

## Implementing the Secondary Course Classification System (SCED)

This short overview of SCED's design and implementation is meant to answer some frequently asked questions from states and districts who are adopting SCED for their student records or transcripts.

SCED was designed as a means for describing secondary courses in general terms so that course information in student transcripts or other records could be understood across schools, districts, and states. There are 22 major subject areas within SCED; and within each area there are a number of courses.

The course classification system is reflected in the 12-character Course Code, which includes four pieces of information: course description (e.g., World Geography); course level (e.g., regular, honors); available credit (expressed as Carnegie units); and sequence (for indicating if a course is part of a series).

### Points About the Design of SCED

*SCED is descriptive, not prescriptive.* It reflects courses that are widely offered. The courses and their descriptions were drawn from existing school, district, and state course catalogs. SCED will not necessarily include courses that subject or curriculum experts feel should be offered, nor will the course descriptions include specific academic standards. The only exceptions to this are the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, whose sponsors provide explicit requirements.

*SCED is not intended to replace schools' and districts' course catalogs.* It is a system to which existing courses can be "mapped" for common understanding. For example, one district might offer a course called "Speed Reading for Comprehension" while another offers a course called "College Course Skills." If both courses can be mapped to SCED's "Strategic Reading" description, each district would know whether a transferring student had covered the same general content.

*SCED course titles are not intended to be used in course catalogs.* The course titles are deliberately general and usually do not include enough description to be used in a school's or district's catalog. For example, rather than calling a course "Literature of a Theme," a course catalog would probably have a more explicit title, such as "The American Dream," or, "Books That Shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> Century."

*"Secondary" means available credit.* While "secondary" usually means grades 9 through 12, this is not always the case. SCED is to be used for courses at the level at which Carnegie units are available. NCES is developing a system for classifying non-secondary courses.

## Points About Implementing SCED

*SCED may require some judgment calls.* There are courses that include content from more than a single subject area. In these cases, mapping to SCED may require you to choose the course description that is the best match for your course's content.

*SCED course descriptions may seem too general* to accurately describe a course. This is unavoidable with a system that attempts to map a multitude of individual courses to a limited number of descriptions. Users should choose the SCED course that is the best match, with the understanding that student records would include both the SCED course code and the school's or district's individual course title.

*SCED describes courses as they would be included in a student's records*, not classes or teacher qualifications. For example, a "Latin I" course could be taught to a class that included students in grades 8, 9, and 10. If Carnegie units for the course were available only to students in grades 9 or above, the students' records would show a secondary (SCED) course for students in grades 9 and 10 and a non-secondary course for those in grade 8 – even though the students sat in the same class with the same teacher and the course was described as secondary in the school's catalog.

*SCED includes course content, but not delivery method.* There is no distinction between an Art History course taught as a seminar and an Art History course taught through virtual learning.

*SCED does not include information about* whether a course is required for high school graduation or whether it has been adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

*Different states have adopted different approaches to implementing SCED.* If you are mapping a school or district course catalog to SCED and you encounter difficulties in using the system, contact your state education agency. There may be a practice or decision rule in place that answers your question.

You can find more information about work in developing non-secondary course codes at descriptions at <http://nces.ed.gov/forum>