



Understanding Advanced Placement

Answers to some Frequently asked Questions

What is the Advanced Placement (AP) Program?

The Advanced Placement (AP) program is a curriculum designed to prepare students to successfully write the Advanced Placement exam. The curriculum, which originates in the United States, is sponsored by a College Board which offers standardized courses to high school students in the United States, Canada and many other countries around the world.

AP curricula, by their very nature, have increased content over and above what is required in the Alberta/ECE core curricula. Additional content and increased rigor translates into additional work and time by the students enrolling in AP preparatory activities and/or courses.

Boards and individual schools employ a variety of implementation strategies for preparing students to be successful in writing the AP exams. The primary goal of YK1's Advanced Placement program is to maximize the success of students in transitioning from high school into college and/or university. *To prepare our students for writing the AP exams, YK1 is committed to using current, 'best practice' teaching strategies that engage students and prepare them for a life of learning.*

What are the potential benefits to the student?

Students enrolling in AP preparatory activities and/or courses write an AP exam which is traditionally administered at the end of Grade 12. A student achieving a high score on an AP exam for a specific course of studies may improve his/her chance of admission into university, may lead to his/her earning university credit for the course, and/or may lead to his/her advanced placement in the course. For example, a student receiving a high score on an AP English exam may be granted 'advanced placement' into a university's second year English course. The university may/may not approve the first year entry level English course for credit. In any case, whether or not a student is granted credit and/or advanced placement at the university level, it is important to not lose sight of the primary goal of AP which is to maximize the student's success in first year university. Even if the university awards advanced placement, for certain students, dependant on their program, it may be in their best interests to take first year English. (See "Is AP just about receiving university credit?" below.)

Will my university of choice accept my AP course for credit?

Participating universities, of which there are many in Canada, grant credit and/or placement to students who obtain high enough scores on the exams to qualify. *The criteria for receiving credit and/or placement credit will be different for different Universities, so whether or not a university awards advanced placement is the sole decision of the university.* The University of Alberta awards advanced placement and/or credit for specific courses to incoming students for AP exams with grades of 4 or higher. For more specific information on the AP policies of Canadian Universities, you may wish to check out the following link: http://www.ap.ca/pages/04_AP_policies.htm .

Is AP just about receiving university credit?

The primary goal of YK1's Advanced Placement program is to maximize the success of students in transitioning from high school into college and/or university, so the answer to this question is "No." First year university can be a difficult transition for many students and especially for students from the NWT who have to adjust to life away from their homes and their families. Prior exposure to first year university course content and/or a focus on in depth exploration of concepts via their AP high school experiences will improve their opportunity for successful course completion during their initial year of university. It certainly makes for a smoother transition to university when the course material and the rigor that you experience in university are familiar to you.

Should I accept the credit for a first year university course, if my AP exam score meets the University requirement?

On the surface, a typical response to this question would be, "Yes, why would I not accept the credit or placement?" In some cases, it may mean that a university requires one less course to graduate resulting in an obvious financial saving. It may also mean that the student has a slot available in which he/she has the opportunity to take an additional course of special interest to him/her.

A closer analysis suggests what is in the best interest for one student may not necessarily be in the best interest of another. Let's examine the interests of two students, student A and student B, who, following the completion of their high school AP English Language Arts exam, meet the credit requirements for first year English at their respective universities. It would probably be in the best interest of Student A, who is intent on pursuing a science degree leading to a career in dentistry, to accept the credit for first year English Language Arts. He/she will probably not be taking any additional English courses, unless it is a degree requirement. The same may not be true for Student B, intent on majoring in English, and who wishes to receive a high grade point average (GPA) in his/her area of study. Receiving a high mark on first year English would give Student B confidence in his/her chosen major and would set him/her on the path to reaching his/her goal of a high GPA. Advancing to second year English and receiving a lower course mark might result in a different outcome.

Do I have to take an AP course in order to write the AP exam?

No, any student can challenge the AP exam without taking the AP preparatory activities and/or courses. Students who have taken challenging courses or who have studied in depth on their own may be able to achieve a high grade on the exam without taking the AP course. *The university bases its decisions for credit and advanced placement 'solely' on the exam mark.*

How will a low score on the AP exam affect my entrance into university?

It is important to note that upon completion of the AP preparatory activity and/or course the student has the option of writing the AP examination. The mark for this examination will reside with the College Board and if the student desires, he/she can request that this mark be forward to the post secondary institution for consideration of advanced placement. The AP examination mark will not be reflected on the students NWT transcript as the AP examination is an external assessment and not associated with graduation requirements in the NWT/Alberta. Also, the student will have the opportunity to write the NWT/Alberta Diploma exam. These two examinations are separate and are not connected to one

another. The student's NWT transcript will only reflect the Diploma examination mark which is reflective of the 50% school based mark and 50% the NWT/Alberta Diploma examination mark.

Can I receive credit at the high school for AP courses?

Currently there are no AP courses offered for credit in the NWT. In order for a high school AP course to receive NWT credits, the curricular outcomes for the AP course must be submitted to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for approval through a locally developed course process. To receive approval for credit as a locally developed course, the learning outcomes for an AP course must be significantly different than the learning outcomes for the corresponding NWT/Alberta course. In the event that the learning outcomes are not significantly different, the learning outcomes are considered one and the same and therefore, cannot be approved for additional credits. An AP course such as American History, if submitted for credit, would be considered for the locally developed course process, because the content is significantly different than Social Studies 30-1. *If ECE approves an AP course for credit, the course is assigned an NWT course ID number and consequently may be offered for credit by any NWT school board.* In the event that the AP course is not approved for credit by ECE, the submitting Board may still offer the course to students. However, they cannot offer it for high school credit.

What is YK1's position on Advanced Placement?

Yellowknife Education District No.1 is committed to meeting the needs of our diverse student body and to ensuring our students have a smooth transition from high school in to university. We continue to provide support to students taking courses outside the traditional NWT curricula. Our team of counselors continues to work closely with our students to support them in taking online high school courses such as Spanish, German, Ukrainian and/or in taking CTS modules in areas such as Parenting and/or Religious Studies. Dependant on their individual needs, our students will continue to receive credit from institutions such as Athabasca University for courses such as German, French, Spanish and Math.

With École Sir John Franklin High School having been recognized as an AP school for the past 15 years, it is important to note that the Advanced Placement program is not new to Yellowknife Education District No. 1. In fact, with the possible exception of the past year or two, École Sir John Franklin was unique in being the 'only' high school in the NWT to receive designation as an AP school. This current year, École Sir John Franklin High School students will continue to write the AP exam for French Language Arts as they have for the past 10 years. In past years, our students have also benefited from Advanced Placement in English Language Arts, Physics, and Mathematics. ***For the 2011-12 school year, École Sir John Franklin High School will be expanding its AP program with AP being offered in the following subject areas: French Language Arts, English, Calculus, Biology, Economics, and Computers.***

In summary, YK1 views Advanced Placement as another learning opportunity to meet the needs of a segment of our student population. Advanced Placement is viewed within the context of providing additional enrichment opportunities for our students that will maximize their success in their transition to college and/or university. To prepare our students for writing the AP exams, YK1 will focus on current, 'best practice' teaching strategies that engage students. Opportunities for credit and/or advanced placement at the university level will be determined on a student by student basis in discussion with our counselors and teachers and in the context of what best satisfies the identified interests, needs and career path of the student.

In the event that you have additional questions regarding YK1's Advanced Placement opportunities for the 2011-12 school year, please contact École Sir John Franklin High School at 669-0773 and/or visit their website at sjf.yk1.nt.ca