



MEMORANDUM TO: Board SHSM Leads
Student Success Leaders

FROM: Richard Franz, Director (A)
Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch

Ginette Plourde, Director
French-Language Policy and Programs Branch

DATE: November 4, 2009

SUBJECT: **Specialist High Skills Majors Policy Changes and Clarifications**

Recently you received a communication about policy changes in the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program. One related to the number of cooperative education credits required in the bundle for the SHSM. The communication which signalled a reduction of required cooperative education credits from two to one, plus an additional major credit, was premature. In fact, given the significance of the cooperative education experience in exploring a particular sector, and in learning about the workplace in that sector, the Ministry of Education reaffirms its commitment to the requirement for students to successfully complete two cooperative education credits in order to meet that criterion for earning the SHSM red seal on the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

Based on feedback from boards and schools who have been implementing the SHSM over the past three years, we have made two policy changes and two clarifications on implementation procedures to be effective September 1, 2009.

The SHSM policy changes are summarized below:

1. The first policy change is to the requirement for all SHSM students to complete a minimum of two cooperative education (co-op) credits, in a placement in their sector, linked to their Grade 11 or Grade 12 major credits. This requirement is now broadened to allow students to link their cooperative education courses to any of the 8-10 required credits in the bundle for an SHSM while maintaining the requirement that the placement be in the SHSM sector. This change will expand the window for scheduling the co-op placement opportunities as co-op credits must always occur concurrently or after completion of the related or linked course.
2. The second policy change relates to the bundle of credits in the Workplace pathway for the Construction sector. The requirement for grade 12 mathematics as an “other required credit” in the Workplace pathway has been changed to a requirement for grade 11 English. There is no

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change to the number of credits in the bundle; this remains at 10 credits for all pathways. Students in the Workplace pathway will no longer be required to take grade 12 mathematics as part of the bundle of credits for this sector, but will need to complete a contextualized learning activity (CLA) in their grade 11 English. SHSM Construction students in the Workplace pathway, who are in grade 12 this year, will not be expected to take a CLA for that course, but all Grade 11 SHSM Construction students in the workplace pathway as of September 2009 will be expected to have a CLA within that course.

In addition to these policy changes, we offer the following clarifications to schools and boards regarding the tracking and granting of the OSSD with a SHSM designation.

1. Students pursuing the SHSM may earn the major credits at a “host” school and the remaining components at their “home” school. In this case, the principal of the home school is responsible for ensuring that all of the required components of the SHSM have been successfully completed in order for the students to graduate with the OSSD with an SHSM red seal. If the home and host schools cannot collectively offer the remaining required components, the principal of the home school will issue the student a “Partially Completed” SHSM Record that lists the successfully completed SHSM components to date.
2. Students can earn a component of the SHSM program (e.g. a certification or a Grade 11 credit in the bundle) in an earlier grade; however, these components will only be recorded on the student’s SHSM Record and on the student’s Ontario Student Transcript (OST) with an “H” in the note column, once the student is enrolled in the SHSM program in grade 11 or 12.

These changes and clarifications provide boards and schools with more flexibility as they implement their SHSMs to meet the needs of all interested students, while safeguarding the elements of the SHSM that distinguish it. The Ministry of Education remains committed to supporting you as you implement the required five components of the SHSM. Please contact any member of the ministry SHSM team for assistance.

Richard Franz

Ginette Plourde

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