

FAQs from June 27 / 28 Course Choice Webinars (released July 6, 2012)



Thank you all for expressing an interest in learning more about the Course Choice program!

During and after our webinars on June 27 and 28 we received many questions regarding almost every aspect of the Course Choice program.

Some of these questions were general questions – some questions were very specific and detailed.

Based on the roll out schedule for Course Choice, we have decided to provide these Round 1 FAQs to address the more general questions, and *some* of the detailed questions.

In cases where we felt the detailed questions would be answered by the release of the Course Choice Request for Applications (RFA) on July 16, we decided it would be best to defer addressing those questions until that time.

If you don't see a question you submitted exactly as you worded it, please look for a similar question with an answer that directly addresses the issue you were concerned about.

The table below indicates our plan for providing additional information to stakeholders as the Course Choice program rolls out over the next weeks and months.

Communication Vehicles	Information Included	Dates
FAQs Round 1	Policy clarifications, answers to general questions	Jul 6
Release of RFA (Request for Applications)	Detailed information on application and evaluation processes Course Choice Glossary Course Choice Funding White Paper	Jul 16
Second Round of Webinars	Detailed information on application and evaluation processes Detailed information on Course Choice funding	Jul 18 - 20
Regional Information Meetings	Comprehensive clarification on application process (focused on course providers but open to all stakeholders) Detailed information on Course Choice funding	Jul 23 - 25
FAQs Round 2	Detailed application information, detailed information on Course Choice funding and its impact on LEAs and a complete Course Choice glossary	Jul 31
Times and meeting information (call-in information for webinars, site locations and meeting times for regional information meetings) will be provided on the Course Choice website		

We are confident that this process for releasing information will be the most efficient, while allowing the DOE to do the best possible job of engineering the Course Choice program processes to be effective and user-friendly.

This information process – which includes the possibility for all of you to email questions to CourseChoice@la.gov at any time – should most efficiently provide all course providers with the information they will need to submit their applications via the online Course Choice portal starting August 17.

The rest of this first FAQ response will group the different types of questions we received by topic.

The Department of Education Course Choice Team

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Course Provider Application Process / Applicants

- Q1) Will post-secondary institutions apply as a system or individually?
- A1) All post-secondary institutions will have to submit individual applications.
- Q2) Will post-secondary public state institutions have to apply?
- A2) Yes.
- Q3) What is the approximate number of providers that will be selected as course providers?
- A3) There is no limit on the number of course providers that will eventually earn the right to become Course Choice course providers. There are practical considerations for any program in its first year of implementation – but our goal and intent is to recommend for final BESE approval *all* course providers that offer high-quality, affordable education options for Louisiana students.
- Q4) Will the application have room for a provider to apply to provide multiple courses, or will it be necessary to fill out multiple applications for each individual course?
- A4) Course provider applicants will have the option to submit a single application for one or many course offerings, or single applications for each course offering. We suspect that applicants will opt to submit a single application for multiple course offerings.
- While applications will allow course provider applicants to summarize their course offerings, the interview process that follows will require applicants (who make it through to the interview process) to provide detailed information on every single course offering they are proposing. We have designed an efficient online process to do this, which will be explained to course provider applicants who make it to the interview phase.
- Q5) Can schools or teachers who work at local schools act as a provider for students who need catch-up work?
- A5) Yes, if they apply and qualify. It is our hope that “home-grown” Louisiana “educational entrepreneurs” take advantage of Course Choice to develop and deliver high-quality educational offerings to Louisiana students. Course Choice team members will be available via the Course Choice hotline (CourseChoice@la.gov) to provide assistance to these Louisiana entities (and to all other prospective course providers).

Courses Offerings

- Q6) What types of courses will DOE approve as part of the Course Choice program?
- A6) We are inviting all prospective course providers who believe they can offer high-quality course offerings to Louisiana students to submit an application. Our focus areas in this first year of implementation will be on: 1) core academic offerings; 2) career and technical education (CTE) offerings; and 3) college credit offerings. But these focus areas do not eliminate the possibility that other types of courses proposed by course providers might still earn final BESE approval.
- Q7) Will Course Choice be for ACT prep? Remediation in reading and math?
- A7) These could be appropriate course offerings for Course Choice program applicants. Course Choice course providers can submit applications for any course offering they believe will offer high-quality education to Louisiana students.
- Q8) What kind of courses would meet these requirements [the focus areas above] yet be tailored for elementary students?

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- A8) The DOE will not be stating an inflexible standard for the types of courses we want or expect to be submitted as part of this application process. We encourage *all* course providers who believe they can offer high-quality course offerings to Louisiana students to apply.
- Q9) What is the timeframe for course deployment? Are during-school, after-school and summer school all available? Can the courses be offered on a flexible schedule, or must they be tied to the local LEA academic calendar?
- A9) Course providers will have significant flexibility in terms of proposing *when* they will provide their course offerings within the school fiscal year 2013 / 2014. They can be offered during school hours or after school hours. They can be offered for a full year, for a semester or for an “inter-session” schedule (e.g. October – February). *All Course Choice course offerings in this first year of implementation must be scheduled to conclude by June 30, 2014.*

Student and Institutional Eligibility and Participation

- Q10) Which students are eligible for participation in Course Choice?
- A10) All Louisiana students are eligible to participate in Course Choice. The key difference arises when determining whether or not public funding will be available to fund the participation of various students.
- All students attending C, D and F schools are eligible funded students – they can enroll in any Course Choice course offering for which they are qualified, and their participation will be publicly funded (up to the funding limits described below, starting with question 18).*
- Students attending A and B schools may be eligible funded students *if* their school does not offer a course equivalent to the Course Choice course offering they have selected. In cases of dispute BESE is responsible for determining whether or not these students will receive public funding for their Course Choice course offerings.*
- Students attending A and B schools can still be eligible participating students and register for Course Choice courses. In these cases, however, students and their families will be responsible for paying the tuition for eligible participating students approved by BESE.*
- Q11) Can a student enroll in the Course Choice program if the course is already offered by the LEA, or is this program only for courses not offered in the LEA?
- A11) Students attending C, D or F schools can enroll in *any* Course Choice offering, whether or not that course is offered in their school. Students in A or B schools can enroll in *any* Course Choice offering. If the course they are seeking to take is not provided by their school, then they are “eligible funded students” – their participation is paid for by their LEA. If the course they are seeking to take is provided by their school, they can still choose to take the course, but in this case their family is responsible for paying the tuition level set by the course provider and approved by BESE.
- Q12) Will a student be permitted to take a Course Choice course offering [when the same course offering is] already offered at their home school and fits into their schedule?
- A12) Yes.
- Q13) Do you have an estimated number of students who will participate in Course Choice?
- A13) Until we learn how many credible course providers apply to deliver course offerings, we cannot make a data-driven estimate of the number of students likely to participate in Course Choice in the 2013 – 2014 school year. We have developed processes for course provider registration and application, however, that we hope enable us to make informed estimates of student participation early on in the process. As soon as the DOE believes it can make a data-driven, credible projection of student participation in 2013 – 2014

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Course Choice we will release this estimate, and we will continue to revise these estimates as better information emerges.

- Q14) Is Course Choice going to be the only way for a student to receive state funding to take a dual enrollment course at a university?
- A14) No. An LEA is still empowered to reach a bilateral agreement with a local university to implement a dual enrollment program based on mutually-accepted financial terms. Courses offered by post-secondary institutions must adhere to Louisiana course content standards to qualify for high school course credit.

Louisiana Virtual School and Course Choice

- Q15) How is Course Choice different than Louisiana Virtual School?
- A15) The Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) is a 8g-funded, subsidized provider of online course offerings available to students only if their LEA decides to offer this choice to their students. LVS tuition levels are fixed and do not vary by course. LVS course offerings are limited.

Course Choice offers *any* third-party course provider the opportunity to deliver high-quality course offerings to Louisiana students in *any* curricular area. Course providers will propose a “market-level” tuition price for their course offerings – different course offerings will likely have widely varying tuition levels. Eligible funded students (i.e., students attending C, D and F schools *and* students attending A and B schools where there are no equivalent course offerings) will have the right to enroll in any Course Choice course offering for which they are qualified. The cost of these courses will be paid for out of each LEA’s MFP funding.

- Q16) What will be the difference between Course Choice and Louisiana Virtual School?
- A16) Moving forward, Course Choice will offer a wide range of course offerings to students throughout Louisiana. LVS will continue to exist to provide course offerings *not* provided through Course Choice that are essential to the academic progress of Louisiana students. In the future, subsidies to maintain uniform tuition levels for all LVS course offerings will disappear, leading to “cost-based” tuition levels for each different LVS course offering.
- Q17) Will Louisiana Virtual School continue to be available for students of Louisiana after Course Choice is implemented?
- A17) LVS will continue to exist to provide course offerings *not* provided through Course Choice that are essential to the academic progress of Louisiana students. Subsidies to maintain uniform tuition levels for all LVS course offerings will disappear, leading to “cost-based” tuition levels for LVS course offerings.

Course Choice Funding

- Q18) Who determines course cost (i.e., “cost” to students, or the tuition “price” charged by course providers)?
- A18) Course providers will submit proposed tuition levels as part of the application process. For those course providers that make it through to the interview process, tuition levels will be an area of significant discussion and inquiry. Course provider applications will ultimately be evaluated on many different evaluation criteria, including among them tuition levels / price. *We are confident that Louisiana will receive applications for excellent educational course offerings from enough competing course providers to drive down the cost of high-quality course offerings.*
- Q19) Who decides how much each Course Choice course provider will get per course offering?

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- A19) Course providers will propose tuition levels for each course offering they apply to provide. As part of the evaluation and interview processes, these tuition levels will be discussed and evaluated. Course Choice course providers may or may not be provided the opportunity to amend their proposed tuition levels if during the evaluation process the DOE evaluation team determines that the course provider has a credible course offering that simply is not priced competitively with other equally-qualified course providers.
- Q20) How / when will course providers be paid?
- A20) As set forth in statute, course providers receive 50% of their approved tuition price when a student starts a course offering. The second 50% is paid when the student successfully completes the course on time. There are provisions in the statute to pay less than the remaining 50% if the student completes the course late. Course providers will receive no part of the second payment if a student fails to complete a course.
- Q21) Does MFP [Minimum Foundation Program] equal PPA [Per Pupil Amount]?
- A21) Yes.
- Q22) So 90% of 1/6 of an LEA's MFP is used to pay for the course . . . did I understand that correctly?
- A22) By statute, the *maximum* amount a course provider may charge as tuition for a one Carnegie credit Course Choice course offering is 90% of 1/6 of an LEA's MFP. As a practical matter, however, we believe it is *very unlikely* that an approved Course Choice course offering will have a tuition set at this level. *We are confident that Louisiana will receive applications for excellent educational course offerings from enough competing course providers to drive down the cost of high-quality course offerings.*
- Q23) Where do any leftover MFP funds [when tuition pricing levels are less than the statutory maximum allowed] go?
- A23) By statute, any MFP funds available from course offering tuitions lower than the maximum allowed are returned to the LEA and to the State on a *pro rata* basis.
- For additional details please see the Course Choice Funding White Paper, to be released on the Course Choice website on July 16 (the same day the Course Choice RFA is released).***
- Q24) How many Course Choice course offerings may a student take?
- A24) There is no statutory limitation on the number of Choice Choice courses a student may take. The limitation is one of funding – students may not enroll in Course Choice course offerings that have aggregate tuitions in excess of 90% of 5/6ths of their LEA's MFP.
- Q25) What happens when a course provider fails to follow through on their commitment, the student attempts to return to the school . . . and there's no funding?
- A25) Course providers that fail to follow through on their commitment will not receive the second 50% payment due them for each student enrolled. There are a number of scenarios that could be envisioned from this question that would lead to a variety of action steps if there is a reason to attempt to recover the initial 50% payment.
- LEAs retain a minimum of 10% of the MFP for each course offering and all students must take a minimum of one course in their home school that is fully funded by the MFP. *Home schools retain at all times their obligation to serve their students, and receive minimum funding levels necessary to do so.*

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Complete information on every aspect of Course Choice funding . . . how, when and under what conditions Course Providers will be paid . . . what amounts LEAs will be charged for students participating in Course Choice . . . and how students and parents will be able to use the funds available to them to enroll in Course Choice course offerings will be addressed in detail in the Course Choice Funding White Paper to be released on July 16, and during the July 18 - 20 webinars and the July 23 – 25 regional informational meetings.

Course Choice and School Accountability

- Q26) Will students who take the majority of their courses with one or more Course Choice course provider(s) still count in the high school graduation cohort?
- A26) Yes – students will remain part of their home school's high school graduation cohort. As a practical matter, it is highly unlikely that a student could take the majority of his / her courses through Course Choice in the initial year of implementation, but this is conceptually possible.
- Q27) Will home schools be responsible for their students graduating on time (graduation cohort) if they are only taking one course per year?
- A27) Yes, although as a practical matter it is highly unlikely that a student could take the majority of his / her courses through Course Choice in the initial year of implementation.
- Q28) What will be the effect on the school's accountability if students take EOC courses by Course Choice course providers?
- A28) Approved Course Choice course offerings will be regarded as the same as traditional school courses in all regards. EOC test results by students enrolled in Course Choice course offerings will be part of their home school's accountability process.
- Q29) How will Course Choice courses fulfill graduation requirements – will they be assigned state course codes?
- A29) All Course Choice courses will be assigned state course codes – this is part of the interview process, for those Course Choice applicants who make it through the application phase into the interview phase. Course Choice offerings will be equivalent to the same state course code courses taught in traditional brick and mortar schools.
- Q30) Will Course Choice course providers be required to follow the uniform state grading policy?
- A30) Yes.
- Q31) Will districts have to accept the credit from Course Choice courses?
- A31) Yes.
- Q32) For core classes with EOC assessments, are home schools responsible for EOC administration?
- A32) Administration of all EOC exams are the responsibility of the home school.
- Q33) How involved will the professional school counselor be in advising students and their parents prior to enrollment in Course Choice courses? Will the counselor be able to assist the parents and students in making appropriate decisions?
- A33) Parents and students will consult with school educators to make sure students are qualified for various Course Choice course offerings, and that they are earning sufficient credits to graduate. Professional school counselors will be able to access the Course Choice Registration System to review course offerings and (we hope) to generate reports on the selections / progress of their students. Our hope is to create an

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online “Academic Pathways Planning Tool” students, parents and their advisors can use to track overall academic progress, including but not limited to Course Choice course offerings.

- Q34) What kind of communication can counselors expect to have with Course Choice course providers? For instance, will there be a way to flag students that are in danger of failing a core subject?
- A34) Each Course Choice course provider will work with an identified school site facilitator that is assigned to students to act as a liaison between course providers and the school. Our plan is to also enable this interaction via the Course Choice Registration System. Additionally, students and their parents / caregivers may fill out and print a Student and Parent Course Choice Course Plan to prepare for their meeting with their professional school counselor.
- Q35) Will Course Choice course providers have to follow CCSS for core courses?
- A35) Yes.
- Q36) If a student takes an EOC course with a Course Choice course provider, does the student have to take the EOC test? If so, what happens if a student receives a “Needs Improvement” on that EOC test?
- A36) Yes. If a student receives a “Needs Improvement” on the EOC test, the home school will be responsible for providing all support services / mechanisms to help keep that student on track.
- Q37) Will students be allowed to enroll in off-campus Course Choice courses for the purpose of credit recovery?
- A37) Yes.

Special Education Accommodations

- Q38) Who is responsible for Special Education student’s accommodations?
- A38) Course Choice course providers will be required to provide all of the accommodations legally required for Special Education students. Significant parts of both the application and the interview processes will focus on making sure Course Choice course providers implement all of Louisiana’s rules and regulations regarding Special Education students.
- Course providers will be obligated to provide ADA/504 accommodations – the LEA is still responsible for Free Appropriate Public Education and all Special Education placement decisions.
- Q39) What happens to students with disabilities? Will the Course Choice course provider be bound by IDEA? Who carries out the accommodations?
- A39) All Course Choice Program providers must agree to and have a plan to service students with special needs through instruction, materials, and/or technology. All eligible participating students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be entitled to Special Education services through the school in which he/she is enrolled including, but not limited to, assisting course providers in implementing the accommodations within the IEP.

All services to which each such student attending public school would be entitled if attending the school in which he is enrolled full time for all courses, including but not limited to special education services pursuant to the student's Individual Education Plan, shall be provided.

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Internet Access / Transportation

- Q40) How are students to obtain computers and internet access? Will this be provided by the LEAs?
- A40) Families are responsible for computers and internet access for students taking Course Choice virtual classes from home. For Course Choice course offerings taken at school, LEAs are responsible for computers and internet access for students taking Course Choice courses that require these computers and internet access. It is important to note that there will be Course Choice courses that do not require in-school computers and internet access.
- Q41) Who provides online access or access to computer or transportation to internship or work sites for Course Choice course offerings?
- A41) If a student is taking an online course through the Course Choice Program and elects to take the course offsite, the parent/guardian must:
1. Ensure that the student is actively engaged in his/her course on a daily basis;
 2. Monitor student progress in the course in conjunction with the course provider, and facilitate communication in regards to student progress in the online course;
 3. Adhere to course provider practices in regards to ethical and legal use of equipment and instructional resources;
 4. Provide the students enrolled in online courses with technical/Internet access that meets the specifications furnished by the course provider; and
 5. Provide all equipment necessary for the student in an online course, including, but not limited to, a computer, computer monitor, and printer if a printer is necessary to participate in the program.

If an eligible funded student enrolls in an online course where the course is administered at the school site, the school or LEA shall meet the following requirements related to the online course environment:

1. The school/LEA shall provide students enrolled in online courses technical access that meets specifications furnished by the course provider.
2. The school/LEA shall provide instructional and communication hardware that meets specifications furnished by the course provider.
3. The school/LEA shall provide timely and appropriate technical support.
4. The school/LEA shall award credit and grades for the online courses assigned by the course provider and instructor with no deviations.
5. The school/LEA shall ensure that a facilitator who is a Louisiana licensed teacher or LEA employed paraprofessional is assigned to students to act as a liaison between the provider and the school.

Miscellaneous Questions

- Q42) Have you made a plan for conflicts of interest?
- A42) Yes. There will be strong firewalls and non-conflict policies to make sure that decisions on which course providers and course offerings are sent to BESE for final approval are free of conflicts of interest.
- Q43) Will there be any preference shown to minority-owned enterprises?
- A43) The RFA process is not a procurement process that scores bidders. It is an application process that evaluates applicants on a pass / fail basis. Because determinations are made on a pass / fail basis, there are no mechanisms for "scoring" any preferences for any type of applicant.

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- Q44) How are you going to ensure that a teacher isn't teaching home school students that he / she could be teaching face-to-face?
- A44) "Teacher entrepreneurs" can apply to as course providers to provide Course Choice course offerings. If their application is approved by BESE, these teachers will be allowed to offer their approved course offerings to all Louisiana students, based on the eligibility rules described above and in statute.
- Q45) What are the certification requirements for teachers?
- A45) Teachers must be certified to teach in Louisiana as required by state law.
- Q46) Are there any accreditation requirements for course providers?
- A46) There are no accreditation requirements mandated by statute. Accreditations will be evaluated as part of the application evaluation process, but accreditations on their own will not be sufficient to qualify a course provider applicant as an approved course provider.
- Q47) Can a course provider use their own building to teach their courses?
- A47) Yes.
- Q48) Are mobile classrooms "on the table" too?
- A48) Yes.
- Q49) What if parents insist that their child take a course from a vendor that has not been approved as a Course Choice course provider?
- A49) Only BESE-approved Course Choice course providers will be authorized to offer Course Choice course offerings.
- Q50) How does a Course Choice course provider inform students and parents about the courses they provide? Will course lists and providers be posted on a website?
- A50) In January, 2013 the Department of Education will implement a comprehensive Course Choice Registration System that will indicate all available Course Choice offerings. This system will enable students and their parents / caregivers to review available course offerings, learn more about them and then register. Our hope is that this system will also enable students to map out their individual educational pathways, ensuring that they are taking course offerings that will enable them to graduate on time, ready for post-secondary academic challenges and job-ready.
- Course providers may rely on this Course Choice Registration System to communicate the details about their course offerings to students and their parents. They may also choose to engage in other communications efforts to provide students and their parents with information about their course offerings and about their organization.

Additional details on the Course Choice Registration System will be forthcoming.

Thank you all for your interest in the Louisiana Course Choice program!

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Louisiana Believes.