
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE: Alternative Pathways To A High School Equivalency Diploma



The Iowa Department of Education has developed this *Implementation Guide* to assist Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program administrators and staff in implementing *Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 32: Alternative Pathways to a High School Equivalency Diploma* and House File 473, a 2017 Iowa statute that grants the department authority to establish policies and procedures for additional pathways for completion of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED).

A high school equivalency diploma is a foundational step toward achieving self-sufficiency and financial stability for all Iowans. Consistent frameworks will assist AEL program administrators in fully implementing these opportunities and support all Iowans in their pursuit of a HSED.

Special thanks to the HSED Task Force members and HSED Alternative Pathways Working Group for their thoughtful contributions and assistance in evaluating the need for alternative pathways to achieve a HSED. This task force developed recommendations for the alternative pathways grounded in comprehensive data, research, and integrity that ensures rigor and maintains quality standards important to Iowa.



Iowa Department of Education -- Adult Education & Literacy

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Option 1

High School Equivalency Diploma Program Based on a Department-Approved Test

Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.7 provides for the awarding of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) to a participant who achieves the appropriate minimum standard scores on an approved test. The Iowa Department of Education (Department) currently has a contract with Educational Testing Service (ETS) to provide the *HiSET*® as the Department-approved assessment for the state of Iowa.

This HSED option may be administered only by entities approved by the DE per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(1). These entities must either be (a) accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) OR (b) eligible entities as defined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73 and subsequent federal workforce training and adult education legislation. Agency/Program Application Forms are found in Appendix 1.

Department-Approved Test Information

1.1 - Age Requirement

Participants can enroll for instruction at the age of 16 but will not be able to officially test until the age of 17. Participants can be given practice tests as early as 16 years and 9 months. Proof of age is required. A valid driver's license or state ID, birth certificate, passport, military ID, court documentation, or other form of government-issued (national or foreign) ID are examples of acceptable forms of identification.

An exception to this age requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

1.2 - Parent or Guardian Consent

Consent of the participant's parent or guardian is required for those persons under the age of 18.

An exception to this consent requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

1.3 - Residency Requirement

Participants do not have to be a resident of Iowa to take the *HiSET*® exam.

Foreign students with an F-1 visa are prohibited from enrolling in any publically funded adult education or family literacy program. See federal law Section 625 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (which can be found in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act, 1997, Public Law 104-208) for more information about this restriction.

1.4 - Verification of Non Enrolled Status

A verification of non-enrolled status from the last high school attended is required for participants age 18 or under.

1.5 - Comprehensive Intake – Revised 9.27.18

Participants must complete a comprehensive intake at an approved program that consists of each of the following components:

a) Registration or Enrollment form; Data elements are detailed in Appendix 2. Programs are required to collect this information and input it in the state approved data reporting system on their Registration/Enrollment forms.

*Social security numbers are the preferred identification number, but if a student does not have this number, please use a college ID or other unique individual identifying number.

b) Proctored assessment of the participant’s reading and mathematics levels; Please refer to the current year’s state assessment guidelines (<https://educatiowa.gov/adult-career-and-community-college/adult-education-and-literacy/assessment-guidelines>). Only approved assessments shall be used. The following resources offer assessments based on student and program goals:

CASAS <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews>

TABE® <http://tabetest.com/>

c) Assessment of the participant’s career interest and aptitudes; For career guidance, there are several free comprehensive resources and tools for career exploration and planning:

Future Ready Iowa - <https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/>

MySkills MyFuture - <https://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/>

O-NET Online - <https://www.onetonline.org/>

d) Discussion of program options available to the participant regarding completion of a HSED to include the requirements, expectations, benefits, and limitations of each option. Refer to this Implementation Guide to assist with these discussions.

e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education. This action plan affords participants mobility if circumstances become necessary for them to transfer to a different program.

(Refer to Appendix 4 for a sample Action Plan).

1.6 - Diploma, Transcript, or Verification Fees

Initial requests for diplomas, transcripts, and/or verification letter fees may not exceed \$10 per document. Official copies may be obtained from Diploma Sender at www.diplomasender.com. A duplicate diploma, transcript, or verification letter may be issued to the participant at a cost not to exceed \$15 per document.

1.7 – Testing

Prior to testing, the activities related to the comprehensive intake must be completed. (Refer to Section 1.5 of this Implementation Guide). Participants are tested in five core areas: Math, Reading, Writing,

Social Science, and Science. The HiSET® battery refers to all five subtests. The first four subtests taken must include Writing and Math. The exam is available in both English and Spanish.

Minimum Passing Standard – In order to pass, an examinee must achieve a score of at least 8 out of 20 on each of the five individual tests; score 2 out of 6 on the writing essay; AND have a total combined score on all five tests of at least 45. On average, official scores are available within: 3–5 business days for multiple-choice tests 6–10 business days for essay tests.

Course fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. Fees must be identified in the program provider’s application to the state and should be minimized so as not to create a barrier for adult learners. All fees/income collected must be expended directly for the purposes of the AEFLA program and cannot be commingled with other funds to purchase non-AEFLA related items or provide non-AEFLA services.

Test fees are negotiated with ETS, the testing vendor. In Iowa, the HiSET® exam fee for the battery (all five subtests) is \$50, which includes two retests per test during a 12-month period from the initial date of purchase. Participants must pay an additional \$15 testing fee per retest.

ETS offers vouchers for organizations that wish to pay HiSET® test fees on behalf of sponsored students. The process for obtaining vouchers is found in the TAM located on the DE Adult Education and Literacy website at <https://www.educateiowa.gov/examiners-hsed>.

1.8 - Verification Form with Qualifying Forms to Test

Participants must bring a verification form with them each day they test. Iowa’s Verification for HSED Test or Retest form can be found in the appendix section of the TAM.

1.9 - Validity of Test Scores

Scores remain valid for a period of five years from the date of the first subtest taken. Participants may retake any expired subtest. The only exception is for test series that expire prior to the five years, in which case all previously taken subtests are void and must be retaken.

1.10 – Retest

If a participant has not achieved the minimum standard test score on any subtest in effect at the time of testing, the participant shall be permitted to apply for retest. Participants may retest twice per calendar year provided one of the following conditions is met:

- a) A period of three months from date of initial testing has elapsed; OR
- b) The participant completes instruction in an AEL program in each subject area to be retested. This instruction shall be certified by an official of the AEL program provider to the test administrator authorized to release the retest.

1.11 - Management Information System (MIS) Reporting

Participants are entered into courses under MIS for Adult Basic Education, but no award file is necessary. CIP codes used for MIS reporting are: 53.02010000 and code set 04 40 11 04.

1.12 - Adult Education Data Reporting

Eligible participants are added to the state approved data reporting system. Their courses, attendance and test scores must also be included. A measureable skill gain for this option can be measured with a post-test gain or earning a high school equivalency diploma. “Eligible participants” here means that the

participant required adult education and literacy services resulting in 12+ hours of services and a qualifying approved assessment demonstrating basic skill needs, and/or no high school diploma.

1.13 - Diploma Award Date

The HSED will not be awarded until the participant reaches 18 years of age, and the participant's ninth grade class has graduated from high school.

1.14 - Diploma Reporting (“Diploma Sender”)

An automatic daily transfer of testing results is sent by the testing vendor. No additional input is needed by programs. Participants should be informed of their responsibility to update their contact details to ensure diplomas/transcripts and verification forms are sent to the appropriate recipient.

1.15 - DE Approved Testing Center

This HSED option may be administered only by entities approved by the DE per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(259A).

Testing centers are authorized based upon meeting the physical, environmental, comfort, and staffing requirements as outlined in the DE Test Administration Manual (TAM), Iowa's policy and procedure manual for HiSET® assessment. The TAM is located on the DE's Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) website at <https://www.educateiowa.gov/examiners-hsed>. In addition, only testing centers that have experience in providing high school equivalency testing will be approved as test administration sites. Refer to Appendix 1 for the application and required documentation to become a DE Approved Testing Center.

1.16 - Ideal Participant

Option 1 is intended to meet the needs of a participant who requires several high school credits to graduate.

Option 2:

High School Equivalency Diploma Program Based on a Attainment of High School Credit

Overview: Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.8 provides for the award of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) to a participant who demonstrates completion of an approved program consisting of at least 36 high school credits.

This HSED option may be administered only by entities approved by the DE per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(1). These entities must either be (a) accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) OR (b) eligible entities as defined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73 and subsequent federal workforce training and adult education legislation. Agency/Program Application Forms are found in Appendix 1.

Department-Approved Test Information

2.1 - Age Requirement

Participants must be at least 16 years and 9 months of age to enroll in secondary credit bearing classes. However, there are many services that programs can provide to participants under the age of 16 years and 9 months. Examples of these allowable services include but are not limited to comprehensive intake; transcript review; collection of work experience hours; remediation courses, career exploration; establishing future work experience, hours, etc. Proof of age is required. A valid driver's license or state ID, birth certificate, passport, military ID, or other form of government-issued (national or foreign) ID are acceptable forms of identification.

An exception to this age requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

Remediation courses are defined as courses below National Reporting System (NRS) ABE Level 4 or College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) Level D (<http://riaepdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08NRS-Chart-Revised-Jan-2015.doc>).

2.2 - Parent or Guardian Consent

Consent of the participant's parent or guardian is required for those persons under the age of 18.

An exception to this consent requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

2.3 – Residency Requirement

While there is no residency requirement for this HSED option, some components of this option require on-site in-person participation. Furthermore, it is not the DE's intention to offer this pathway option to circumvent legislative requirements from other states. Therefore, this option is not conducive to a 100% online or correspondence based format.

Foreign students with an F-1 visa are prohibited from enrolling in any publically funded adult education or family literacy program. The federal law (Section 625 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which can be found in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act, 1997, Public Law 104-208) prohibits foreign students in F-1 immigration status from enrolling in publicly-funded adult education programs.

2.4 - Verification of Non Enrolled Status

A verification of non-enrolled status from the last high school attended is required for participants age 18 or under.

2.5 - Comprehensive Intake – Revised 9.27.18

Participants must complete a comprehensive intake at an approved program that consists of each of the following components:

a) Registration or Enrollment form; Data elements are detailed in Appendix 2. Programs are required to collect this information and input it in the state approved data reporting system on their Registration/Enrollment forms.

*Social security numbers are the preferred identification number, but if a student does not have this number, please use a college ID or other unique individual identifying number.

b) Proctored assessment of the participant’s reading and mathematics levels; Please refer to the current year’s state assessment guidelines (<https://educatiowa.gov/adult-career-and-community-college/adult-education-and-literacy/assessment-guidelines>). Only approved assessments shall be used. The following resources offer assessments based on student and program goals:

CASAS <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews>

TABE® <http://tabetest.com/>

c) Assessment of the participant’s career interest and aptitudes; There are several free comprehensive resources and tools available:

Future Ready Iowa - <https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/>

MySkills MyFuture - <https://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/>

O-NET Online - <https://www.onetonline.org/>

d) Discussion of program options available to the participant regarding completion of a HSED to include the requirements, expectations, benefits, and limitations of each option. Refer to this Implementation Guide to assist with these discussions.

e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education. This action plan affords participants mobility if circumstances become necessary for them to transfer to a different program. Action plans will be need to be uploaded to Diploma Sender.

(Refer to Appendix 4 for a sample Action Plan).

2.6 - Diploma Award Date

The high school equivalency diploma will not be awarded until the participant reaches 18 years of age, and the participant's ninth grade class has graduated from high school.

2.7 - Diploma, Transcript, or Verification Fees

Initial requests for diplomas, transcripts, and/or verification letter fees may not exceed \$10 per document. Official copies may be obtained from Diploma Sender at www.diplomasender.com. A duplicate diploma, transcript, or verification letter may be issued to the participant at a cost not to exceed \$15 per document.

2.8 - Course Fees

Course fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. Fees must be identified in the program provider's application to the DE and should be minimized so as not to create a barrier for adult learners. All fees/income collected must be expended directly for the purposes of the AEFLA program and cannot be commingled with other funds to purchase non-AEFLA related items or provide non-AEFLA services.

2.9 - Core Credit Requirements

Participants must demonstrate completion of an approved program consisting of at least 36 high school credits: eight high school credits in English or communications; six in mathematics; six in science; six in social studies, including government; and ten elective requirements.

Courses that are developed by approved programs must be rigorous and aligned to a minimum of the NRS Levels 4-6. Courses in Math and English must have a curriculum that addresses the CCRS associated with levels D-E. Courses must also be designed in which credit is earned. Participants are expected to achieve a proficiency level of 70% or higher. As defined in 281-section 21.5, subsection 14, a course must meet one of the following criteria: it is taught for at least 200 minutes per week for 36 weeks; it is taught for the equivalent of 120 hours of instruction; or it requires the demonstration of proficiency of formal competencies associated with the course and CCRS according to the State Guidelines for Competency-based Education (<https://educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/Competency-based%20Guidelines2016-06.pdf>). Core credit courses may be contextualized or integrated as long as the associated standards are addressed through the unit of instruction.

For the purposes of the HSED program parameters and requirements provided in this chapter, high school credit means the credit awarded for the completion of course or demonstrated competency equivalent to a semester of instruction (i.e., approximately 60 contact hours). Therefore, the department requirement of four units of English or Communication, for example, will be equivalent to eight high school credits required by a HSED. This equivalency is based on the fact that postsecondary providers of the HSED program schedule course offerings on a semester basis (adjustments made internally for any that operate on the quarter system). (Refer to Appendix 3 for a sample Transcript Evaluation Form).

2.10 - Elective Credit Requirements - Revised 9.27.18

Programs may honor the elective credits a high school has awarded up to 10 credits. In other words, awarded credits are awarded credits. Thus, the program may honor PE, music, art, drama, etc., as an elective credit. Electives from core areas (English, Math, Social Science, & Science) can also count toward these ten elective credit requirements. If a student has earned more than 10 credits, the program may not award the excess elective credits.

In the case where the student has earned less than the 10 required electives, programs must offer elective coursework that aligns with 21st century learning skills and be classified in the following five areas: 1) Civic literacy; 2) Health literacy; 3) Technology literacy; 4) Financial literacy; and/or 5) Employability skills. Courses must also be designed in which credit is earned. Participants are expected to achieve a proficiency level of 70% or higher. As defined in 281-section 21.5, subsection 14, a course must meet one of the following criteria: it is taught for at least 200 minutes per week for 36 weeks; it is taught for the equivalent of 120 hours of instruction; or it requires the demonstration of proficiency of formal competencies associated with the course and CCRS according to the State Guidelines for Competency-based Education. Prior and/or current work-site learning, documenting 1,000 hours, is equivalent to one high school credit.

(<https://educateiowa.gov/sites/files/ed/documents/Competency-based%20Guidelines2016-06.pdf>).

Prior and Current Work-Site Learning

Prior work-site learning and current work-site learning may be counted toward an elective. Participants can earn a maximum of four work-site learning credits - two credits for prior experience and two credits for current experience.

- a)** Prior work-site learning shall be evaluated using a state-developed assessment tool (refer to Appendix 6) and may be awarded a maximum of two high school credits. Participants will be required to include a written account of the work experience and learning that occurred. This written account (not to exceed one page) should address how the participant felt their work experience advanced their skills in either the CORE subjects (Math, English, Science, Social Studies) or the 21st century skills (Civic literacy, Health literacy, technology literacy, financial literacy, or employability skills). Credit earned for prior work experience shall not be counted toward the minimum participation requirement; and
- b)** Current work-site learning shall be evaluated using a state-developed assessment tool (refer to Appendix 7) and may be awarded a maximum of two high school credits. Credit earned for current work-site learning may be counted toward the minimum participation requirement.

2.11 - Postsecondary Credit

Credit awarded by a regionally accredited postsecondary institution for the successful completion of a course that applies toward the requirements of a postsecondary credential including, but not limited to, a certificate, diploma, associate, bachelor, or graduate-level degree program shall be accepted to fulfill the requirements for the satisfactory completion of a program, as follows:

- a)** one postsecondary semester credit or its equivalent shall be equal to one-third high school credit. The resulting high school credit can be used to satisfy either a core or elective credit requirement; AND
- b)** twenty (20) contact hours of non-credit postsecondary coursework shall be equal to one-third high school credit provided it is aligned to regional career pathways and occupational needs. This credit can be used to satisfy an elective credit requirement.

2.12 - Award of Prior Credit

The participant shall provide official transcripts from any Iowa school district, accredited public or non-public high school, or regionally accredited college or university to document completion of credits earned. Additional documentation may be requested to validate credits earned. In general, courses in

which passing grades have been earned are acceptable for transfer. Only the class title and credits earned will appear on the official State of Iowa transcript.

As part of the application process, each program seeking approval to provide this option will be required to submit and adopt a written policy for determining the awarding of equivalency credit authorized under this subsection. The policy shall apply uniformly to all centers and/or campuses operated by the approved program.

An official transcript is one that has been received from a secure authenticated designated party or the issuing institution. The official transcript must also bear an institutional validation (typically this could include the Registrar's signature, the college seal or watermark) and the date it was issued. Transcripts received that do not meet these requirements should not be considered official.

2.13 - Minimum Participation Requirement

Participants must demonstrate competence through continuous enrollment in an approved program for a minimum of two high school credits. "Continuous enrollment" means the participant received services without interruption for at least 90 days or has planned future services; or if less than 90 days, has completed an approved program.

2.14 - Minimum Graduation Requirement

If the participant is not continuously enrolled in an approved program, the participant will become subject to the minimum graduation requirements applicable to the date of re-enrollment. Therefore, a student cannot just come into a program and be issued a diploma. Participants will need to complete at least two high school credits within their continuous enrollment period.

If graduation requirements at the state level change and a participant does not meet the minimum participation requirements as referenced in 2.13, he/she would be subject to the new requirements when he/she re-enrolls in the program.

2.15 - Management Information System (MIS) Reporting

Participants are entered into courses under MIS for Adult Basic Education, but no award file is necessary. CIP codes used for MIS reporting – 53.02010000 and code set 04 40 11 04.

2.16 - Adult Education Data Reporting

Eligible participants are added to the state approved data reporting system. Their courses, attendance and test scores are also included. A measurable skill gain for this option can be measured with a post-test gain, completing a Carnegie unit, or earning a high school equivalency diploma. "Eligible participants" here means that the participant required adult education and literacy services resulting in 12+ hours of services, a qualifying approved assessment demonstrating basic skill needs, and/or no high school diploma.

2.17 - Diploma Reporting ("Diploma Sender")

Additional input is needed by programs to track the completion and the award date for the high school equivalency diploma. Programs will need to attach documentation detailing prior credit awarded, completion of credits earned and date of program completion. This information is critical to issuing the diploma and verification of completion.

2.18 - Ideal Participant

Option 2 is designed for participants who do not need many credits to graduate. Participants needing several credits to graduate may be best served by referring them to Option 1, Testing.

Scenario:

A participant has come to your program with the following high school credits:

Core Areas	Credits Taken	Credits Required	Credits Needed
English	8	8	0
Social Science	9	6	0
Science	3	6	3
Math	0	6	6
Other			
Electives	*3 *from the excess Social Science credits above	10	7

Question: Can this participant take P.E. to satisfy one of the Elective requirements?

Answer: Yes. P.E. can be used to meet the Elective credit requirements. Revised 9.27.18

Question: May the participant take Financial Literacy as one of his electives?

Answer: Yes. Financial Literacy is one of the five 21st century skills that will count towards the elective requirements.

Question: May a participant count his current work-site learning experience as an elective?

Answer: Yes. If a participant has worked 60 hours, that would count as 1 elective credit.

Question: Must the participant take Government as part of his Social Science requirements?

Answer: Yes. Government is a required course.

Question: What if the participant is only 16 years old? Can the program offer high school classes for credit to this student while she waits to be 16 years and 9 months?

Answer: No. If a participant has not yet reached the age of 16 years and 9 months, she may not take courses that count towards high school credit. However, services may still occur, and the program may offer remediation courses. Remediation courses would be courses that are at or below Level C of the College and Career Readiness Standards.

Option 3:

High School Equivalency Diploma Program Based on Postsecondary Degree

Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.9 provides for the award of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) to a resident participant who presents an associate degree or higher that includes general education coursework and is awarded by a regionally accredited postsecondary institution.

This HSED option may be administered only by entities approved by the DE per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(1). These entities must either be (a) accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) OR (b) eligible entities as defined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73 and subsequent federal workforce training and adult education legislation. Agency/Program Application Forms are found in Appendix 1.

Postsecondary Degree Information

3.1 - Age Requirement

Participants must be at least 16 years and 9 months of age. Proof of age is required. A valid driver's license or state ID, birth certificate, passport, military ID, or other form of government-issued (national or foreign) ID are acceptable forms of identification.

An exception to this age requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

3.2 - Parent or Guardian Consent

Consent of the participant's parent or guardian is required for those persons under the age of 18.

An exception to this consent requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

3.3 – Residency

Participants must be residents of the State of Iowa at least 90 days prior to the application for a high school equivalency diploma.

An approved program's designee shall require written documents, affidavits, or other related evidence deemed necessary to determine residency. A student shall provide at least two documents from different sources to determine residency status. Examples of acceptable documentation include: written and notarized documentation from an employer that the student is employed in Iowa or a signed and notarized statement from the student describing employment and sources of support; an Iowa state income tax return; utility bill, an Iowa driver's license; an Iowa vehicle registration card; an Iowa voter registration card; or proof of Iowa Homestead credit on property taxes.

Foreign students with an F-1 visa are prohibited from enrolling in any publically funded adult education or family literacy program. The federal law (Section 625 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which can be found in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations

Act, 1997, Public Law 104-208) prohibits foreign students in F-1 immigration status from enrolling in publicly-funded adult education programs.

A verification of non-enrolled status from the last high school attended is required for participants age 18 or under.

3.4 - Comprehensive Intake – Revised 9.27.18

Participants must complete a comprehensive intake at an approved program that consists of each of the following components:

a) Registration or Enrollment form; Data elements are detailed in Appendix 2. Programs are required to collect this information on their Registration/Enrollment forms.

**Social security numbers are the preferred identification number, but if a student does not have this number, please use a college ID or other unique individual identifying number.*

b) Proctored assessment of the participant’s reading and mathematics levels; Please refer to the current year’s state assessment guidelines (<https://educatiowa.gov/adult-career-and-community-college/adult-education-and-literacy/assessment-guidelines>). Only approved assessments shall be used. The following resources offer assessments based on student and program goals:

CASAS <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews>

TABE® <http://tabetest.com/>

Note: If a participant scores below ABE Level 5, they might be advised to take some remedial courses.

c) Assessment of the participant’s career interest and aptitudes; For career guidance, there are several free comprehensive resources and tools for career exploration and planning:

Future Ready Iowa - <https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/>

MySkills MyFuture - <https://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/>

O-NET Online - <https://www.onetonline.org/>

d) Discussion of program options available to the participant regarding completion of a HSED to include the requirements, expectations, benefits, and limitations of each option. Refer to this Implementation Guide to assist with these discussions.

e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education. This action plan affords participants mobility if circumstances become necessary for them to transfer to a different program. Action plans will be need to be uploaded to Diploma Sender. (Refer to Appendix 4 for a sample Action Plan).

3.5 - Diploma Award Date

The HSED will not be awarded until the participant reaches 18 years of age, and the participant’s ninth grade class has graduated from high school.

3.6 - Diploma, Transcript, or Verification Fees

Initial requests for diplomas, transcripts, and/or verification letter fees may not exceed \$10 per document. Official copies may be obtained from Diploma Sender at www.diplomasender.com. A duplicate diploma, transcript, or verification letter may be issued to the participant at a cost not to exceed \$15 per document.

3.7 - Fees

Fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. Fees must be identified in the program provider's application to the DE and should be minimized so as not to create a barrier for adult learners. All fees/income collected must be expended directly for the purposes of the AEFLA program and cannot be commingled with other funds to purchase non-AEFLA related items or provide non-AEFLA services.

3.8 - Transcripts

Participants must provide official transcripts to an AEL program to document completion of program requirements. (Refer to Appendix 3 for a sample Transcript Evaluation Form). An official transcript is one that has been received from a secure authenticated designated party or the issuing institution. The official transcript must also bear an institutional validation (typically this could include the Registrar's signature, the college seal or watermark) and the date it was issued. Transcripts received that do not meet these requirements should not be considered official.

3.9 - Institutional Requirements

The postsecondary degree must be awarded by a regionally accredited postsecondary institution. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Post Secondary Education (OPE) provides a database as a public service without warranty or endorsement of the educational institutions or programs at: <https://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/search.aspx>

3.10 - Management Information System (MIS) Reporting

Participants would only be entered in the MIS system if enrolled in a qualifying course(s) under MIS for Adult Basic Education, and no award file is necessary. CIP codes used for MIS reporting are: 53.02010000 and code set 04 40 11 04.

3.11 - Adult Education Data Reporting

Participants would only be added to state approved data reporting system, if eligible. Their courses, attendance, and test scores must also be included. "Eligible participants' here means that the participant required adult education and literacy services resulting in 12+ hours of services and a qualifying approved assessment demonstrating basic skill needs.

3.12 - Diploma Reporting ("Diploma Sender")

Additional input is needed to track the completion of the program and the award date for the high school equivalency diploma. Programs will need to attach documentation detailing the applicant demographics, eligibility and transcript records. This information is critical to issuing the diploma and verification of completion.

3.13 - Ideal Participant

Option 3 is best suited for a resident participant who has an associate degree or higher that includes general education coursework.

Option 4:

High School Equivalency Diploma Program Based on Foreign Postsecondary Degree

Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.10 provides for the award of a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) to a resident participant who presents a postsecondary degree equivalent to an associate degree or higher from outside the United States.

This HSED option may be administered only by entities approved by the DE per Iowa Administrative Code 281-32.3(1). These entities must either be (a) accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) OR (b) eligible entities as defined by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), 20 U.S.C. Ch. 73 and subsequent federal workforce training and adult education legislation. Agency/Program Application Forms are found in Appendix 1.

Foreign Postsecondary Degree Information

4.1 - Age Requirement

Participants must be at least 16 years and 9 months of age. Proof of age is required. A valid driver's license or state ID, birth certificate, passport, military ID, or other form of government-issued (national or foreign) identification are acceptable forms of identification.

An exception to this age requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

4.2 - Parent or Guardian Consent

Consent of the participant's parent or guardian is required for those persons under the age of 18.

An exception to this consent requirement is a person who is at least 16 years of age and a resident of an Iowa juvenile institution, an active participant in Job Corps, or under the supervision of a probation office.

4.3 - Residency

Participants must be residents of the State of Iowa at least 90 days prior to the beginning of the term for which the participant is enrolling.

An approved program's designee shall require written documents, affidavits, or other related evidence deemed necessary to determine residency. A student shall provide at least two documents from different sources to determine residency status. Examples of acceptable documentation include: written and notarized documentation from an employer that the student is employed in Iowa or a signed and notarized statement from the student describing employment and sources of support; an Iowa state income tax return; utility bill, an Iowa driver's license; an Iowa vehicle registration card; an Iowa voter registration card; or proof of Iowa Homestead credit on property taxes.

Foreign students with an F-1 visa are prohibited from enrolling in any publically funded adult education or family literacy program. The federal law (Section 625 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which can be found in the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations

Act, 1997, Public Law 104-208) prohibits foreign students in F-1 immigration status from enrolling in publicly-funded adult education programs.

4.4 - Comprehensive Intake – Revised 9.27.18

Participants must complete a comprehensive intake at an approved program that consists of each of the following components:

a) Registration or Enrollment form; Data elements are detailed in Appendix 2. Programs are required to collect this information on their Registration/Enrollment forms.

**Social security numbers are the preferred identification number, but if a student does not have this number, please use a college ID or other unique, individual, identifying number.*

b) Proctored assessment of the participant’s reading and mathematics levels; Please refer to the current year’s state assessment guidelines (<https://educatiowa.gov/adult-career-and-community-college/adult-education-and-literacy/assessment-guidelines>). Only approved assessments shall be used. The following resources offer assessments based on student and program goals:

CASAS <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews>

TABE® <http://tabetest.com/>

Note: If a participant scores below ABE Level 5, they might be advised to take some remedial courses.

c) Assessment of the participant’s career interest and aptitudes; for career guidance, there are several free comprehensive resources and tools for career exploration and planning:

Future Ready Iowa - <https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/>

MySkills MyFuture - <https://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/>

O-NET Online - <https://www.onetonline.org/>

d) Discussion of program options available to the participant regarding completion of a HSED to include the requirements, expectations, benefits, and limitations of each option;

e) Development of an action plan for the completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career pathway, occupation, or further education. This action plan affords participants mobility if circumstances become necessary for them to transfer to a different program. Action plans will be need to be uploaded to Diploma Sender. (Refer to Appendix 4 for a sample Action Plan).

4.5 - Diploma Award Date

The HSED will not be awarded until the participant reaches 18 years of age, and the participant’s ninth grade class has graduated from high school.

4.6 - Diploma, Transcript, or Verification Fees

Initial requests for diplomas, transcripts, and/or verification letter fees may not exceed \$10 per document. Official copies may be obtained from Diploma Sender at www.diplomasender.com. A duplicate diploma, transcript, or verification letter may be issued to the participant at a cost not to exceed \$15 per document.

4.7 - Fees

Fees are determined by the local program, but if fees are assessed, they may cover only necessary and reasonable testing or program costs. Fees must be identified in the program provider’s application to

the DE and should be minimized so as not to create a barrier for adult learners. All fees/income collected must be expended directly for the purposes of the AEFLA program and cannot be commingled with other funds to purchase non-AEFLA related items or provide non-AEFLA services.

4.8 - Transcripts

The participant must present to an AEL program an official transcript from an institution of higher education attesting to the completion of the program of study required for the postsecondary degree. If the transcript is not in English, the applicant shall also provide a certified translation. (Refer to Appendix 3 for a sample Transcript Evaluation Form).

Some participants' records may be difficult to authenticate, and they may not have complete records from previous schools. The following strategies can help improve the process of obtaining and translating international transcripts:

- Centralize the intake process to ensure that official documents are carefully authenticated. For new participants in the program who might qualify for a HSED based on completion of a foreign postsecondary degree, have staff members that are experienced working with participants from other countries and interpretative services for the most represented languages;
- If in-house translation is not possible, contract with an outside agency or refer participants to consulates, refugee or immigrant centers or community groups that can provide translation services.
- Translations should be a literal translation and not an interpretation; and
- Have a detailed process in place to gather key information, such as course names, hours of instructional time, length of courses and grades obtained if the academic histories in the transcript are incomplete or missing.
- Use structured interviews with participants and guardians as appropriate as well as the school, embassy, Ministry of Education or other authorized agency to gather additional information as needed.

4.9 - Evaluating Foreign Credentials

Translating course names is usually not enough to evaluate international transcripts, as identically named courses completed in another country may vary in key characteristics, such as content, hours of instruction, and grading practices. To accurately evaluate the courses listed on a foreign based transcript, programs must have current and accurate information about the corresponding country's education system. Here are some ways to help ensure foreign based transcripts are correctly interpreted:

- Standardize course equivalencies by gathering detailed information about education systems in the countries your participants are likely to come from;
- Periodically update your reviewer's knowledge of education systems in the participants' home countries and document the new information; and/or
- Consider utilizing a foreign credential evaluation service for professional interpretation of foreign based transcripts.

In regards to foreign credential evaluation services, please note that the DE does not endorse any of these products but provides this information to our program providers to make their own determinations and evaluations:

The International Association of Universities has an online reference tool that provides comprehensive and detailed information on Higher Education Systems and credentials in 186 countries (18,500 institutions) around the world: <http://whed.net/home.php>

The National Association for College Admissions and Registrars (AACRAO) has a product called AACRO EDGE that programs may purchase. It is a resource for evaluating educational credentials earned in foreign systems: <http://www.aacrao.org/aacrao-solutions/aacrao-international/on-the-cutting-edge/edge>

ECE: Foreign Credential Evaluation Reports offers a variety of international education reports, services, and resources for individuals, institutions, and agencies. <https://www.ece.org>

4.10 - Citizenship

The participant shall be a United States citizen, or meet both of the following requirements:

a) demonstrates proficiency (with a score on an NRS approved assessment of at least ESL level 5) in speaking, listening, reading, and writing as defined by the department's approved English language proficiency standards;

AND

b) successfully completes a course in government or civics education. (*Note: This course may be integrated and contextualized with other basic skills as needed*).

4.11 - Management Information System (MIS) Reporting

Participants would only be entered if enrolled in a qualifying course(s) under MIS for Adult Basic Education, and no award file is necessary. CIP codes used for MIS reporting are: 53.02010000 and code set 04 40 11 04.

4.12 - Adult Education Data Reporting

Participants would only be added to the state approved data reporting system, if eligible. Their courses, attendance and test scores must also be included. "Eligible participants" here means that the participant required adult education and literacy services resulting in 12+ hours of services and a qualifying approved assessment demonstrating basic skill needs.

4.13 - Diploma Reporting ("Diploma Sender")

Additional input is needed to track the completion of the program and the award date for the high school equivalency diploma. Programs will need to attach documentation detailing the applicant demographics, eligibility, citizenship/civics education completion and transcript records. This information is critical to issuing the diploma and verification of completion.

4.14 - Ideal Participant

Option 4 is best suited for a resident participant who presents a postsecondary degree equivalent to an associate degree or higher from outside the United States.