

## **Center for Talent Development Acceleration Request Procedure**

The Center for Talent Development (CTD) recognizes that all students across the achievement spectrum should be supported to develop their potential. As such, CTD offers a variety of advanced enrichment and accelerated courses for students age 4 through grade 12, allowing students to master content above and beyond what may be traditionally offered in school at their grade level.

For some students demonstrating a need for an even higher level of instruction than CTD's advanced and accelerated courses already provide, further acceleration may be an option. This document describes the process that shall be used for evaluating students for possible accelerated placement into CTD courses designed for older students.

The process of review shall be open to all students referred for acceleration regardless of socioeconomic status or race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, citizenship status, genetic information or any other classification protected by law or University policy. Decisions about acceleration and course enrollment are made separately from decisions about financial aid. As with any applicant, students applying for early admission may apply for need-based financial aid for CTD programs where aid is available.

### **1. Definitions**

Most CTD courses are already designed to provide a degree of differentiation and acceleration, as reflected in course descriptions and the standard admission requirements. This document is primarily intended to address early admission to our already advanced courses, allowing students to access content at an instructional level that more appropriately matches their readiness to learn in a particular subject area.

- a. "Accelerated placement" is the placement of a student at the instructional level that best matches that student's needs by allowing access to a curriculum that is usually reserved for children who are older or in higher grades than the student. Accelerated placement is not limited to those students who have been identified as gifted and talented, but rather is open to students who demonstrate high ability commensurate with the course eligibility requirements and who may benefit from accelerated placement.

### **2. Publication of Acceleration and Referral Procedures and Forms**

- a. Copies of this document and referral forms for evaluation for possible acceleration shall be made available to program staff and parents and shall be published on the CTD website.
- b. Copies of this procedures document may also be requested by contacting the CTD Admissions Office at [ctd-admissions@northwestern.edu](mailto:ctd-admissions@northwestern.edu).

### **3. Initiation of Evaluation Process**

- a. Referral Procedures
  - i. Referrers: Any student applying to a Center for Talent Development program may be referred for evaluation for accelerated placement by a CTD teacher or administrator or a parent or legal guardian of the student. With the consent of a parent or legal guardian, a student may also self-refer.
  - ii. Referral Intake Form: The referrer shall complete the appropriate referral form and submit it to the Admissions Manager. The submission of the referral form by the initial referrer starts the clock on the evaluation process. Referral forms must be submitted a minimum of 10 business days prior to the published program application deadline. Because of the nature of the programs, accelerated placement requests are generally not possible after a course has begun.
  
- b. Written Parental Consent: If the referral comes from an individual other than the student's parent or legal guardian, the Admissions Manager of the referred student shall obtain written permission from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement. Consent is presumed when the individual referring the student for evaluation is a student's parent or legal guardian. The Center for Talent Development staff shall evaluate all students who are referred for evaluation and whose parent(s) or legal guardian(s) have granted permission to evaluate the student for possible accelerated placement.
  
- c. Timeline:
  - i. Students who are referred for evaluation for possible accelerated placement shall receive a determination no later than 10 business days after receipt of a complete referral packet which includes the referral form and all required documentation.
  
- 4. **Evaluation Process:** The evaluation process involves a multi-member review team. This evaluation team is responsible for reviewing completed referral packets, which should include relevant, reliable, and comprehensive data, in order to determine whether and what type of accelerated placement is appropriate for that student.
  - a. Evaluation Team
    - i. An evaluation team shall consist of multiple participants. Team members include:
      1. Center for Talent Development Admissions Manager
      2. Relevant Center for Talent Development program coordinators or his or her designee
      3. A Center for Talent Development Associate Director
      4. A program staff member, Center for Talent Development instructor, or assessment team member
    - ii. A parent or legal guardian of the student shall be invited to submit a personal statement or other relevant information as part of the referral packet. Accommodations should be made for parents with disabilities or who are not fluent English speakers to enable them to participate fully in the process.

- b. Multiple Evaluation Criteria
  - i. The evaluation process shall include a review of valid, reliable indicators of academic achievement, intellectual ability, and developmental readiness, including test scores, recommendations from educators, and previous grade reports or course evaluations. The criteria used to make a decision about accelerated placement should be appropriate to the program and course eligibility requirements (e.g., test scores that demonstrate a student is ready for the course content and pace of instruction; recommendations that describe psychosocial skills necessary for success; grades/evaluations from previous accelerated coursework in a similar subject area). For students referred for possible acceleration, above-grade-level assessment results in the relevant subject area are strongly recommended.
  - ii. Any assessments utilized as part of the evaluation process shall meet the requirements for testing outlined in the program eligibility information on the website. For students who have not previously participated in above-grade-level assessment, testing is available through Center for Talent Development. See the website for information.
  - iii. The student's desire to be accelerated shall be considered in the decision-making and implementation planning process.
- c. Other Factors CTD Considers That May Preclude An Accelerated Placement
  - i. Legal requirements or liability issues may preclude Center for Talent Development from allowing early admission to certain courses. Examples include laboratories or service-learning sites with age restrictions or computer science courses with age-restricted software. In these cases, applicants will be considered or referred for accelerated placement in other courses or equivalent programs, where available.
  - ii. CTD limits class sizes and admits students on a first-come, first-served basis. A student will not be placed in a course that has reached enrollment capacity. The date CTD has a complete course application and acceleration packet on file, not the date a determination is made about acceleration, will be the official date for enrollment decisions.
- d. Procedures for Notifying Parents/Guardians of the Decision is Required
  - i. A parent or legal guardian of the evaluated student shall be notified in writing of the outcome of the evaluation process no later than 10 business days after receipt of a complete referral packet. This notification shall include instructions for appealing the outcome of the evaluation process.
  - ii. If a student is denied an accelerated placement, parents or legal guardians must be notified of the applicable refund policy. Refunds will be granted for students denied an accelerated placement; however, the parent may choose to enroll the student in a grade-level course, if the student meets the qualifications for the course.
  - iii. A parent or legal guardian of the referred student may appeal the decision of the evaluation team to the Center for Talent Development Director. The appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 days of being notified of the committee's decision. The Director shall review the appeal and notify the parent or legal guardian who filed the appeal of a final decision within five

(5) business days of receiving the appeal. The Director's decision shall be final. However, the student may be referred and evaluated again at the next available opportunity if he or she is again referred for evaluation by an individual eligible to make referrals as described in this document. In cases where notification is received immediately prior to the course start date, appeal decisions will be considered for an upcoming course, not the course already in progress.

- e. Communication of the Decision to Student's Center for Talent Development  
Instructors: The decision that a student is eligible for accelerated placement shall be communicated to the appropriate program staff and receiving teacher(s) and relevant administrative personnel to ensure that all are informed and prepared to support the placement.

## **5. Accelerated Placement**

- a. If an accelerated placement is approved, the evaluation team shall notify the family in writing. In general, accelerated students who successfully complete a course and meet the requirements for future courses may continue with accelerated placement in subject areas and courses with same admission criteria as long as prerequisites are met and there are no other legal requirements or liability issues that may preclude Center for Talent Development from allowing early admission (see 4, b, l, above). Any accommodations or modifications the student is entitled to receive due to a disability shall be available in the accelerated setting.
- b. The accelerated student's placement will be evaluated by the program instructor and coordinator during a specified trial period. The trial period is set by the program coordinator and is dependent on the program structure (e.g., length of course, pacing, etc.) and course type (e.g., accelerated, enrichment). Trial periods for accelerated, compacted courses may be as short as one day, while other course types may offer a longer trial period. After the trial period, if the program staff determines the student is meeting course learning and behavioral expectations, the student will continue in the accelerated placement. If a student is not meeting course expectations during the trial period, the student will be returned to a non-accelerated setting without penalty if another course is available in the same subject at the appropriate grade level. During the trial period, the accelerated student's parent or guardian may also request in writing that the student be returned to a non-accelerated setting without penalty if another course is available in the same subject at the appropriate grade level. However, for some of CTD's fast-paced, compacted courses, it may not be possible to admit students into another course in the same session.
- c. At the end of the course, a student's record will be updated to reflect the outcome of the acceleration and the process required for approval of future accelerated placements.