**Environmental Science Course**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **What was the rational for developing new laboratory science course that would count towards graduation?**

This course will provide students the opportunity to learn environmental concepts in depth and build on the concepts currently embedded in the 2010 *Science Standards of Learning*. The goal of this course is to provide students with the skills and content necessary for them to look at current and future environmental issues, both natural and man-made, through a critical lens and to provide a platform to make informed decisions. We want students to have the opportunity to increase their environmental literacy and graduate with the knowledge and skills to act responsibly to protect and restore their environment.

1. **When does the addition of the Environmental Science course for graduation credit go into effect?**

This course may be counted as a graduation credit in laboratory science starting with the graduating class of 2018.

1. **What certification do teachers need to teach this course?**

Teachers for this course must be certified in Biology and/or Earth Science.

1. **Are there standards or other documents to support this course?**

Currently, there are no Standards of Learning for Environmental science; however, content guidelines have been created to inform instruction. It is anticipated that the content guidelines for this course and many of the second level science laboratory courses will become Standards of Learning in the next revision process. The goal is to have teachers review and implement the content guidelines and provide feedback in order to revise the content before becoming official Standards of Learning.

The content guidelines were created to provide a foundation in both Earth Science and Biology. The goal of the guidelines is to address gaps in student content knowledge and science skills prior to entering a Standards of Learning EOC tested course. These content guidelines are baseline knowledge and the rigor may be increased for students that are taking the course later in their high school career.

1. **How can this course be used in meeting student laboratory science requirements for standard diploma? Advanced diploma?**

There are many pathways that students may choose in order to meet the graduation requirements for standard and advanced diplomas. In order to meet the requirements for standard diploma, students must complete three Virginia Board of Education (BOE) approved science laboratory science courses from a minimum of two disciplines. Advanced diploma requires four BOE approved science laboratory science courses from a minimum of three disciplines. The disciplines are Biology, Earth Science, Chemistry, and Physics. Environmental Science may count as an Earth Science or Biology discipline; a student may not apply it to both disciplines. Please refer to the sample course pathway document provided.

1. **Does the teacher certification determine whether a student earns biology or Earth science credit?**

No. It is expected that school counselors will work with students as they develop their academic plans to determine which discipline will be most appropriate in preparing students for future course work. Students within the same class may take the course for different discipline credit.

1. **How are the second level courses in Earth science and biology impacted by the environmental science course?**

Although environmental science can count as a biology or Earth science credit in meeting the requirements for graduation, students still need to take the prerequisite first level course in a discipline before taking the second level course. For example, a student can meet the graduation requirements for the standard diploma and the prerequisites by taking environmental science, biology, and anatomy and physiology. A student could not take environmental science and then anatomy and physiology.

1. **How does this course differ from Advanced Placement Environmental Science (APES)?**

Although both courses offer content on environmental science, the Advanced Placement course content is provided through the College Board. Teachers of the APES course are expected to complete syllabi that must be submitted and approved by the College Board. At the end of the course, the students have the option to take the AP Environmental Science test. Based on their performance on the test, the college they choose to attend may award credit for the course.

The new Environmental Science course is meant as an introductory course suitable for all students.

1. **Is there a Standards of Learning End of Course assessment tied to this course?**

No.

1. **Can the environmental science course be used as a verified credit?**

No. In order to earn a verified credit in a science course, the student must pass the course and pass the Standards of Learning assessment tied to the course. The only science courses at the high school level that have a Standards of Learning assessment are Biology I, Earth Science I, and Chemistry I. There are other tests that can be used to substitute for the biology, Earth science, and chemistry tests. The substitute tests can be found at [substitute tests for verified credit](http://doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/subtests-verified-credit.pdf%20). There is no Virginia BOE approved end-of course test or substitute test associated with this newly approved environmental science course.

1. **What textbook should be used?**

At this time, VDOE has not reviewed textbooks for environmental science.