

## 2018-19 Special Course Applications Frequently Asked Questions

### ***What is a special course?***

A special course is a high school elective course that is intended to meet the unique needs of a school or district that cannot be met using the courses and standards approved in the [Approved High School Courses Policy](#) (3.205) and listed in the [Correlation of Course Codes](#).

### ***Did the special courses policy change?***

Yes, in January 2017 the state board of education approved a policy change to adjust the length of approval for special course applications. This policy revision is intended to align the [Special Courses Policy](#) (3.201) with the [Standards Review Policy](#) (3.209), which requires instructional standards to be reviewed and approved by the board no less than every six years.

### ***What are the revisions to the special courses policy?***

Prior to the 2016-17 school year, special course applications which were submitted and approved for three consecutive school years received permanent approval status from the state board. Beginning with applications submitted for the 2017-18 school year, the revised policy allows for the approval of special courses for one, three, or six years, after which time the district is required to submit a special course application to continue offering the course. This ensures that special course standards are reviewed and approved on an ongoing basis by the district and the department to ensure high levels of rigor and alignment with Tennessee Academic Standards.

### ***When does the revised special courses policy go into effect?***

The revised special courses policy was phased in over the 2017-18 school year and will be fully implemented in the 2018-19 school year. Specifically:

- All special course applications submitted for the 2017-18 school year were reviewed under the revised policy and **approved for one, three, or six years**.
- Special courses which were permanently approved prior to the 2016-17 school year are valid through the 2017-18 school year, but must be resubmitted as new special course applications and assigned new special course codes prior to the 2018-19 school year (application deadline May 4, 2018).
- **All** special course codes assigned prior to the 2016-17 school year will be retired following the 2017-18 school year.

### ***My district had a special course reach permanent approval status prior to the 2016-17 school year. Do I need to resubmit that course?***

Yes. All special courses which were approved prior to the 2016-17 school year are valid through the end of the 2017-18 school year. In order to continue offering that special course, your district must submit a special course application which is approved prior to the 2018-19 school year. A complete list of districts and schools offering special course codes which will be retired in June 2017 can be found [here](#).

### ***What does the special course application review process entail?***

Special course applications are reviewed by department content area experts and leadership to ensure that the special course standards are rigorous and substantially different from the content of courses listed in the [Approved High School Courses Policy](#) (3.205) and listed in the [Correlation of Course Codes](#).

In some cases, department staff works with districts to make revisions to the application as submitted. Requests for additional information and/or documentation should be addressed by the district within 30 days. Occasionally the department will approve a special course with conditions and/or modifications, which are clearly outlined in the special course approval letter. The state board of education provides final approval of all special courses.

### ***How long does the special course approval process take?***

We anticipate that the timeline for review and approval of special courses for the 2018-19 school year will be extended due to the increase in applications resulting from this policy change. We encourage districts to submit special courses as early as possible.

### ***Are special course applications ever not approved?***

Yes, special course applications can be denied for a variety of reasons, including significant overlap with course standards included in the [Approved High School Courses Policy](#), lack of rigor in the course standards, misalignment between course content and teacher endorsement and/or labor market demand, etc.

### ***Do I need to submit a special course application for a dual enrollment course?***

No, [dual enrollment](#) courses should be scheduled using the dual enrollment course codes listed in the 2018-19 [Correlation of Course Codes](#). For more information on course codes for early postsecondary opportunities, email [Early.Postsecondary@tn.gov](mailto:Early.Postsecondary@tn.gov).