

Completing an Associate Degree While in High School

Is it right for you?

High School Concurrent Enrollment courses are \$5 per credit and a great opportunity for many students; however, they are not a good fit for everyone. All concurrent enrollment courses are placed on a permanent college transcript and should not be taken lightly. Most high school students take 2-3 concurrent enrollment courses throughout their junior and senior years. While it is possible to earn a full associate degree in high school, only a few students earn the full 60 college credits required to complete the UVU Associate Degree before they graduate. Although a sibling or neighbor earned an associate degree while in high school, this does not mean it is right path for every student.

Important Things to Consider

1. Understand Long-Term Educational Goals

- It is important for students to have a clear idea of what bachelor's degree they will pursue when deciding on earning an associate degree in high school. Unless the student has taken classes applicable to their bachelor program as part of the associate degree electives, he or she will need more than 60 additional credits (2 years) to finish a bachelor's degree. **A student who has earned an associate degree will have completed 2 years' worth of college credit but potentially will have 3+ years to complete a bachelor's degree.**
- Some bachelor degree programs have specific general education requirements or incorporate general education courses into their schedule sequence to balance class-loads throughout a four-year degree. A student must maintain full-time status (12-18 credits) to maintain scholarships and federal financial aid. This may be difficult to accomplish if all general education requirements are already complete. This is especially important to consider when planning certain STEM or pre-health degrees such as nursing.
- There is no guarantee that earning an Associate Degree while in high school will increase a student's chance to get accepted at competitive colleges. Students must familiarize themselves with the admissions process at the college or university that interests them.
- Advanced opportunity courses, such as Concurrent Enrollment, can affect high school grade point averages. If a student's GPA begins to decline due to taking college courses, then pursuing a college degree while in high school may not be right for them. High school GPA is an important consideration in scholarships and admission processes at most colleges.

2. Understand Other Factors Involved in Pursing an Associate Degree

- Due to the rigorous coursework and additional workload required to receive both a high school diploma and an associate degree, students may miss out on normal high school activities and other social functions. It may be hard to juggle high school activities, sports, a job, etc. For some, it can be a major adjustment. **Free time and social time will often be exchanged for study time.**
- Other college and career preparation activities may not be given the attention they need. If a student is completely focused on earning an associate degree, he or she may not spend enough time on ACT prep, career exploration, scholarship searches, college and university planning, and more. Career & degree exploration is especially crucial for associate degree seekers since a student will start right into bachelor degree major requirements once at college.
- Some classes required for an associate degree may deal with mature and sensitive issues. They may include class discussions that are uncomfortable for some students. These classes cannot be waived.
- There are pre-requisites for some courses offered through Concurrent Enrollment. It is the student's responsibility to know what these are and how to complete them.

3. Create An Academic Plan

- Students must meet with both a high school counselor and a Concurrent Enrollment Academic Advisor. Careful, advanced planning is imperative to ensure that both high school and college graduation requirements are met.