

Texas Education Agency

**Memorandum of
Understanding
(MOU)**

Guidance for Early College High Schools



Table of Contents

What is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)? 3

Why Use an MOU? 3

How Often is the MOU Reviewed? 3

Minimum Requirements for an ECHS MOU 4

 1. Program Design- 4

 2. Target Population and Student Enrollment Requirements 4

 3. Curriculum Alignment and Courses of Study 4

 4. Instructional Materials 5

 5. Instructional Calendar and Administration of Statewide Instruments 5

 6. Eligibility of Students for Financial Assistance 6

 7. Student Enrollment and Attendance 6

 8. Grading Periods and Policies 6

 9. Data Collection and Data Sharing 7

 10. Provisions for Discontinuing ECHS Operation 7

Rules for Charging Students in an ECHS 7

Additional Issues to Consider When Creating an MOU 9

 11. MOU Checklist 11

What is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a document that defines the terms of an agreement between two or more parties. Many government and educational institutions use MOUs to outline the terms of a partnership or project. Depending on the language and the terms of the agreement, an MOU can have the legal binding power of a contract.

In Early College High Schools (ECHS)s, MOUs allow school districts and colleges to formalize their P-16 partnership in the following areas:

- A. General Operating Procedures: outlines the terms of the partnership by defining the roles and responsibilities of each partner and stating the financial and in-kind contributions of each entity
- B. Use of Facilities: determines how partners will share and allocate space
- C. Course Articulation: establishes policies for matching and transferring coursework between partners and provides ongoing procedures for reviewing courses that may be counted for dual credit

Why Use an MOU?

1. It is Required: According to Texas Education Code (TEC) 29.908, Early College High School programs “must include articulation agreements with colleges, universities, and technical schools in this state to provide a participating student access to postsecondary education and training opportunities.”

2. It Defines the Relationship: MOUs formally define the terms of agreement between school districts and institutions of higher education (IHE)s working together to facilitate the creation and implementation of Early College and dual credit programs.

3. It Ensures Sustainability: Changes in school district and college leadership are inevitable. Likewise, rules and requirements of the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will change. As change occurs at the local and state level, the MOU provides continuity, clarity, and sustainability of the ECHS model.

How Often is the MOU reviewed?

Annually. Early College High Schools scale up one grade level at a time over four years. This scale-up period allows the partners to adjust policies and procedures in order to serve students in the best way possible. Annual review of the MOU ensures that it accurately reflects the most current policies and procedures. According to the ECHS Program Requirements, “each ECHS must develop and maintain a Leadership Committee that meets regularly (**at least quarterly**) to address issues of design and sustainability. Leadership Committee should include the ECHS principal and individuals with decision-making authority from all partnering districts and IHE(s). The group should meet regularly and once every quarter at a minimum (examples: advisory board, steering committee, or coordinating council).” It is recommended that the MOU



be updated with current-year signatures to indicate that it has been reviewed annually by the group.

Minimum Requirements for an ECHS MOU

The following are the minimum required topics that must be included in a Memorandum of Understanding:

ECHS Program Requirement	
1.	Curriculum alignment
2.	Courses of study
3.	Instructional materials
4.	Instructional calendar
5.	Administration of statewide instruments
6.	Eligibility of students for financial assistance
7.	Student enrollment and attendance
8.	Grading periods and policies
9.	Provisions for discontinuing operation

1. Program Design (should describe ECHS model)

Stand Alone Academy

Stand Alone Academy: Multiple Campuses

School within a School: Comprehensive High School

School within a School: Multiple Campuses

School within a School: Other Grade Levels

2 . Target Population and Student Enrollment Requirements

The Early College High School shall serve, or include plans to scale up to serve, students in grades 9 through 12 and shall target and enroll students who are at risk of dropping out of school as defined by the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and who might not otherwise go to college.

3. Curriculum Alignment and Courses of Study

The language in the MOU addressing curriculum, support, and courses should directly support the 60 credit plan and show thoughtful consideration of a blended curriculum with high levels of rigor, acceleration, and support. This section of the MOU may be called the Articulation Agreement and bears likeness to other dual credit agreements, but with unique elements for the ECHS model. Issues to consider in this section of the MOU include:

- a. Availability of classes in the program of study for ECHS students
- b. Use of IHE academic support facilities, such as libraries, labs, advising center, career center, eating facilities, cultural facilities, and sports facilities
- c. Required scores on college placement exams for courses included in the degree plan

- d. Agreements regarding shared professional development or blended curriculum teams
- e. Provisions for adopting a shared syllabus template or format
- f. Agreement on how to address Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) if the college course does not meet all of the requirements
- g. Agreement that college credit will be awarded the same semester the credit is earned
- h. Definition of roles and responsibilities regarding transcripts
- i. Course cancellations (including addressing if late registration fees will be required when IHE cancels classes)

4. Instructional Materials

Instructional materials such as textbooks and course packets are one of the largest expenses for an ECHS. The MOU should define which partner is responsible for covering the cost of instructional materials. When developing the MOU, the following creative cost-saving measures may be agreed upon and, if necessary, included in the MOU. Issues to consider in this section of the MOU include:

- Creating an agreement to use the same text book for multiple years (usually 2 or more years)
- Providing the option to rent textbooks or online materials
- Allowing vendor deals through the campus bookstore
- Allowing vendor deals outside of the campus bookstore
- Developing community partnerships for textbook “scholarships”
- Enabling the school district to copy its own course packets

5. Instructional Calendar and Administration of Statewide Instruments

The MOU should address differences between the school district and college calendar and define processes and procedures. While this is particularly important for testing schedules, including STAAR, college placement exams, and the college exam schedule, there are a number of other topics to consider including:

- College classes and/or exams that occur when the school district is not in session
- College classes that occur when the district is administering STAAR
- Accessing and scheduling at the college when the college is not in session
- Roles and responsibilities regarding the administration of college placement exams
- Special events such as athletics or UIL

6. Eligibility of Students for Financial Assistance

The MOU should clearly define which partner will cover tuition, textbooks, fees, and college placement exams. In addition, if the school district or the college develops partnerships that provide financial assistance to students who enroll in or graduate from the ECHS, these opportunities may be outlined in the MOU. Examples may include:

- Textbook support from local or community foundations
- Fundraising on behalf of the ECHS by the college development office
- Partnerships with four-year colleges to provide scholarships to students who graduate from the ECHS

7. Student Enrollment and Attendance

Each partner must accurately count student attendance and enrollment for funding purposes. Attendance accounting becomes more complicated as students take an increasing number of college courses. The MOU should document formal attendance-taking procedures. For further guidance, see [TEA Guidance for ECHS – Dual Credit Attendance](#).

8. Grading Periods and Policies

High schools and colleges often have different grading scales and timelines. Many ECHSs overlook these differences. However, the volume of college coursework and the blended curriculum in an ECHS require that the partners develop an agreement about grading policies and procedures. This agreement should be included in the MOU. Questions to consider when aligning grading practices are as follows:

- Are high school and college grades submitted on the same schedule? If not, how will the partners align these schedules?
- Are the grading scales in college the same as in high school? Is a college “A” the same as the high school “A”?
- How do grading policies affect students’ GPAs at the college and at the high school?
- What effect, if any, does the grading policy have on students as they are compared with other high school students in the district or in the state? For example, what are the implications of being in the lowest 25% of students at an ECHS with 400 students and a goal of 60 college credit hours versus being in the lowest 25% of a comprehensive high school?
- What feedback will be provided by college professors or courses?
- How will high school teachers know if a student needs intervention or support for a college course?

9. Data Collection and Data Sharing

The ISD and IHE shall make provisions for collecting and sharing data such as:

- Student and teacher data
- College readiness data
- Attendance
- Testing
- Academic performance reporting i.e., GPA, TSI, AP exams

10. Provisions for Discontinuing ECHS Operation

As leadership and fiscal conditions change within districts and colleges, there may be a need to discontinue the ECHS program. The MOU must include provisions for discontinuing ECHS operation. The goal of developing a process for discontinuing operation is to ensure that students experience a smooth transition with as little academic disruption as possible.

The MOU may include either a general statement about discontinuing operation, or it may outline the specific process that the partners will follow. Regardless of the level of specificity included in the MOU, the partners must abide by the following requirements:

- a. An ECHS with a grade 11 cohort will continue operation through that cohort's scheduled graduation from the ECHS. Services to enrolled grade 9 and grade 10 students may be continued through graduation of those cohorts by agreement, but this is not required.
- b. ECHS with only grade 9 and grade 10 cohorts must discontinue operation at the end of the school year in which the partners decide to close the ECHS.
- c. While in the process of discontinuing operation, the ECHS may not enroll any additional students in the ECHS.
- d. While the ECHS is in the process of discontinuing operation, it must continue to meet all of the required design elements and provide full support for all students enrolled in the ECHS.

Rules for Charging Students in an ECHS

According to the ECHS design elements, students in an ECHS may not be charged for the costs associated with enrolling in dual credit courses, such as tuition, fees, and textbooks. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. All students are legally entitled to a free, public education: An ECHS is a free, public school that, in addition to granting a high school diploma, also provides significant amounts of dual credit opportunity. In the ECHS model, dual credit courses are built into the program of study and are used to fulfill high school graduation requirements. A student who fails a course in a comprehensive high school would not charge to re-take



courses because they are entitled to a free, public education. Similarly, ECHS students may not be charged for the additional costs associated with enrolling in dual credit.

2. Concerns about access and equity: Early College High Schools are purposefully designed to serve students who would not otherwise attend college (including at-risk, first generation, or low socioeconomic status) by removing financial barriers. If students are charged for their high school education, it creates equity and access issues, because their public education is no longer free. This is particularly important when you consider that ECHSs are designed to serve students who are at-risk, first generation, or low socioeconomic status.

The list of activities for which ECHS students may not be charged includes, but is not limited to:

- Tuition and fees
- Textbooks
- Summer courses
- Re-taking a class due to failure
- Re-taking a class in order to obtain a higher grade
- Administration (or re-administration) of a college placement exam
- Required fees charged by the college

Either the school district or the college may cover these costs, but the student shall not be required to pay.

Commissioner’s Rules Concerning Early College Education Program

(d) Conditions of ECHS program operation.

(3) A student enrolled in an ECHS course for high school graduation credit may not be required to pay for tuition, fees, or required textbooks. The school district or charter in which the student is enrolled shall pay for tuition, fees, and required textbooks, to the extent those charges are not waived by the institution of higher education.

Link: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter102/ch102gg.html>

Additional Issues to Consider When Creating an MOU

	Issues to Consider	Benefit
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission statement and expected outcomes • School design/model 	Supports ECHS design cohesion and establishes outcomes to measure progress and success against
2.	Grades and student population to be served	Protects the school design by formally setting grades served and target student population according to ECHS model
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structure • Positions/offices of persons responsible for oversight and decisions relative to the ECHS (other than the principal) within the school district and the institution of higher education 	Defines the roles and responsibilities for joint decision-making and partner communication
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors, faculty, and administration • Responsibilities associated with employment of staff for high school courses and college courses • Compensation • Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures staffing quality • Provides clarity for human resources, management, accreditation, and training purposes
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECHS Location • Responsibility for cost of facility, including maintenance and upgrades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifies budgetary responsibilities with regard to the location of the ECHS • Reveals additional areas for consideration including: parking, security, cafeteria service,
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of facilities for ECHS • Use of specific college facilities and other considerations 	Clarifies student and faculty access to services during and after instruction times
7.	Transportation	Helps to guarantee student access to services
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support services • Technology and technology support 	Outlines each partner’s contribution to student support systems and access to technology
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student recruitment and selection procedures • Student recruitment procedures • Basic criteria for enrollment 	Protects the school design by formally setting partner supported recruitment and selection procedures according to ECHS model



Guidance for Early College High Schools: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct • Safety 	<p>Outlines dangers, codes of conduct, and repercussions of behavior (discipline) that may differ considerably between high school and college campuses</p> <p>Sets expectations for clear communication to students and helps protect the liability of partners</p>
11.	<p>Performance evaluation and project reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify responsibilities between partners for data collection and set common definitions for progress and success
12.	<p>Fiscal agent</p>	<p>Outlines roles and responsibilities for fiscal management and reporting for the school</p>
13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Sources of income to support the school, including contributions each partner will make • Sustainability plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracks all income and expenditures so that both partners understand the financial obligation involved in operating an ECHS • Ensures agreement between partners regarding financial commitments for the long-term operation of the ECHS
14.	<p>Criminal history check of all employees who have regular contact with students, including all faculty, school district and institution of higher education</p>	<p>Helps ensure the safety of students and liability of the partners</p>



Guidance for Early College High Schools: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

MOU Checklist

BM 1 Target Population Implementing	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU	BM 1 Target Population Exemplar	Support Docs	Design App	ISD MOU	Page # MOU
No exclusion-discouragement of any sub pops					Meets all implementing criteria				
Not based on STAAR, Discipline, GPA, TSI Met Standards, or Teacher Recommendations					Type of lottery if applicants exceed space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blind open lottery • Weighted lottery for AR, ED, ELL, 1st Gen • Weighted to match ISD demographics 				
Documented in Policy and Procedure									
Recruitment Plan and reviewed annually									
Includes input from all stakeholders									
Regular activities to inform all stakeholders									
BM 2 Partnership Agreement Implementing	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU	BM 2 Partnership Agreement Exemplar	Support Docs	Design App	ISD MOU	Page # MOU
Location, costs, fees, transportations					Meets all implementing criteria				
EOC administration plan					All access to IHE facilities/services				
Grading periods and policies					PD for ECHS and IHE staff				
Course of study					Collecting-sharing student/teacher data				
Curriculum alignment					Student advising of transferability				
Instructional materials					Transcription of college credits				
Instructional Calendar					Articulation agreements				
Tuition, fees, textbooks waived/ discounted									
Enrollment and attendance policies									
Provision for discontinuation									
Data collection/review process for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit attempt/pass • GPA • EOCs • SAT/ACT/PSAT • TSI readiness by grade level • ECHS staff qualifications • Location of courses 	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Provisions for using data for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing improvements • Articulation to four year IHE • Determine level of entry to IHE • Enrollment and retention rates • Leaver codes/attrition by grade • Increase participation in IHE activities 	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____



Guidance for Early College High Schools: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

BM 3 P-16 Leadership Initiatives Implementing	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU	BM 3 Leadership Initiatives Exemplar	Support Docs	Design App	ISD MOU	Page # MOU
Leadership Team in place					Meets all implementing criteria				
Has authority for decision making					ISD Superintendent or Designee				
Meets regularly					ISD C and I Leader or Designee				
Has clear roles and responsibilities					ISD ECHS Leader				
Reviews the MOU					IHE President or Designee				
Shares in reporting requirements					Dean of Education/Academics or Designee				
Agenda/minutes publically available					ECHS Liaison				
					Plan sustainability that deters staff turnover				
BM 4 Curriculum and Support Implementing	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU	BM 4 Curriculum and Support Exemplar	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU
2 or 4 year college partner					Meets all implementing criteria				
HS Endorsements					30 hour minimum attainment				
Courses of study earning 30 to 60 hours					Core complete attainment				
Clear Pathways to AA and BA					60 hours toward BA attainment				
Certification L1 or L2 or Licensures					Completes as AA				
Monitors & reports HS credit attainment					Structured data review processes				
Monitors & reports IHE credit attainment					Develops IEPs for HS /Degree Plans				
Monitors & reports by sub-pops					Community service requirement				
Personalized academic support plan					Business partnerships opportunities				
Provide BDA tutoring and/or Saturdays					Internship opportunities				
Embedded advisory or CR or mentoring					Four year application assistance				
Establish mentorship program					Financial aid counseling				
Social and Emotional Support Plan					College and career counseling				
Connections to social services									
Parent outreach and involvement plan									



Guidance for Early College High Schools: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

BM 5 Academic Rigor and Readiness Implementing	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU	BM 5 Academic Rigor and Readiness Exemplar	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU
TSI is NOT a prerequisite for admission					Meets all implementing criteria				
TSI given on acceptance or by end of S2 G 9					TSI site				
Plan for student TSI success					Frequent testing				
Academic preparation plan					Access to data and re-prep IEPs				
Re-preparation plan					Bridge before and after G9				
Fee Waivers for all administrations					Bridge to G10				
Report test dates to TEA					Bridge to G11				
Report rates by attempts					Bridge to G12				
Report rates by sub-pops									
BM 6 School Design Implementing	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU	BM 6 School Design Exemplar	Support Docs	ISD MOU	IHE MOU	Page # MOU
SA/IHE; SA not/IHE;SWS/HS; K12; K12 Rural;					Meets all implementing criteria				
Not on IHE at least 6 times on IHE per year					Not on IHE weekly use of facilities				
SWS disaggregates required data					IHE Liaison contact weekly				
100% dedicated leader within four years					HQ teachers ECHS exclusive				
Has scheduling, hiring, budget autonomy					Counselor exclusive				
IHE Liaison w/ authority					Core-elective exclusive sections				
Interacts directly and frequently					Mentoring induction for new hires				
HQ teachers w/n 4 years report to leader					ECHS-IHE opportunities for:				
ECHS students in ECHS teacher core classes					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative training 				
Annual PD plan for ECHS determined by NA					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative support 				
100% counselor dedicated w/n 4 years					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formative peer observation 				