASCENT eligibility. Only transcripted <u>credit-bearing, college-level</u> postsecondary coursework count toward the 12 credit hour ASCENT requirement. [C.R.S. § 22-35-108 (2)]

Q: Can ASCENT students take basic skills courses during their ASCENT year?

A: No. ASCENT students must be qualified at the college level for the courses in their degree or certificate programs, and must not need remediation in their selected pathway/degree program. This includes supplemental academic instruction (SAI) courses [C.R.S. § 22-35-108 (2), and ASCENT guidelines]

Q: Do certificates count as degree programs for ASCENT program?

A: Yes. A student can be enrolled in any certificate, associate degree of applied sciences, an associate degree of general studies, an associate degree of arts, or an associate degree of science, and all baccalaureate degree programs.

Q: Can ASCENT students receive federal/state financial aid from an Institution of Higher Education?
A: No. Students must still be classified as high school students during their 5th year by both the district and the IHE to be eligible for ASCENT. Students might be able to apply for and receive private or institutional scholarship monies if these scholarships don't require students to be classified as a college student.

Cooperative Agreements & Applications

Q: Does a cooperative agreement need to be in place for ASCENT participation?

A: Yes. A cooperative agreement must be in place between the LEP and the college for ASCENT program participation. It is recommended that this agreement be made separate from the Concurrent Enrollment cooperative agreement. Sample models for both types of agreements can be found on the CDE website in [Concurrent Enrollment, District Resources](#).

Q: Whose responsibility is it to let the postsecondary institution know about prospective ASCENT students? When should this information be communicated and how?

A: LEPs should initiate ASCENT agreements with the receiving IHEs when the student completes the ASCENT application during the spring of the student's senior year in high school, prior to their ASCENT year.

Q: If a college course is taught at the high school by a high school teacher, can students participate in the ASCENT program with this course?

A: Yes, this is allowed and can be discussed as part of the cooperative agreement between the LEP and IHE.

Q: Is it possible to alter the ASCENT application? If so, which parts are eligible to be updated?

A: Yes. The application on CDEs website is a guideline. The application must include at the least the requirements laid out in concurrent enrollment rule, 1 CCR 301-86, 2.01.

Funding

Q: Is funding for ASCENT different from Concurrent Enrollment?

A: Yes, ASCENT is not funded through regular PPR as Concurrent Enrollment is. LEPs with students participating in ASCENT receive a separate allocation for ASCENT students that is subject to available state appropriations each budget year. The amount appropriated each year specifies a standard amount for ASCENT FTE that is used for all ASCENT students. [C.R.S. § 22-35-108 (2)(a)]

Q: What is the process to determine if funding is available for ASCENT?

A: Requests for funding for the ASCENT program are submitted by the Colorado Department Education (CDE) to the legislature as a part of its annual budget request. LEPs must submit an online Intent to Participate form to CDE with final ASCENT participation numbers for the following academic year by May 1st. By June 1st, LEPs will receive notification from the Department of the number of ASCENT slots that have been allocated to their LEP. [See more information on the ASCENT allocation requests here]

Q: If there are more eligible ASCENT students submitted by LEPs than are funded by the state budget, how will participation be determined?

A: The State Board of Education, following recommendations of the CEAB, has approved an allocation model to be used to determine ASCENT space distribution, based upon the following criteria:
- Currently participating LEPs will receive a minimum number of ASCENT slots equal to those utilized by students during the current school year
- New LEPs will receive up to 10 spaces for the first year or the number requested if less than 10
- If additional spaces are available, half of the remaining slots will be distributed via the LEPs free and reduced lunch (FRL) rate as a proration.
- The other half of remaining slots will be proportionally distributed to LEPs that did not receive spaces under the FRL distribution based on district size
- Unused spaces may be returned to the general pool and reallocated to LEPs, based upon appeal.

Q: What happens to funding if a student drops out of ASCENT or drops to part time?

A: It depends on when this occurs.
- Funding for ASCENT program participants is dependent on the number of college credit hours into

which the student is scheduled during the semester of the pupil enrollment count date (usually Fall semester), and is determined by the student's schedule as of the pupil enrollment count date (usually 10/1).

- o ASCENT students scheduled for at least 3, but less than 12, credit hours are eligible for part-time funding.
- o ASCENT students scheduled for at least 12 credit hours are eligible for full-time funding.

If an ASCENT student drops out of ASCENT prior to the pupil enrollment count date, then the district cannot submit the student for ASCENT funding in Student October.

If an ASCENT student drops out of ASCENT after the pupil enrollment count date, but before the end of the fall term, the district can submit the student for ASCENT funding in Student October if the district has documentation evidencing all of the following:

- Attendance from the college or institution of higher education (IHE) showing the student attended on the pupil enrollment count date, or if absent for any reason (including no scheduled class),
  - o Then documentation showing the student established attendance during the current school year prior to the pupil enrollment count date and resumed attendance within 30 days following the pupil enrollment count date
- Credit hour verification (Fall semester)
- Tuition payment verification (showing the district paid the tuition for all scheduled credit hours used for funding determination)
- Cooperative Agreement between LEP and IHE

Q) Can ASCENT funding be used to pay for concurrent enrollment courses taken by ASCENT students during the summer term?

A) Districts receive ASCENT funding based on what a student's schedule was as of the pupil enrollment count date FOR the semester of the pupil enrollment count date. Therefore, if a district allows an ASCENT student to take courses during the summer, the district should be aware that the credit hours taken by the student during the summer cannot be used to evidence scheduled credit hours in the semester of the pupil enrollment count date.

Attendance

Q: How many credit hours must an ASCENT student take each semester?

A: ASCENT program participants are classified as either full-time or part-time depending on the number of credit hours of college courses they are attending on October 1 of their ASCENT year. Students enrolled in 12 or more credit hours will be considered full-time students, and their LEPs will receive full-time funding. Students enrolled in 3 credit hours, but fewer than 12 credit hours will be considered part-time students, and their LEPs will receive part-time funding. [1 CCR 301-86, 2.03 (3) (a&b)]

IHEs may limit the maximum number of credit hours a student can take in a semester. Community colleges allow a maximum of 18 credit hours without special permission. LEPs may also set a cap on their ASCENT students' credit hours.

It is important to note that the ASCENT program is geared toward students who have the goal of attaining a college credential. Participants should be encouraged to enroll in as many courses as they can successfully complete in order to earn their degree or certificate.

Q: How is attendance documentation collected for ASCENT students? Does it need to be collected?

A: Yes, attendance needs to be collected for ASCENT students as part of the October count. If students are not attending any classes at the LEP, students must get verification of attendance from their instructors for each course at the IHE during the October count period. Please see Student October Count Attendance Requirements, Concurrent Enrollment & ASCENT for guidance on ASCENT attendance verification.

Q: What documentation do LEPs need to provide on ASCENT Students as part of October Count?

A: Please also see Student October Count Attendance Requirements, Concurrent Enrollment & ASCENT for guidance on ASCENT attendance verification.

If a student is taking all of his/her courses at the IHE (or any locations other than district/charter school sites in which attendance is logged in the district's/charter school's student information system by district/charter school staff), then the district/charter school must be prepared to provide alternative verification of attendance. This would include those students who are only scheduled for Concurrent Enrollment courses offsite at an institution of higher education (IHE), or who are participating in the ASCENT program offsite at an IHE. In order to facilitate attendance verification for these students, the district/charter school should be prepared to provide one of the following at the time of audit:

> 1. A form provided to the student, who is then responsible for having his/her college instructor(s) or IHE employee sign to attest that he/she has met the attendance requirements.

> 2. A form completed by a designated district/charter school or IHE employee who signs to attest that the student has met the attendance requirements. This may be in the form of a roster where an employee could, on one form, indicate attendance for multiple students.

The district/charter school and institution of higher education should work in partnership to determine what form of attendance verification will be utilized. At minimum, the form needs to show verification that the student was in attendance in at least one (1) course on the count day.

If the student is not in attendance on the count day, the form needs to show verification that the student was in attendance in at least one (1) course for one (1) day (in the current school year) prior to the count day AND one (1) day within the 30 days following the pupil enrollment count day.

Examples of forms currently in use are available through the Field Analyst Support Team (FAST) at the Colorado Department of Education. In the event a district chooses to create its own attendance verification form, the district should ensure that the form contains the following information:

> (1) Student name – First, Last (middle initial, if possible)
> (2) Applicable term/semester (ex. Fall 2014)
> (3) Instructor name or name and title of the individual attesting to the student's attendance
> (4) Dates in which the student attended during the count window

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(5) Instructor or designated employee signature

(6) Date of signature

(7) Attendance verification statement (ex. "I, the undersigned, attest that the student named above has attended on the days evidenced by my initials during the pupil enrollment count window.")

Q) We have a student who is signed up to complete a concurrent enrollment course in the semester of the pupil enrollment count date, but the course is not scheduled to start until after the pupil enrollment count date. Is the student eligible for funding?

A) It depends. In order to be eligible for funding, the student must meet the membership/attendance requirements AND the scheduled hours/credits requirements.

Membership/Attendance

If as of the pupil enrollment count date the student is scheduled for courses to be completed during the semester of the pupil enrollment count date, at least one course must start prior to the pupil enrollment count date and the student must have established attendance in that course prior to the pupil enrollment count date.

Scheduled Hours/Credits

As long as the student is scheduled into a course as of the pupil enrollment count date, and that course is scheduled to be completed during the semester of the pupil enrollment count date, it can be used in the funding determination for the student.

Q) We have students who are taking concurrent enrollment courses through the Institution of Higher Education that follow an online and/or hybrid class structure. Is the student eligible for funding, and if so, what type of documentation do we need?

A) Any course taken through an IHE in which students are receiving both high school and college credit, AND the district has a cooperative agreement with the IHE and pays tuition directly to the IHE per the agreement will be evaluated as any other concurrent enrollment course (e.g., based on credit hours).

- o Full-time funding = 12+ college credit hours
- o Part-time funding = 3-11 college credit hours

Q) What if an instructor cancels class during the 11 day count period?

A) In order to meet the membership/attendance criteria, students must meet the following requirements in a combination of courses (e.g., they do NOT have to meet these requirements in every scheduled class):

- o Attend a portion of the day on the pupil enrollment count date, OR if absent (or if there is no class):
  - ▪ Establish attendance during the current school year prior to the pupil enrollment count date AND
  - ▪ Resume attendance within 30 days following the pupil enrollment count date

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Q) What if an instructor does not take daily attendance? What if our student does not get completed attendance forms submitted to the district shortly after the 11 day count period?

A) Because many IHEs do not require instructors to take daily attendance, it is up to the district/school and student to collect documentation to evidence attendance. This can be done in a number of ways, including, but not limited to, having:

- An instructor completing a daily attendance log provided by the student indicating the days the student attended during the count window
- If this attendance log does not show that the membership/attendance requirement was met, then the student may need to collect additional documentation evidencing requirements were met
- A student provide dated class notes, assignments, tests, etc. showing classroom attendance
- A district/school representative attest to student attendance - must have a method by which to verify attendance (example- see bullet point 2)

Graduation Requirements

Q: Are students considered high school graduates after they have met graduation requirements, even if they continue into the 5th year with the ASCENT program?

A: A qualified student who is an ASCENT program participant shall be counted in the enrolling school district's or institute charter school's graduation rate in the school year in which the student completes the school district's or institute charter school's minimum high school graduation requirements. (*HB 17-1294/ C.R.S. 22-35-108 (2017)* However, an ASCENT student's high school diploma cannot be dated and conferred to the student until he/she has completed the ASCENT (5th) year. Also, the date of graduation on the ASCENT student's official high school transcript must reflect the date that the student completes his/her ASCENT (5th) year. Districts and Charter Schools can decide if they will allow ASCENT students to participate in regular graduation ceremonies without receiving an official diploma. *See ASCENT Graduation Rate Reporting Q&A.*

Q: Should class ranking be done during the student's senior year when they were actually in school with their peers or should it be the following year when they are in their ASCENT year?

A: LEPs can determine year of student ranking and graduation honors, however if any courses taken during the ASCENT year are used to fulfill graduation requirements, these courses need to be taken into consideration in determining student rank and gradation honors.

Other

Q: What is the difference between ASCENT and ASSET?

A: ASCENT stands for **A**ccelerating **S**tudents through **C**oncurrent **EN**rollmen**T**. Students who have completed at least 12 credit hours of transcripted postsecondary credits prior to completion of their 12th grade year may be eligible for the ASCENT Program. They remain pupils in their Local Education Provider (LEP) for one year following their 12th grade year, and the LEP receives ASCENT specific

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state funding that it uses to pay their college tuition at the resident community college rate. Students take courses primarily on college campuses. Students receive their high-school diplomas at the end of their ASCENT year. [C.R.S. § 22-35-108]

Specific criteria to qualify for in-state tuition classification under ASSET: A student (other than a nonimmigrant alien) who meets the below criteria is eligible for in-state tuition classification. This includes U.S. citizens, permanent resident aliens, and students without lawful immigration status. Enrolled for at least three years at a public/private Colorado high school immediately preceding graduation or earning a GED;

- Admission into Colorado institution of higher education/attends a reciprocal program within 12 months of high school graduation or earning a GED.
- Students without lawful immigration status are required to submit an affidavit (onetime on the COF website) stating that the student has applied for lawful presence or will apply as soon as he or she is eligible to do so;

Students who graduated from a Colorado high school or completed GED prior to September 1, 2013 and were not admitted into college within 12 months but meet ALL other eligibility criteria may qualify for in-state tuition by providing documentation to the school proving that the student has been physically present in Colorado for eighteen months prior to enrolling.