

# NACEP ISSUE BRIEF

# ALIGNING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

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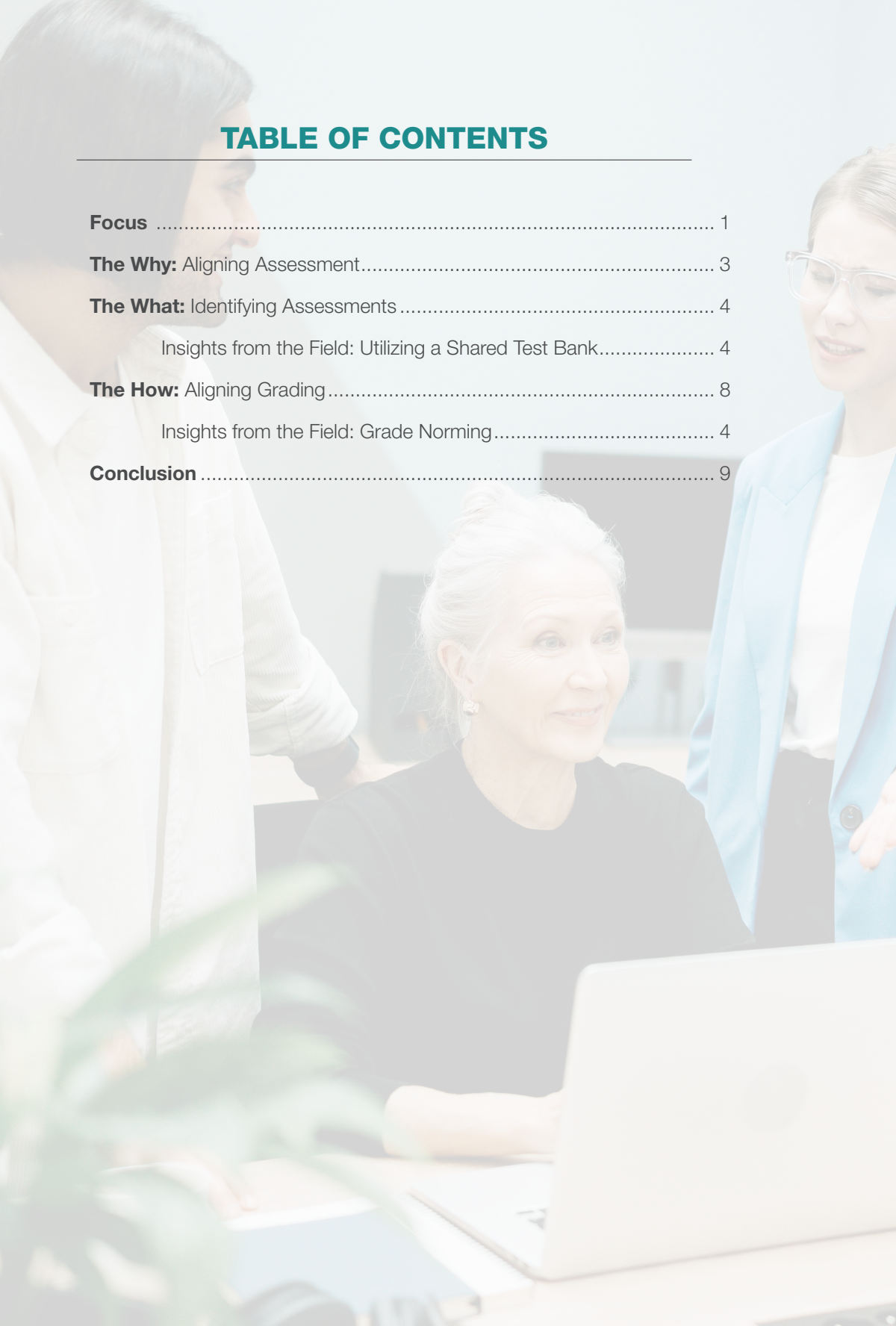
Advancing Quality College  
Courses For High School Students

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## FOCUS

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At the heart of the NACEP Accreditation Standards is a belief that college faculty play an integral role in ensuring parity in concurrent enrollment course content, assessments, and expectations. NACEP's 16 standards in six categories serve to ensure the post-secondary institution offers the same college course in the high school as is offered on the campus and provides sufficient academic and program oversight to ensure course integrity. Integral to this process is the Assessment Standard which addresses the proficiency of learning outcomes for students through the use of comparable grading standards and assessment methods between on-campus and high school sections. Whether NACEP accredited or not, Concurrent Enrollment Programs (CEPs) can look to NACEP's A1 Standard for guidance on ensuring consistency in how students demonstrate their learning, and how instructors assess that learning.

Course assessments are key evidence demonstrating that students have achieved the expected learning outcomes. Aligning methods of assessment and grading practices, as outlined in the A1 Standard, ensures course quality and rigor, regardless of where the course is offered. Furthermore, when Faculty Liaisons (FLs) and Concurrent Enrollment Instructors (CEIs) collaborate on assessment alignment, CEP relationships are strengthened.

This Issue Brief provides an overview of strategies FLs and CEIs can utilize to ensure that students have high-quality educational opportunities and are held to the same learning expectations no matter who teaches the course or where the course is offered.

### **The A1 Standard**

The college/university ensures concurrent enrollment students' proficiency of learning outcomes is measured using comparable grading standards and assessment methods to on-campus sections.



## THE WHY

### ALIGNING ASSESSMENT

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According to NACEP A1 Standard, the college/university must make certain that “concurrent enrollment students’ proficiency of learning outcomes is measured using comparable grading standards and assessment methods to on-campus sections.” Note that this standard specifically includes, as noted in the NACEP Accreditation Guide, “both grading standards and methods of assessment.” Specifically, the A1 Standard seeks to ensure that

1. Assessments used in both the high school and college classroom measure the same content and level of student achievement of the course learning outcomes and
2. CEIs grade student work in the same way as that work would be graded in the college classroom. For example, as recommended in the NACEP Accreditation Guide, “there should be program faculty discussions about what ‘A’ student work looks like.” (pg. 16)

Quality CEPs clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner in a formal agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a Letter of Agreement (LOA). These partnership agreements serve as blueprints for the collaboration and are typically reviewed and renewed annually. Because of the importance of alignment, these agreements often include guidelines on grading scales, learning outcomes, and course content. The following sections provide an overview of how FLs and CEIs can collaborate to ensure comparable student learning.



## THE WHAT

### IDENTIFYING ASSESSMENTS

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Sharing assignments and discussing learning outcomes are common practices among faculty in many college departments. These discussions should extend into concurrent enrollment spaces so that instructors, regardless of location, provide students with similar learning experiences. The NACEP Accreditation Guide refers to this as “paired assessments” — assessments that are “in comparable format,” “assess the same topics or concepts,” and utilize “the same assessment strategies.” (pg. 16)

The easiest way to ensure the alignment of assessments is to use the same assessments, or equivalent assessment methods in both courses. However, “paired assessment” doesn’t have to mean that assessments used in every instance of a course are exactly the same; instead, parity suggests “likeness” or “equivalence.” Thus, paired assessments can exist in various forms: a podcast in one class, a final paper in another; a test over particular skills, or a presentation that demonstrates those skills. What should remain constant are the outcomes being assessed.

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Paired assessments can be established through FL and CEI collaboration in a variety of ways:

- The CEI can adopt the assessments used by campus faculty for that course;
- If the campus faculty utilize a variety of assessment methods, then the FL and CEI can work together to choose one of those assessments for implementation at the high school;
- The FL and CEI can review assessments available at either institution, or online, to determine a new assessment for both parties to utilize;
- The FL and CEI can partner in their knowledge of student assessment to co-develop an assessment.

### **Insights from the Field: Utilizing a Shared Test Bank**

Instructors from the West Ada School District (Idaho) who teach the concurrent enrollment version of Kinesiology 220 (Introduction to Athletic Injuries) for Boise State University use a shared test bank to identify questions for exams in their courses. The CEIs developed the test bank themselves, combining questions that they have used in past exams with questions from related exams at Boise State. Faculty Liaison John McChesney regularly reviews the test questions and notes that “of the vast amount of potential questions on any subtopic, the shared test bank questions [are] at the same academic level as exams at Boise State.”

The use of the shared test bank has a variety of benefits. “Their use of this test bank makes CEP assessment comparisons much easier,” says McChesney. “It also ensures that all of the KINES 220 courses in this school district are synchronized in terms of assessment of learning.” This alignment is particularly important in this rapidly growing school district. “The shared test bank has been great for new instructors to use,” McChesney added, “as we’ve had a lot of new instructors come on board.”

Keep in mind that equivalency in assessments is about more than just the kinds of work students are producing; it also includes the location and timing of the assessment. For example, if college students take a timed assessment in a testing center and their high school counterparts complete a group assessment without time constraints, then parity does not exist.

## THE HOW

### ALIGNING GRADING

Once assessment methods have been identified, the next step in ensuring parity is aligning grading practices. Since the course being taught is a college course, the grading scale provided by the higher education partner should be used, even if it differs from the one used in the high school (Note: The CEP partnership agreement is the perfect place to outline any college or faculty approved deviation in the grading scale and the rationale for such changes.)

The NACEP CEP Accreditation Guide provides detailed guidance on CEP standards and their implementation. Pages 9-25 break down each standard, the required evidence for accreditation, and commentary from the NACEP Accreditation Commission. This commentary offers helpful insights for programs seeking to ensure the quality of their concurrent enrollment offerings and clarifies the range of acceptable practices within each standard while addressing frequently asked questions.

The commentary on the Assessment Standard emphasizes that although using the same grading scale is important, it is not the only factor in maintaining consistency between on-campus and concurrent enrollment sections. Simply grading students on the same scale does not guarantee alignment in the assessment of their work. FLs and CEIs benefit from ongoing discussions about grading practices. The commentary further suggests that implementing “collaborative grading activities,” often referred to as grade norming, can help establish a coordinated approach, ensuring that grading strategies between FLs and CEIs are aligned. Grade norming provides a structured framework for these discussions, fostering greater consistency in how student work is evaluated.

During grade norming, FLs and CEIs review examples of student work and compare the grades each would assign. This approach is especially important for assignments where grading can be subjective, such as short answer responses, lab reports, or essay tests. Ideally, the student work reviewed includes samples from both high school and college classrooms. The commentary on the Assessment Standard encourages CEIs and FLs to cast a wide net and review and grade student papers, exams, or assignments from course sections

#### ASSESSMENT STANDARD A1 (CEP)

A1 Standard	The college/university outcomes is measured to on campus sections	
A1 Required Evidence	1.	A Statement of Educational Intent (SOEI) or NACEP Statement of Educational Intent (SEI)
A1 Required Evidence	2.	Paired student assessment – one paired exam, lab exercise, or assignment
Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs should not assess in a single assessment in a single discipline. If separate standards were used, aligning assessment and assessment.</li> <li>• The Statement of Educational Intent (SOEI) for a discipline (see definition) should be reviewed by the program of study coordinator and faculty in the discipline.</li> <li>• Paired student assessment should include the discipline and program or campus section.</li> <li>• Assessment of student work in concurrent enrollment sections should be in concurrent enrollment sections, prompts, multiple-choice, or essay.</li> <li>• Evidence should make a comparison of student work assessed at the same level.</li> <li>• Saying that students are concurrent enrollment programs and a student who gets an A in a concurrent enrollment program about what ‘A’ student work.</li> <li>• Many institutions conduct grade norming across sections, throughout the year, and/or during annual professional development. This includes opportunities where faculty review and grade student work other than their own.</li> </ul>	

other than their own. This practice helps develop shared expectations for what constitutes “A” work, “B” work, and so on, ensuring consistent grading norms across all course sections, regardless of location.

The initial course-specific training for CEIs or the annual professional development meeting (Standards F2 & F3) provide excellent opportunities for CEIs and their FLs to engage in grade norming. CEPs may also weave this practice into other touch points they have established for instructors during the academic year.

### **Insights from the Field: Grade Norming**

Collaboration as colleagues is a strong underlying theme in grade norming at the University of Findlay (UF). CEIs who teach UF college writing courses participate in a form of grade norming known as “calibration” during their initial discipline-specific course training and annual professional development, as well as during other points of the semester as needed. After FLs have acquainted CEIs with the theories, pedagogies, and outcomes of the course, they provide CEIs with sample essays from student writers. The FLs and the CEIs individually provide feedback and then score the essays based on the outcomes of the assignment. They then come together in small groups to discuss their feedback and scores. These conversations help instructors build a common language and understanding of the writing expectations for the course. According to CEI Dan Frizell (Smithville High School), “These conversations help me when I’m back in the classroom – alone – doing the work of evaluating student writing. Calibration is what assures me that the opinion I give my students on their writings is on target.”

Additionally, CEIs in their first year of teaching the course are asked to send UF English FLs a sampling of papers that they have assessed to be in the “high,” “medium,” and “low” grade range. The FLs then provide feedback on the CEIs’ scoring as an additional measure to assure parity. Oftentimes, CEIs will check in with the FLs when they have a particularly difficult assessment. In this work, the FLs and CEIs build collegiality around the challenges of responding to student writing. One Faculty Liaison, Nicole Diederich, explains: “When I calibrate with my high school colleagues, it not only broadens my own understanding of student writing instruction, it also fosters that sense of community that is so integral to Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.”



CEIs can also align grading by utilizing a shared rubric. To identify a rubric for a particular assignment, the FL could share the rubric used by campus faculty for that assignment, or the FL and CEI could collaborate to modify or design a rubric. While co-creating might take more effort than simply adopting an existing rubric, collaboration ensures that both parties know the rubric's purpose and how to utilize it. An additional advantage of using a shared rubric is that it gives FLs and CEIs the ability to track student outcomes across course sections and over time.

Collaborative strategies like these have the added benefit of fostering a collegial relationship between the CEIs and FLs since both are positioned as experts on student learning who contribute to a shared understanding of what it means for students to be successful in a specific CE course.



# CONCLUSION

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Aligning assessment methods through paired assessments, grade norming, and shared rubric development ensures that students achieve the course learning outcomes regardless of where they are taking their college coursework. Importantly, aligning assessments also supports the following characteristics of successful Concurrent Enrollment Programs:

- **Quality.** Consistent methods, systems, and approaches are in place that help maintain the quality and integrity of the educational experience.
- **Equity and Integrity.** Students are provided equal opportunities to succeed and are not unfairly disadvantaged due to differences in educational backgrounds or resources.
- **Accountability.** Clear expectations and assessment criteria are established so that students and educators are accountable for their roles in the learning process.
- **Transferability of Credits.** Evidence is provided that learning outcomes are achieved so that concurrent enrollment credits are recognized by other colleges and universities.
- **Student Success and Retention.** Students are supported in their attainment of learning outcomes, which increases their confidence and leads to higher levels of retention, as well as better academic performance in the future.

While there is much to consider when aligning assessments, this work is an opportunity for the FL and CEI to each have a voice in how assessments are chosen, designed, and/or delivered. Collaborative practices such as those featured here not only result in assessments that demonstrate student achievement of the course learning outcomes but also strengthen the Faculty Liaison and Concurrent Enrollment Instructor partnership, an essential component of an impactful Concurrent Enrollment Program.





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