
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. Students must:

- Have completed or be on schedule to complete at least 12 credit hours (semester hours or equivalent) of transcribed postsecondary credits prior to the completion of his or her 12th grade year. *(Note: Does not include International Baccalaureate (IB), College Level Education Program (CLEP), prior learning, or experiential courses, unless these exams/experiences have been converted to transcribed credits on a college transcript. See [ASCENT Q&A for Advanced Placement \(AP\) courses](#).)*
- Is not in need of basic skills coursework for their selected pathway/degree program, and as defined by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education's (CCHÉ) [remedial education policy](#)
- Have been selected for participation in the ASCENT program by his or her high school principal or equivalent school administrator
- Have satisfied the minimum prerequisites for the course before his or her enrollment in the course; and
- Have not participated in the ASCENT program in previous years.

[C.R.S. § 22-35-108 (2), and ASCENT Guidelines]

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. The requirements for eligibility for ASCENT include: having 12 credit hours on the college transcript, not be in need of any basic skills courses for their selected pathway/degree program, and must be admitted to the institution of higher education. 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. The end of the 12th grade year is determined by the academic calendar of the local education provider.

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. [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.

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 school district 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. Initial requests for ASCENT participation by LEPs must be provided to CDE by February 1st the academic year prior to participation, followed by an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 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: An ASCENT program participant who is enrolled in at least twelve credit hours of higher education courses as of the October count period of the budget year will be considered a full-time student for the full academic year. However, if a student withdraws from a course during the fall-semester, the LEP may need to return funds during audit if this drops the student below the 12 credits needed for full-time status.

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 at 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: If a student is having personal challenges and needs to withdraw or drop out one semester (Fall), can they still take part in ASCENT for the following semester. Do they have to pay the LEP back for classes?

A: LEPs with students who have extenuating circumstances during their ASCENT year should contact CDE to discuss the student's options.

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 sites in which attendance is logged in the district's student information system by district staff), then the district 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 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 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 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
- (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.”)

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 a student's diploma reflect date of senior year or their 5th year as an ASCENT student?

A: The diploma must be dated for the student's 5th year, end of ASCENT year.

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 graduation honors.

Other

Q: What is the difference between ASCENT and ASSET?

A: ASCENT stands for **Accelerating Students through Concurrent ENrollmentT**. Students who have completed at least 12 credit hours of transcribed 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 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.