

NORTH CAROLINA HONORS LEVEL COURSE RUBRIC FRAMEWORK

Overview

This guiding document is the new North Carolina Honors Level Course Rubric and will guide the revisions to the Honors Course Implementation Guide. This document provides guidance in the development and implementation of honors level courses in all content areas.

Areas to be developed with feedback and in partnership with Local Education Agencies to inform the Honors Implementation Guide include but are not limited to:

- Specific content area support and guidance
- Specific resources to guide honors level course development
- Exemplars or models of best practices in course development and implementation for professional development
- Glossary of terms
- Other needs that arise from the field

Definition of Honors Level Courses

Honors courses must be developed and implemented to:

- be more challenging than standard level courses in order to foster growth for advanced learners. Courses that are designated as inherently advanced are designed at the honors level and do not have standard level courses. Inherently honors courses are those with standards written in a progressive nature or courses that require pre-requisite skills.
- be distinguished by a difference in the depth and scope of work required.

Students, families, and all school personnel are informed and understand that honors level courses are designed to be more challenging for the advanced learner. Honors level courses are developed as an integral component of a differentiated program of study that provides an array of opportunities for all students based on their aptitudes, achievement, and interests. A well-developed academic program will have standard, honors, and other advanced programs.

Teacher's Role (includes but not limited to)

Teachers of honors level courses will:

- possess the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to facilitate an honors level course with advanced curriculum content.
- have the capacity to develop and implement a differentiated curriculum based on and above the standard curriculum to support the growth of advanced learners.
- use a variety of instructional strategies to engage advanced learners.
- be aware of current curriculum innovations and research in the subject area in order to develop and implement an honors level course.

Student's Role (includes but not limited to)

Students enrolled in honors level courses will:

- possess the interest, ability and motivation to meet the challenges of an honors level course.
- be willing to take greater responsibility for their learning.
- aspire to an advanced level of learning through high quality work.
- be aware of and complete any prerequisite course(s) leading to the honors level course.

Parent's Role (includes but not limited to)

Parents/Guardians of the advanced learner will:

- be aware of the requirements and expectations of an Honors Level Course.
- support their student to perform at an advanced level of learning through high quality work.

School/Administrator's Role (includes but not limited to)

To support honors level instruction, principals will:

- assign honors level courses to teachers who possess the skills, knowledge and dispositions to facilitate an honors level course with advanced curriculum content.
- ensure teachers are using the Honors Level Course Rubric Framework and the Honors Level Course Implementation Guide to define honors level instruction.

Facility Requirements

Facilities for honors level courses will:

- support the implementation of curriculum standards.
- provide any special equipment, technology, or materials that are necessary to facilitate the honors level course.

Overview of Honors Level Course Review Process

The State Board of Education has requested the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to conduct a review process in order to provide guidance to Local Education Agencies for effective implementation of honors level courses. The Honors Level Course Rubric and the Honors Implementation Guide will serve as a framework to guide teachers, principals and Local Education Agencies in developing and locally reviewing honors level courses. The honors level course review process will occur every three years.

Randomly selected Local Education Agencies will be notified at least one semester prior to the review in order for effective collection of documentation and artifacts.

The review process is intended to provide comments, feedback and support to strengthen honors level courses for continuous program improvement.

Purpose of the North Carolina Honors Level Course Rubric

The purpose of this rubric is to clearly define what makes an honors level course different from a standard level course. The rubric assesses how the curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are adapted for advanced learners. It is designed to provide a consistent framework to guide teachers and principals as they develop, implement and evaluate local courses aligned to the *NC Standard Course of Study*, which includes the *Common Core State Standards* and *NC Essential Standards*. Locally developed honors level courses are subject to the honors level course review process. The honors level rubric will serve as the foundation for the revision of the Honors Implementation Guide in the fall of 2012.

As honors level courses are prepared for review and specific evidence is required:

1. Honors Level Course Portfolio Checklist to verify that each component is present and additional artifacts are identified.
2. Honors Level Course Review Rubric which indicates whether each expectation is met or not met.

Reviewers and school personnel may use these forms to ensure that all the necessary components of an honors level course are met. The intent is to provide a consistent tool for school personnel and reviewers to evaluate honors level courses.

For local review, school personnel may consider the following:

The curriculum guide is clear, concise and includes the following:

- course description (including length of the course)
- standards
- concepts (generalizations/essential questions)
- issues particular to the course
- expectations of performance
- pacing guides with examples of assignments, time tables and deadlines
- assessments, rubrics, grading practices
- instructional materials, equipment and/or technology

The teacher is qualified and prepared to teach advanced learners through multiple instructional methods

North Carolina Honors Level Course Rubric

I. Curriculum Content

How is the honors level course adapted and differentiated for advanced learners?

There is evidence that the honors level course represents extension, acceleration and enrichment of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study (Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English/Language Arts and Literacy and North Carolina Essential Standards)* for the standard level course. Curriculum should indicate depth in rigor, accelerated pacing, complexity, challenges and creativity beyond the standard level course. *

How does the honors level curriculum support vertical alignment for college and career readiness?

There is evidence that extensions, acceleration and enrichment are aligned with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and/or other appropriate advanced courses of study.

Honors Level Course Portfolio Evidence:

Teacher rationale for curriculum content (intentional reflection & philosophy)
Standards and objectives
Curriculum Plan (pacing guides, course syllabus, scope & sequence, curriculum maps, etc)

Met

Not Met

Comment(s):

II. Instructional Materials and Methods

How is the honors level course taught?

There is evidence of appropriate differentiation in instructional practices for advanced learners.

There is evidence of instructional diversity of teaching strategies indicating complexity above the standard level course*, which may include, but not be limited to:

- teacher as a facilitator, coach and model,
- student led learning and research,
- student exchange of ideas,
- project-based learning, problem-solving learning, and seminar style learning with a concentration of writing across all modalities
- integration of other content areas with connections to real-world skills and context, and
- use of higher level critical thinking skills and creativity for advanced learners.

Honors Level Course Portfolio Evidence:

Teacher rationale for instructional materials and methods

Instructional materials and methods (instructional resources, methods, strategies, equipment, and technology)

Sample units, lesson, and assignments

Student work samples

Met

Not Met

Comment(s):

III. Assessment

How is the Honors Level Course Assessed?

There is evidence that assessment practices align with the honors level curriculum and instructional best practices to include pre-assessment, formative and summative assessment.

There is evidence of authentic assessments and ongoing student self- and peer-assessment to adjust and improve learning.

Honors Level Course Portfolio Evidence:

Teacher rationale for assessment practices

Assessment practices (grading practices, use of rubrics and/or scoring guides, use of formative and summative assessment)

Assessment samples (pre-assessment, description of formative assessment, and summative assessment)

Student work assessment samples

Met

Not Met

Comment(s):

*See Glossary of Terms for description of inherently advanced/inherently honors courses

North Carolina Honors Level Course Portfolio Checklist

Course Title and LEA Name and Number

Documentation of Local Approval with signature from LEA representative(s)

Course Description

Curriculum Content Portfolio Evidence

Teacher rationale for curriculum content

Standards and objectives

Curriculum Plan

Instructional Materials and Methods Portfolio Evidence

Teacher rationale for instructional materials and methods

Instructional materials and methods (instructional resources, methods, strategies, equipment, and technology)

Sample units, lesson, and assignments

Student work samples

Assessment Portfolio Evidence

Teacher rationale for assessment practices

Assessment practices (grading practices, use of rubrics and/or scoring guides, use of formative and summative assessment)

Assessment samples (pre-assessment, description of formative assessment, and summative assessment)

Student work assessment samples

Other

North Carolina Honors Level Course Rubric Framework

Glossary of Terms

The terminology listed will be developed and changed as needed with feedback from and in partnership with Local Education Agencies.

Advanced Learner – a student who has demonstrated the need for a differentiated education at a more advanced level. Some advanced learners may also be identified as academically and/or intellectually gifted.

Curriculum Plan – is a plan for the course content which may include items such as honors level course outline, course syllabus, scope & sequence, pacing guide, curriculum maps, etc

Evidences – are artifacts that teachers or Local Education Agencies may submit as part of the North Carolina Honors Level Course Portfolio which demonstrates that the honors level course meets the honors rubric criteria such as course syllabus, sample lesson plans, teacher’s rationale, assessment samples, grading practices, etc.

Honors Level Course Rubric Portfolio –The portfolio is the compilation of evidence supporting the review process to assure the honors level course is developed and implemented to meet the needs of advanced learners and meets the recommended criteria set forth in the North Carolina Honors Level Course Framework. Previously, the term in the former rubric was the Curriculum Guide.

Inherently Advanced/Inherently Honors Courses – are exempt from this review process. These “inherently advanced” courses include courses such as Pre-calculus, World Languages Levels III & IV, Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB), higher proficiency levels for Arts Education and Career and Technical Education Courses and Non-AP/IB Calculus. These courses are developed at rigorous advanced levels which follow the best practices listed in the NC Honors Implementation Guide and the Honors Level Course Rubric.

North Carolina Standard Course of Study – curriculum standards adopted by the NC State Board of Education; *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English/Language Arts and Literacy*, and *NC Essential Standards* for all other content areas beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

Pre-Assessment – is a strategy to determine what students already know and understand regarding a set of standards and/or instructional goals before instruction begins. Pre-assessment is critical for advanced learners to ensure they are engaged with learning at the appropriate level and with the appropriate content.

North Carolina Honors Level Course Rubric Framework Implementation Timeline

Implementation Timeline of the Honors Level Course Framework and Rubric (Multi-year implementation)

1. **2012-2013 - Transition Year** for all LEAs with support offered by NCDPI to understand the new Honors Level Course Rubric and Honors Level Course Implementation Guide
(No review process for LEAs will occur this year)

Fall/Winter:

Honors Level Course Implementation Guide will be developed by the Honors Team and Curriculum Content Areas; then vetted and reviewed by representatives from the field including the Institutes of Higher Education.

Spring:

Professional Development will be offered in three centralized locations of NC (east, central and west) to help LEAs understand the new Honors Level Course Rubric and Honors Level Course Implementation Guide.

Random selection and notification of the first review group - one-third of the LEAs will undergo the review process in 2013-2014 (about 35 LEAs).

2. **2013-2014 – Implementation** of the new Honors Level Course Rubric, Honors Level Course Implementation Guide and Honors Level Course Portfolio process:

Winter:

Portfolio review process of the participants selected (first group of LEAs).
Possibly have content experts to do the initial review and prioritize the LEAs who need support from NCDPI to meet honors level course rubric.
Feedback given to the LEAs

Spring:

Follow up support given to high priority LEAs from NCDPI to assist in meeting the honors level course rubric.
Random selection and notification of the second review group (one- third of LEAs) to undergo the review process in 2014-2015

3. **2014-2015 – Second Group** of LEAs Undergoing Review and Feedback Process (about 35-40 LEAs)

Winter:

Portfolio review process of the participants selected (second group of LEAs in NC).
Possibly have content experts to do the initial review and prioritize the LEAs who need support to meet honors level course rubric.
Feedback given to the LEAs

Spring:

Follow up support given to high priority LEAs from NCDPI to assist in meeting the honors level course rubric.

Random selection and notification of the final review group (one third of LEAs) to undergo the review process in 2015-2016

4. **2015-2016 – Final Group** of LEAs Undergoing Review & Feedback Process (about 35-40 LEAs)

Winter:

Portfolio review process of the participants selected (final group of LEAs in NC). Possibly have content experts to do the initial review and prioritize the LEAs who need support to meet honors course rubric.
Feedback given to the LEAs

Spring:

Follow up support given to high priority LEAs from NCDPI to assist in meeting the honors level course rubric