SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) For Modernized CTE Programs

Modernized CTE Program Development and Approval Process

CTE Program FAQ

CTE modernization is being implemented to ensure programs reflect today's workforce needs and lead to meaningful credentials, college opportunities, and careers. The changes are based on labor market data, industry input, and student outcomes, not historical program structures or local preferences.

1. Why were the CTE programs reviewed and modernized?

The South Carolina Department of Education conducted a comprehensive review to ensure CTE programs remain aligned with workforce demand, postsecondary expectations, industry credentials, and student success outcomes. This program review was the start of a planned cyclical review cycle for all SCDE approved CTE programs as part of a data-driven process to ensure South Carolina CTE programs continue to meet the evolving needs of students and South Carolina priority occupations and workforce demands. The goal is to provide rigorous, relevant, and scalable programs that prepare students for high-demand careers.

2. What information was used to develop the proposed programs?

The review considered:

- Existing program structures and course sequences
- Current course standards
- Labor market and workforce demand data
- Industry credential alignment
- Post-secondary expectations
- Historical enrollment and completion data

These data sources informed the initial program recommendations and course sequences.

3. Who had the opportunity to provide feedback?

Feedback was solicited from:

- CTE instructors
- CTE administrators
- Industry and workforce partners
- Postsecondary representatives

Stakeholder review was a key component of the process.

4. How was stakeholder feedback used?

Pathway Specialists reviewed all submissions, analyzed trends and recommendations, and considered revisions where appropriate. Feedback informed discussions and refinement before programs were finalized for review and approval.

5. Were decisions based on local preferences?

No. Reviewers were asked to make recommendations based on evidence, workforce needs, post-secondary expectations, and statewide considerations rather than local historical practices or individual district preferences.

6. What factors guided final program decisions?

Recommendations were guided by:

- Student-centered design
- Statewide applicability
- Labor market demand
- Postsecondary readiness
- Industry credential attainment
- Equitable access
- Program scalability
- Modernization and workforce relevance
- Evidence-based decision making

These principles were used throughout the review and approval process.

7. Who approved the final recommendations?

The process included:

1. Pathway Specialist review and refinement
2. OCR Director review and approval
3. Senior Staff review and approval

Final approval authorized the release of updated state-approved CTE programs.

8. When do the modernized programs take effect?

Students entering high school during the 2027-28 school year (9GR28) will follow the modernized CTE program structure. Students who entered high school before the 2027-28 school year may complete either the legacy or modernized program requirements.

9. Will current students be required to switch programs?

No. Students who entered high school before 2027-28 may continue under the legacy program requirements outlined in the 2026-27 CTE Course and Program Guide, or meet requirements under the modernized structure. This transition approach is intended to minimize disruptions for students and districts.

10. Why will this be a phased implementation?

The recommended approach mirrors the implementation of the Tiered Certification System and allows districts adequate time to:

- Adjust schedules
- Plan course offerings
- Communicate changes
- Support student transitions

This approach promotes a smoother statewide implementation.

11. What if my courses are double blocked?

Districts may still offer courses using a double-blocked schedule. To ensure students receive the required seat time (120 hours per course) and maximize access, courses may be taught in a variety of scheduling formats, including 9-week double-blocked courses, provided the required instructional hours are met.

Only courses designated with a "D" in the Academic Unit field on the Course Card in the SCDE Course Code Database may be offered for 240 hours and awarded two credits upon successful completion.

Regardless of the scheduling model used, districts should ensure students can progress through the full program sequence. Because the Modernized CTE Programs are structured as three- or four-course sequences rather than unit-based programs, students should be provided the opportunity to enroll in and complete all courses within the sequence, including the third and fourth courses, as applicable.

12. Can I provide feedback for future updates?

Yes. Continuous improvement is a key component of maintaining high-quality CTE programs. Program reevaluations will occur on an ongoing, cyclical basis and may also be conducted as workforce needs; post-secondary expectations, industry standards, and student demands evolve. Stakeholder feedback will continue to play an important role in these reviews and will be collected and considered during future reevaluation processes. This modernization effort reflects a long-term commitment to ensuring CTE programs remain relevant, rigorous, and responsive to the needs of students, employers, and postsecondary partners.

13. One of the programs my school offers is not included in the Modernized Programs list. Can we keep programs that are no longer included in the Modernized Programs list?

Yes. If your current program continues to meet a demonstrated local business and industry need, you may submit an Innovative Program Application to continue offering the program. The application requires a needs assessment from both business and industry partners and students to document the ongoing need for the program.

If the requested program aligns with a previously approved program, the application may be fast-tracked to the three-year renewal cycle. Districts must collect enrollment data annually; however, that data only needs to be submitted as part of the renewal application once every three years. New CTE Innovative Program Application Instructions

14. When will the new courses listed in the Modernized Programs list be available?

New courses will be developed during the Spring standards revision cycle and prioritized for review by Technical Advisory Committees (TACs). The new courses will be available for use in the 2027-28 academic year.

We will be seeking volunteers to serve on these committees, so please look for upcoming communications regarding TAC nominations and participation opportunities.

15. What is the plan to fund state-approved instructional materials for this revised plan?

Many courses in the revised plan remain unchanged. OCR will coordinate with the Office of Instructional Resources and Technology Strategy through the established instructional materials adoption cycle. As new course standards are developed, we will advocate for aligned instructional materials to support implementation.

16. Are any CTE courses being eliminated?

No CTE courses have been eliminated. Some CTE courses are not included in any CTE program, but no courses are being eliminated.

However, courses and course standards will continue to be reviewed through the regular cyclical revision process. As part of those reviews, courses may be recommended for retirement based on factors such as enrollment trends, student outcomes, South Carolina workforce priorities, and business and industry needs.

17. What if a CTE course is no longer included in any pathway?

Courses that are no longer included in a Modernized CTE Program will remain available for students under the legacy program structure. However, those courses will not count toward completion of a Modernized CTE Program for students in the 9GR28 cohort (students who enter 9th grade during the 2027-28 school year) and beyond.

Districts should begin planning for the transition to the Modernized CTE Programs by reviewing course offerings, evaluating program alignment, and providing professional development and support for teachers who may need to teach different courses.

If a legacy program structure continues to meet a demonstrated local business and industry need, districts may submit an Innovative Program Application to continue offering the program. The application requires a needs assessment from both business and industry partners and students to verify the need. If the requested program sequence aligns with a previously approved sequence, the application may be fast-tracked to the three-year renewal cycle. Districts must collect enrollment data annually and submit it as part of the renewal process every three years.