 *Academic Year*  
*2026-2027*

# **QCC Early College Pathways Student Guide**



# Early College Pathways Mission & Vision

*Offering dual credit programs to empower high school students with the skills, vision, and confidence to pursue higher education.*

*Quinsigamond Community College Early College Pathways and its high school partners will offer concurrent enrollment courses and support programs that allow all students to grow as individuals, explore their interests, start to plan their future, and see themselves as responsible leaders in their community.*

## Contents

Welcome.....	3
What is Concurrent Enrollment.....	4
Applying to Early College Pathways & Registering for Classes.....	5
Early College Pathways Course Catalog.....	5
Grading & Courses.....	6
Benefits of ECP & Student Responsibilities.....	7
Dropping and Withdrawing from a Course.....	8
Program Fees.....	8
Resources and Access to QCC.....	9
Students Seeking Additional Supports.....	10
Student Code of Conduct.....	10
Applying to QCC as a Senior.....	11
Transferring QCC Credits to Another College.....	11
Best Practices.....	12
College Vocabulary.....	12

---

# Welcome

---

Welcome to QCC Early College Pathways (ECP)! We are very happy that you made the decision to be part of the program and experience college, early.

This student handbook sets the base expectations for students taking a concurrent enrollment course at their high school. Concurrent enrollment allows high school instructors with advanced credentials to be certified to teach QCC courses at the high school. Students earn both high school and QCC credit for the course.

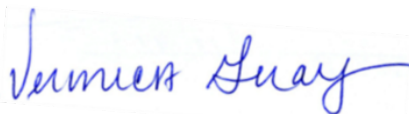
If your school is part of a Massachusetts Designated Early College Program (Early College Worcester, Early College Southbridge, or Early College Marlborough), you have a specific handbook just for your program. While the core policies are the same, your Handbook will have details specific to your program.

This student handbook provides important information to help you navigate the program. We encourage you to read all parts of the Handbook. You can also jump to the section you need most by using the index. If you have questions, contact your school counselor and the QCC Early College Pathways program.

You are making a significant investment in your future, and we are proud of you!



Carol King  
Dean of College and Career Pathways



Veronica Guay  
Executive Director of High School Dual Enrollment Programs and Pathways

---

# *What is Concurrent Enrollment*

---

Concurrent enrollment is when a high school instructor with advanced credentials is certified by a college to teach the course at the high school, and students earn both high school and college credits for the course. Some high schools also offer college programs where a college professor visits the high school or you, the high school student, attends class on the college campus. That is called dual enrollment.

The benefits of concurrent enrollment are that you can take the course at your high school, during your regular day, there is no travel, and you are usually already familiar with your teacher. It may not feel so different because it feels familiar, but you should know that it is quite special! The benefits of dual enrollment are that you are usually taking the course at the college, and that experience feels more collegiate. You learn how to navigate the campus and learn other soft skills while being on campus. The potential downside is that you have to travel to the campus and it may interrupt some of your after-school activities. Both have their own benefits!

This handbook is exclusively related to concurrent enrollment, where your high school teacher is certified by the college to teach the course. What a great opportunity!

---

# *Applying to Early College Pathways & Registering for Classes*

---

## **Applying to ECP**

Before students can register for college courses through ECP, they must first apply to the program and be admitted. Students must meet with their school counselor to discuss the benefits and responsibilities of being in the program and learn how to apply. Your counselor will help you apply and share the required Parent Authorization Form and Personal Residency Form with you. Once a student applies and is admitted, they have access to the many resources and support programs. There is no requirement to register for a course to take advantage of ECP resources. Once you are an ECP student you will have access to these resources.

## **Register for Courses**

Once you have been admitted, you can start taking courses through ECP. You can take one or more courses every semester. Likewise, there may be a semester that you don't want to take a college course. Course offerings vary from semester to semester. Your courses will be listed in your high school course catalog (it may be an additional insert).

**IMPORTANT** – Meet with your counselor about your courses before you enroll. They will share information on course content, rigor, and intensity. Also, attend information sessions offered by ECP, see schedule of information sessions.

## **Registration Deadlines:**

Fall classes, June 1

Spring Classes, December 1

Summer Classes, April to May (Until classes are filled)

---

# *Early College Pathways Course Catalog*

---

For a full list of current courses and student eligibility requirements, see the [QCC Early College Pathways Course Catalog and Certification Guide on the ECP website](#).

---

# *Grading & Courses*

---

Your QCC course runs during the QCC semester, which is approximately from the beginning of September to mid-December for the fall semester and mid-January to mid-May for the spring semester.

When your QCC course(s) have concluded, your grades will appear on an official QCC transcript. QCC uses the traditional scale of A to F. The grade of X may be entered if you do not attend a significant part of the class. While this grade does not affect your GPA (grade point average) and credit count on your QCC transcript, it is not a desirable grade and should be avoided. If you drop a course before the Drop deadline, it will not appear on your QCC transcript. If you drop a course after the Drop deadline, a W (Withdraw) will appear on your transcript. See [Dropping & Withdrawing for more details](#).

It is important to remember that your college transcript is a permanent record. You want to have as few D's, F's, and W's on your transcript as possible, as they may negatively affect your ability to get scholarships and other student financial aid in the future. D's, F's, and W's may also make it more difficult to pursue certain degrees, for example, law and medicine.

Prerequisite courses are the first course in a sequence. ECP students must earn the grade of C- or better to advance to the next course in the sequence. This policy aligns with MassTransfer policies, which assure credit transfer within Massachusetts between public colleges and universities. These courses include: Art 131/132, English 101/102, Spanish 111/112.

You can retake a course if you earn a grade that you determine is unsatisfactory. This option is reserved for special circumstances and you should talk to your early college counselor to determine if this is right for you.

If you earn the grades of D, F, or W in two courses you must meet with your early college counselor to develop an action/success plan before you will be allowed to take additional courses.

---

# *Benefits of ECP & Student Responsibilities*

---

ECP offers many benefits, but as an ECP student you also have certain responsibilities.

## **Student Benefits**

- Earn credits on a QCC transcript
- Build confidence as a college student
- Access to all QCC academic resources
- Attend academic, social, and career workshops, field trips, and experiences
- Listen to speakers who describe their pathway into and through college
- Access to attend leadership academies
- Learn about certificates, pathways, degrees, and majors
- Consult with the early college counselor at your high school who will support you with information and one-on-one advising

## **Student Responsibilities & Considerations**

A college class requires additional hours of studying outside the classroom, much more than a high school class. Meet with your advisor to learn more about the expectations and rigor of each course.

Students are responsible for deadlines. In college there are strict deadlines for when to drop and withdraw from classes. If you want to drop a class because of grades or the course is not interesting, you must drop the course in time, or your transcript will record the unwanted grade. This is also true for turning in homework, assignments, and retakes – even if your high school allows flexibility, the college course will not.

Students are expected to behave like college students and are held to the same standards as other QCC students. This means showing up on time, paying attention in class, doing all your assignments on time, and communicating with your instructor verbally and in emails with polite respect. Issues of student misconduct, like cheating and plagiarism, are a violation of the QCC student code of conduct and the penalties at QCC may be more stringent than at your high school. See [QCC Student Code of Conduct](#).

---

# *Dropping and Withdrawing from a Course*

---

Once you register for a course, you may decide that the course is just not for you and want to drop. Talk to your instructor and your school counselor about whether dropping the course is the best option. If you decide to drop the course, please communicate with your instructor and school counselor. They will notify QCC about your dropping the class.

**Dropping and Withdrawing are two different things.** Dropping means you are leaving the class early, before the drop deadline. The deadlines are approximately two weeks after the start of class. Please check the deadlines on the QCC Academic Calendar. Withdrawing means you are leaving the course later (after the drop deadline). If you drop a course (leave early), your college transcript does not show that you enrolled in the course. If you withdraw from a course (leave late), your college transcript will show a W (Withdraw). It will not affect your GPA (grade point average) or add to your total credits. That said, too many W's on your transcript does not look good. To avoid that, talk to your instructor early if you have questions or concerns about the course.

Like all other college students – Check the QCC Academic Calendar to learn the Add/Drop and Withdraw Deadlines. Your ECP instructor should know the dates too.

## **Retroactive Registration**

Quinsigamond Community College has a strict policy of no retroactive registration. This means that after the add/drop deadline, even if you have been sitting in the class the entire time, if you were not registered for the class, you cannot be added afterwards. You will not be awarded credit if you did not register.

Please pay attention to whether you are registered and don't miss out on the chance!

---

# *Program Fees*

---

Early College Pathways has two types of programs, ones that are designated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and ones that are not. Designated Early College Programs are free to students. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education covers the cost of tuition. Programs that are not designated by the state may incur a cost to the students. Your high school is required to communicate those costs to you in writing before registration.

---

# *Resources and Access to QCC*

---

As an ECP student, you have access to many resources.

**Library Resources** are available to all QCC students. Come in and take out books or access the online resources, which include access to newspapers, magazines, academic journal articles, e-books, and even study guides. Visit the library online at: <https://www.qcc.edu/library>

**Tutoring** is available to students on the QCC campus at any of the tutoring centers. QCC has a Math Center, Writing Center, and even Subject Area tutoring. There is even online tutoring available! Learn more about the resources at: <https://www.qcc.edu/support/academic-career-support/tutoring>

*ThinkingStorm* a tutoring company that QCC contracts with to provide additional online tutoring. There are drop-in hours, and, hours by appointment. Students are also able to submit a paper to *ThinkingStorm* and receive written feedback within 48 hours. Students have access to *ThinkingStorm* for up to 16 hours per semester. <https://www.thinkingstorm.com/QCC/TSMenu.aspx>

**Career Services** can help make your professional goals a reality. Shape your future by taking advantage of the career resources and available opportunities. Take free career interest assessments to learn about possible careers, the certificates and degrees needed, as well as current salary ranges and job market growth. <https://www.qcc.edu/support/academic-career-support/career-services>

**Technology Resources** are available and even required for some classes. Learn about the free software and other resources available to you as a QCC student. Blackboard is an important resource that most of your college courses use. You can learn about all of these resources at: <https://www.qcc.edu/support/it-service-desk>

**QCC Student Handbook** offers you a complete picture of a student at QCC. Take a look, and reach out with questions. <https://www.qcc.edu/information/current-students/student-handbook>

---

# *Students Seeking Additional Supports*

---

Do you have an IEP or 504 plan with your high school? IEP and 504 plan accommodations at the high school do not automatically transfer to the college and may be different at the college. It is your responsibility as the student to apply for an accommodation – not your high school or your parent/guardian. Students are required to complete paperwork for an accommodation each semester they take a course. We encourage you to contact accessibility services and meet with one of the caring professionals to discuss your accommodation.

<https://www.qcc.edu/support/specialized-support/student-accessibility-services>

---

# *Student Code of Conduct*

---

As an ECP Student you are a welcomed part of the QCC community. We encourage you to take advantage of the benefits. We also expect you to behave like a mature college student, which includes paying attention in class, coming to class prepared, respecting others, and helping to build a civil community. Following the “Golden Rule” – Treat others the way you would like to be treated – is good advice for every situation in life. Think about if you were the other person – the professor, the cafeteria staff, and the student sitting next to you – and help build our community together. We know you will! That said, you are responsible for reading and understanding the [QCC Student Code of Conduct](#).

---

## *Applying to QCC as a Senior*

---

As an ECP Student you have earned college credits at QCC. The next step is applying to college to earn a certificate, associate degree, and/or a bachelor degree. It is best to talk to your school counselor to learn more about the process – they are experts and the process requires a discussion. With that in mind, we want to connect you to two important resources.

[Commonwealth Commitment](#) – Paying for college just got easier! Learn more about locking in a low tuition rate and getting money back after earning a bachelor degree.

[QCC Admissions](#) – Learn about requirements, information sessions, and apply to QCC.

---

## *Transferring QCC Credits to Another College*

---

Are you looking to transfer the credits you earned through ECP to another college? To be clear, the credits you earned through QCC Early College Pathways are already on your QCC transcript. To transfer credits to another, you must request an official transcript from QCC and have the transcript sent to the college you will be attending.

The majority of the credits you earn through Early College Pathways transfer to other Massachusetts state colleges and universities that have similar courses and programs. See list of state institutions [here](#).

If you are planning to attend a private university in Massachusetts or a university outside of Massachusetts, please contact their admissions office to learn if your QCC credits will transfer. Let them know that you have an official transcript from QCC with credits you earned while still in high school. Learn about their transfer policies before you apply – it will help you make decisions on where to apply.

[Request a QCC Transcript](#)

---

# *Best Practices*

---

College is a new environment and here are some best practices that will help you to succeed in class.

- 100% attendance in class.
- Read your syllabus, which will indicate your assignments, deadlines, and contact information.
- Ask questions when you do not understand the content. Don't wait! College classes move faster than high school classes and waiting may affect learning the next concept.
- Check in regularly with your school counselor to update them on your progress.
- Develop a network in your class so you can discuss the class with others, ask someone for notes if you missed a class, and study together.

---

# *College Vocabulary*

---

Sometimes, the biggest barriers to success can be understanding language that college professors and staff think you understand. Here is a short list of things that may be confusing.

**Associate's Degree** – An Associate's Degree is considered a two-year degree that prepares students for entry into a specific profession through a guided pathway, or, serves as the first two years towards earning a bachelor's degree. An associate's degree is a degree in higher education.

**Bachelor's Degree** – A Bachelor's Degree is considered a four-year degree that prepares students for a wide range of careers and for a Master's Degree. A bachelor's degree is often an expectation for most professional careers. A bachelor's degree is a degree in higher education.

**Certificate Program** – A Certificate Program is an educational experience where students take one or several collegiate courses that earn them a specialized credential. While this is not a degree program, it awards students a credential for a specific skill. Examples include, but are not limited to, Photonics, CNC, Accounting, Logistics/Supply Chain Management, Computer Forensics, Public Health, or Practical Nursing. Often a certificate program can be part of an associate's degree.

**Early College Pathway** – A thematic area in Early College that allows students to explore and understand how specific college courses lead to a variety of college majors and careers.

**General Education Course** – Often called "Gen Eds," are a foundational part of a college degree program, designed to provide students with a broad understanding of various academic disciplines.

**GPA** – Your GPA is your Grade Point Average. That means the average of all the final grades you have earned. For example, if you earned an A in Math 101 and a B+ in Psychology, your GPA is an A-, but most people will say your GPA is a 3.7. Grades in college, A through F, are converted to numbers on a scale from 4.0 to 0.0. Read your syllabus and ask your professor what the grade scale is for your specific class.

**Lecture** – Lectures are the part of the class when the professor teaches you information through longer descriptions and explanations. It is expected that you allow the professor time to lecture in class uninterrupted. If you have questions, raise your hand and ask.

**Major** – The primary field of study that a student focuses on during their undergraduate education.

**Minor** – A secondary field of study that complements a student's major, typically requiring fewer courses.

**Syllabus** – A syllabus is a document that the professor creates that describes the class, which includes course descriptions, learning objectives, assignments, assessments, grading scale, required readings, deadlines, and weekly topics. Many professors post their syllabus on Blackboard and hand out a copy in class. Read the syllabus on the first day of class. If you have questions, ask the professor.

**Transcript** – In high school you have a report card; in college you have transcripts. They record your classes, the number of credits for each course, the total number of credits earned from all classes, as well as your GPA.

\*\*If you have questions and don't understand a word or concept in class, ask the professor. If you don't understand it, mostly likely the rest of the class doesn't either.\*\*

We are proud of you for taking the first steps toward college! This is a fun and challenging opportunity. We are here to help you succeed! Contact us with any questions.

[earlycollege@qcc.mass.edu](mailto:earlycollege@qcc.mass.edu)

508.854.2743