

Clearing the confusion: AP, IB or dual enrollment?

High school students have several ways to get jump on college credit



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Students can gain college credit while still in high school. It saves them time in college and allows them to focus more on their major rather than having to take basic core classes. Even better, it can save them money, and that's what students and parents like to hear.

There are three common ways to gain college credit: Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment.

AP classes are the most common and well-known among the three.

"The AP program was designed by the College Board to give all students equal access to college-level courses while still in high school," Chestatee High School AP Coordinator Nick Scheman said. "The design of the AP program is simple in that students can take any number of courses within all disciplines."

Credit is not guaranteed when students finish the course. They will have to take an exam at the end of the year to determine whether they will get the credit.

“They can obtain college credit for every AP course where they earn a passing score of 3, 4 or 5 out of 5,” Scheman said.

If a student takes AP government and at the end of the year gets a 3, 4 or 5 on the exam, colleges see this score and the student won’t have to take an intro to political science class in college.

The IB program is a bit different. IB is a college-level class that a student takes their 11th- and 12th-grade years.

“IB diploma students earn a International Baccalaureate diploma that is recognized worldwide as the benchmark of high achievement in a high school curriculum,” according to the IB website.

IB is more globally minded “The IB programme focuses on internationalism, globalization and critical thinking skills necessary to be successful in a shrinking world,” West Hall IB Coordinator Andrew McCain said.

Students who are interested in the IB program will apply in the fall of their 10th-grade year. The application includes teacher recommendations, a short essay and a transcript of ninth and 10th grades, according to their website

“Colleges and universities value the International Baccalaureate program because they know of its overall rigor,” McCain said. “Students who participate in IB earn 11-13 high school IB credits, making IB students extremely competitive in college admissions. One thing I always tell students is that colleges know that an IB student is incredibly prepared to be very successful in college.”

Earning credit is similar to AP, but students have what is called an internal assessment, which is like a lab experiment or research paper based on what class subject a student is in. Then the student takes an external assessment, which is similar to the AP exam.

“Students earn college credit by taking two to three exams in the subject, as well as an internal assessment (graded by teacher), all of which combine to form the final score of 1-7. Each college has its own criteria for accepting IB/AP credit based on that score, but a score of 4 is considered passing.” McCain said. IB is currently offered at West Hall, Johnson and North Hall high schools.

Dual enrollment is quite different when compared to AP and IB. Dual enrollment is when high school students take classes at their local college.

The University of North Georgia’s Gainesville campus would be the local college for students living in Hall and Gwinnett Counties.

“Dual enrollment provides an opportunity for high school students to experience a taste of college classes and truly prepare themselves,” said Charles Bell, the dual enrollment coordinator at the UNG’s Gainesville campus. “Some of the top reasons why recently graduated high school students perform poorly their first year of college are because they treat college like it’s the 13th grade or they never had to study or do not have good time management skills.”

“It also saves students and their parents thousands of dollars, and the credit hours they earn do not count against their HOPE hours. UNG has had four students finish their associate’s degrees while still in high

school and several who were able to finish their associate's one to two semesters after graduating high school," he added.

Students who apply will meet with their high school counselor to determine if they're eligible for the program. The student then completes an online application through GACollege411. After that is done the students will apply to their local school just like a normal college application.

What makes dual enrollment so different than AP or IB is dual enrollment adds the atmosphere of being a full-time college student.

"Dual enrollment provides students with in-class instruction at a university. Students learn to navigate college life inside and outside of the classroom, thus giving them better preparation for college out of high school," Bell said.

Another major difference with dual enrollment is that students are guaranteed the college credit if they pass the class.

"IB and AP classes require students to take a test to earn college credit for the classes they took. As a dual enrollment student, the classes a student takes count for college credit as long as they pass the class," Bell said.

Taking any of these classes all have their benefits. Even if you do not pass the AP or IB exam colleges still like the fact that you rose up and took a more rigorous curriculum, and will increase your chances of being accepted into your first choice college or university.