

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 2019-20 Special Course Applications and Special Program of Study Applications

### ***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 [Online Course Catalog](#).

### ***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.

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

The revised special courses policy was phased in over the 2017-18 school year and was 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 were valid through the 2017-18 school year, but should have been resubmitted as new special course applications and assigned new special course codes prior to the 2018-19 school year
- **All** special course codes assigned prior to the 2016-17 school year were retired following the 2017-18 school year.

### ***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 [Online Course Catalog](#).

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.

### ***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 [Online Course Catalog](#). For more information on course codes for early postsecondary opportunities, email [Early.Postsecondary@tn.gov](mailto:Early.Postsecondary@tn.gov).

***Our district needs an ESL math course that gives math credit, not ESL credit. I sent in a request for an ESL math class to the ESL team and the course was approved with math credit only.***

### ***What do I need to do?***

If a course is approved by the ESL team, it is only for ESL credit. For a special class designed for English learners with interrupted or limited formal education to grant math credit, that course would need approval by the math team. The submission should not come to the ESL team.

### ***What about CTE Special Courses and Special Programs of Study applications?***

Special courses submitted for career and technical education are strongly recommended to be accompanied by a special program of study application. Failure to do so will result in the special course only being approved as an elective and would not count toward a student's progression through a program of study and hence would not allow a student to be identified as a concentrator. In this case, you will use the CTE Special Program of Study Application. Accompanying special courses will be submitted together with this application at the end.

### ***What is the application process for 2019-20 CTE Special Programs of Study (SPOS)?***

**Special program of study (SPOS) applications** are required for districts offering CTE programs of study which are not included in the [2019-20 Programs of Study](#) document.

If your school district plans to apply for a new SPOS for the 2019-20 school year, please complete the following steps:

1. CTE directors must submit the 2019-20 Special Program of Study Application. Applications received after the application deadline or from individuals other than the district's CTE director will not be considered for approval. The 2019-20 SPOS Application will be released February 8, 2019.
2. School districts will be notified of final approval status via email within six weeks of submission, provided requests for additional information are addressed by the district in a timely manner.
3. Approved SPOS are entered in eTIGER and are valid for three school years, as documented in each SPOS final notification email. Please keep this email notification for your records.
4. Once a new SPOS is approved, CTE directors must log into eTIGER to select the SPOS for 2019-20 school year *no later than July 1, 2019*.

Questions concerning the SPOS application process should be directed to [Deborah.Knoll@tn.gov](mailto:Deborah.Knoll@tn.gov)

Questions concerning the Special Course Application process should be directed to [Charlotte.Woehler@tn.gov](mailto:Charlotte.Woehler@tn.gov)