

## Nebraska Statewide Career Academy Quality Indicators for Local Implementation



The **Nebraska Career Academy Quality Indicators**, adopted in 2008 from the National Career Academy Coalition Standards, are intended to provide statewide uniformity and consistency of program development while affording the flexibility of local implementation. As the state and local programs evolve so shall this document. The Quality Indicators have been approved by the Chief Instructional Officers of the Nebraska Community Colleges and the Nebraska State School Board of Education in 2010.

**Career Academy:** A plan of study created for high school students from a Career Cluster area which outlines a pathway for career exploration. The course(s), within the plan of study, may be for high school credit, dual credit or college credit. Each course will include a component that explores the career field associated with that course. This plan of study may lead to employment or continued education. The academy is typically a partnership between a K-12 entity and a post-secondary institution. *(developed by Nebraska Community Colleges Chief Instructional Officers)*

- 1. Defined Mission and Goals: The career academy has a written definition of its mission and goals. These are available to the administrators, teachers, students, parents, advisory board and others involved in the academy. Criteria include:**
  - Well-defined mission and goals, focusing on careers and college, raising student aspirations and increasing student achievement
  - Clearly identified student and stakeholder code of conduct
  - Impact of the Career Academy on local, regional and/or state economies through high wage, high skill, high demand and/or high interest career pathways
- 2. Leadership: The academy has a leadership structure that incorporates the views of stakeholders. Criteria include:**
  - Representation on advisory board from aspects of the industry and stakeholders to include, but not limited to: faculty, administrators, counselors, advisors, parents, students, at both secondary and postsecondary levels
  - Holding of regular advisory meetings
  - Evidence of a healthy partnership between the school and the community
  - Opportunity for student input
- 3. Academy Structure: An academy has a well-defined structure within the high school or consortium, reflecting its status as a small learning community. Criteria include:**
  - Recruitment and selection process for students, with appropriate exit procedures
  - Recognized space, physical and/or virtual, in a school or business setting
  - Participation in student organizations and competitions where available
  - Identified career or industry cluster(s)/field(s)
  - Supportive atmosphere
- 4. Host District and High School: Career academies exist in a variety of consortia, district and high school contexts which are important determinants of an academy's success. Criteria include:**
  - Support from the local Board of Education and the superintendent
  - Support from the principal and high school administration
  - Support from the local high school teaching faculty, counselors, and postsecondary faculty
  - Visible and contractual support from partnering postsecondary and business/industry leadership
  - Funding, facilities, equipment and materials available
- 5. Faculty and Staff: Teacher selection, leadership, credentialing and cooperation are critical to an academy's success. Criteria include:**
  - Identified leader (teacher leader, team leader, coordinator, directors, etc.)
  - Credentialed teachers in their field and by partnering institution(s) who are committed to the mission and goals
  - Supportive counselors and non-academy teachers

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### **6. Professional Development: Provide professional development time, leadership and support.**

*Criteria include:*

- Common planning time for academy staff, either face-to-face or by electronic means such as telephone and/or online
- Professional development for secondary and postsecondary Career Academy teacher
- Orientation for parents, students and other district employees not directly involved in the Career Academy

### **7. Curriculum & Instruction: The curriculum and instruction within an academy meets or exceeds external standards and college entrance requirements, while differing from a regular high school by focusing learning around a career cluster/field. Criteria include:**

- Sequenced, integrated and relevant curriculum framed around state or national standards which incorporates academics and career education when applicable
- Shared learning environment where students learn from and instruct one another with faculty, business/industry, and the community
- Provide “real-world” work experiences using problem and project-based teaching strategies
- Rigorous learning meeting college requirements
- Integration of 21st Century learning and skills in all areas of the curriculum
- Course delivery methods such as, but not limited to, face-to-face, distance learning, blended, team-taught, online, or other possible distance delivery means.
- Utilize Personal Learning Plans that highlight multiple entrance and exit points along the career pathway which include certificates, 2-year, 4-year and professional degree options

### **8. Business, Postsecondary Education & Community Involvement: A career academy links high school to its host community and involves members of the business, postsecondary education and the civic community. Criteria include:**

- Address the needs of the local and regional economy
- Utilize multiple methods to engage the business and civic communities
- Provide a work- based learning component that may include internships, job shadowing (virtual or face-to-face), entrepreneurship, etc.
- Provide post-secondary college courses which could be approved by the high school/district as a dual credit course for high school credit
- Provide opportunities for high school courses to be evaluated for possible post-secondary articulated credit
- Create experiential components such as field trips, mentoring, and guest speakers (virtual or face-to-face)

### **9. Student Assessment: Collect and report student proficiency data. Criteria include:**

- Collection and analysis of student achievement data including assessment of both academic and technical knowledge and skills
- Use of multiple measurements which include items such as student attendance, retention, credits, grade point averages, state test scores, graduation rates, authentic assessment and college going rates
- Accurate and transparent reporting of Career Academy data to stakeholders

### **10. Cycle of Improvement: An academy will engage in a regular, well-defined, objective self-examination. Criteria include:**

- Systemic and planned assessment of the academy’s mission and program conducted by students, parents, academy faculty and staff, partnering organizations and stakeholders
- Systematic review of the academy’s design and implementation
- Planned refinements for the academy which include timetables and measurable outcomes based on data to address strengths and weaknesses