



NUSTEP

Student & Parent

Handbook

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1. Welcome & Program Overview

What started in one high school with one class has now expanded to over 35 schools in WNY and Rochester, and currently offers over 45 different course offerings. Approximately 1,800 students participate in NUSTEP annually to jumpstart their college careers.

NUSTEP gives academically prepared high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn official, transferable Niagara University college credit right on their own high school campus. Courses are taught during the regular school day by university-approved high school instructors who use syllabi and standards identical to on-campus sections.

The Benefits & Implications of Dual Enrollment

Enrolling in NUSTEP is an incredible opportunity to accelerate your higher education, reduce future college costs, and demonstrate academic rigor to college admissions boards. However, because you are establishing a **permanent college transcript**, participation carries serious adult responsibilities. The grades you earn in your NUSTEP courses will follow you to whatever college or university you attend after graduation and will impact your cumulative undergraduate GPA.

2. Student Eligibility & Academic Advising

Student Enrollment Criteria

To enroll in a NUSTEP course for college credit, students must meet the following programmatic criteria:

- **Juniors and Seniors:** Must maintain an overall average of **80 or above** across their five core academic subjects (English, Math, Science, History, and World Language).
- **General Recommendations:** Participating juniors and seniors must be formally recommended for NUSTEP course placement by their high school counselor, a former teacher, or the current NUSTEP instructor.

Sophomore Eligibility — Case-by-Case Review

While NUSTEP enrollment is primarily designed for high school juniors and seniors, sophomore students may be considered for participation on a case-by-case basis. Given their younger age and earlier stage of academic development, sophomore applicants are subject to an elevated review process that involves multiple levels of university academic leadership to ensure they are genuinely prepared for the rigor of college-level coursework.

The sophomore review process operates as follows:

- **Endorsement:** The interested sophomore must be formally endorsed by a high school guidance counselor or instructor who can speak to the student's academic readiness and maturity.
- **Required Documentation:** The student must submit their official high school transcript and a letter of recommendation as part of their application for consideration.

- **University Review:** The submitted materials are reviewed by the Niagara University Associate Provost. Depending on the course requested, the review may also involve the relevant academic Department Chairperson and/or faculty liaison, who can assess whether the student's background aligns with the specific academic expectations of the course.
- **Decision & Communication:** Once a determination has been made, the Manager of NUSTEP communicates the outcome directly to the student and the partner high school, providing any relevant context or next steps as appropriate.

Description of the Academic Advising Process

- **Advising Allocation & Shared Model:** Academic advising is a collaborative, shared effort between the NUSTEP Program Director, University Admissions, and our secondary school partners. Operationally, **the bulk of direct student advising and primary eligibility reviews are the responsibility of the high school guidance department and your dual enrollment instructors.** While students and parents are always welcome to reach out directly to the NUSTEP office for institutional support, our partner high schools handle the frontline day-to-day advising administration and curriculum alignment.
- **Format & Delivery Method:** Information is delivered via interactive classroom presentations conducted by NUSTEP representatives, digital documentation via the NUSTEP web portal, and 1-on-1 planning sessions with high school guidance counselors.
- **Advising Timeline:** Advising begins in the spring prior to the enrollment year during high school course selection and intensifies during the formal registration window at the start of the fall and spring semesters.
- **Information Provided:** Students receive comprehensive guidance on how NUSTEP courses align with university programs of study (majors/degrees), required course prerequisites, expected course load, registration logistics, credit transferability parameters, and student legal rights.

Course Prerequisites & Placement Testing

Certain advanced NUSTEP courses—particularly in mathematics, sciences, and sequential world languages—require students to meet specific academic prerequisites or pass high school benchmarking before enrollment is finalized. Students should review individual course specifications with their counselor to ensure they possess the necessary foundational preparation.

3. Program Costs, Registration, & Cancellations

Enrollment Processes

Enrollment for all courses must be completed through the secure online NUSTEP portal during the designated registration windows at the start of each term.

Course Cancellations

Niagara University reserves the right to cancel a NUSTEP course section prior to the start of the semester if the enrollment fails to meet minimum capacity thresholds, or if a credentialed instructor becomes unavailable. If a course is canceled by the university, all collected tuition fees for that section will be refunded in full.

Tuition Fees & Fee Waivers

Once a student registers and pays for a course, they are considered a part-time student for university reporting purposes.

- **Standard Tuition:** \$105 per credit hour (\$315 for a 3-credit course; \$420 for a 4-credit course).
- **Reduced Tuition:** Students on a free or reduced lunch program by USDA standards are eligible for a reduced rate of **\$25 per credit hour** (\$75 for a 3-credit course; \$100 for a 4-credit course).
- **Verification:** To secure the reduced rate, a high school counselor or instructor must verify the student's eligibility status with high school administrators and provide NUSTEP with an official letter, email, or meal program acceptance documentation.

4. Student Legal Rights & Institutional Policies

FERPA Rights (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student educational records. Once a student registers for a college course, these privacy rights transfer from the parents to the student, regardless of age. To ensure a healthy support network, **students are asked to complete a FERPA waiver within their online application.**

- **If You Agree (Recommended):** You grant Niagara University, your parents/guardians, and your high school teachers permission to freely discuss your enrollment, course progress, and grades.
- **If You Do Not Agree:** Federal law strictly prevents university staff and your instructor from discussing your academic progress or grades with *anyone*—including your parents or guardians.

ADA Accommodations (Americans with Disabilities Act)

Niagara University is committed to providing equal access to education for all qualified students. If you have a documented disability and receive accommodations at your high school (such as via an IEP or 504 Plan), you are eligible to receive corresponding accommodations in your NUSTEP course.

- **Process:** To ensure your accommodations align with university standards under the ADA, please notify your NUSTEP instructor at the start of the term. The instructor will work in coordination with the high school special education department and NUSTEP administration to implement approved academic adjustments.

5. Academic Integrity & Conduct Policies

The integrity of an academic community necessitates full and correct attribution of ideas, methodologies, and findings. Academic honesty is essential to ensure the validity of the grading system. The principal violations of academic honesty are cheating and plagiarism.

- **Cheating:** The unauthorized use of materials, information, or devices during examinations or in preparing assignments. Assisting another student in an act of academic dishonesty is also defined as cheating.
- **Plagiarism:** Presenting the ideas, words, or opinions of someone else as your own. Paraphrased material, even if rendered in your own words, must be properly cited and attributed to the originator.

Allegations, Penalties, and Appeal Workflows

An instructor who suspects academic dishonesty will present the evidence directly to the student. The student will have an opportunity to respond. If the response is rejected, the instructor will assign an appropriate penalty based on the severity of the offense, which may include:

1. Mandatory resubmission of an essay or rewriting of an examination.
2. Assigning an automatic grade of **"F"** for the specific paper, project, or exam.
3. Assigning a final grade of **"F" for the entire college course** (*Note: Second offenders receive an automatic "F" for the course*).

The instructor will submit an official report of the offense to the NUSTEP office and the university faculty liaison. The high school may also impose separate school-level penalties. Students wishing to appeal an academic integrity penalty must follow the formal academic grievance process outlined in the official Niagara University Catalog.

6. Course Drops, Withdrawals, & Financial Aid Implications

Dropping or Withdrawing from a Course

If a student chooses to withdraw from a NUSTEP course, they must follow formal university policy. **Simply notifying your high school teacher or counselor is not sufficient to withdraw from the university roster.**

- **The Process:** The student must send an explicit email directly to Niagara University's Registrar, Harry Gong, at hgong@niagara.edu, indicating the exact course they intend to drop.
- **Timeline and Transcribed Grading Standards:**
 - **Before Midterms:** The student will receive a grade of **"W" (Withdrawal)** on their transcript. A "W" does not impact a student's cumulative college GPA.

- **After Midterms:** The student will be assigned a grade of **"U" (Unsatisfactory)**. A "U" is non-transferable but does not impact the GPA.
- **Failure to comply** with the official registration drop window will result in a permanent **"F"** in the college course.
- **Refund Policy:** Tuition payments are refundable only if the official withdrawal email is processed before the university's designated payment period closes. No refunds are issued after the payment period deadline.

Long-Term Impact on Future Financial Aid

Students must understand that withdrawing from a course, or earning low grades like a "U" or "F," can have significant consequences for their future collegiate financial aid eligibility.

Under federal regulations, when you enroll as a full-time college student after high school, you must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards to maintain federal grants and loans (such as Pell or Stafford loans). SAP measures your "pace of completion"—meaning you must successfully complete a set percentage of all college credits you attempt. Earning a "W," "U," or "F" in a NUSTEP course counts as an *attempted but uncompleted* credit, which can immediately place your future college financial aid at risk before you even set foot on a college campus.

7. Grading Standards & Transcripts

NUSTEP Grading Scale

The following official scale must be utilized by your instructor to determine your transcribed university grade and college GPA calculations:

Letter Grade	Numeric Value	GPA Value
A+	97–100	4.00
A	93–96	4.00
A-	90–92	3.67
B+	87–89	3.33

B	83–86	3.00
B-	80–82	2.67
C+	77–79	2.33
C	73–76	2.00
C-	70–72	1.67
D+	67–69	1.33
D	63–66	1.00
D-	60–62	0.67
F	59 and Lower	0.00

Accessing Final Grades Online

Paper report cards are not issued. Students view final grades through the **myNU Student Portal**.

1. **Obtain Your Student ID:** Ask your classroom teacher for your unique 7-digit Niagara University ID number, which is generated a few days after registration and listed on their official course roster.
2. **Activate Your Account:** Go to www.niagara.edu/purplepass and click "**Get started online**". Enter your lower-case **s** followed by your 7-digit ID (e.g., **s1234567**) and date of birth. Follow the prompts to receive your password via email.
3. **View Grades:** Log into <https://mynu.niagara.edu> and click "**Self Service**". Click on "**Grades**" and select the correct semester to verify your final grades.

Credit Transferability & Ordering Transcripts

NUSTEP credits are highly transferable and recognized by colleges and universities nationwide. However, transfer policies are determined entirely by the receiving institution.

To transfer your credits to another college, you must request an official transcript:

- **How to Order:** Go to www.niagara.edu/records and select "**Request a Transcript**" to be guided to the secure **Parchment Ordering Page**.
- **Cost:** Each official copy is **\$10.00**.
- **Important:** Check Self Service first to make sure your instructor has posted your grade. Do *not* use the "After Degree" option when ordering. Transcripts will not be processed if you have an outstanding financial obligation to Niagara University.

8. Learning Resources & Student Support Services

Because NUSTEP students are formally registered part-time students at Niagara University, they are granted access to several university learning resources and campus support benefits. However, due to the geographic location of our classes and the status of concurrent enrollment participants as high school minors, certain academic and medical support functions are split between university resources and high school frameworks.

University-Provided Resources & Campus Access

NUSTEP participants are highly encouraged to visit campus and immerse themselves in the collegiate environment. To gain physical entrance, student pricing, or free admission to these university facilities and events, you must present your official digital student ID card, which can be accessed at any time by logging into your myNU account on your smartphone.

- **Niagara University Library System:** NUSTEP students have full academic access to the university's library infrastructure. By authenticating through the myNU student portal using your unique PurplePass login credentials, you gain off-campus digital access to the university's vast array of academic databases, peer-reviewed journals, and research indexes. Furthermore, you are welcome to visit the physical on-campus library to utilize study spaces and check out books by showing your digital ID card.
- **The Castellani Art Museum:** Located right on the Niagara University campus, the Castellani Art Museum features a world-class collection of over 5,600 pieces of art. NUSTEP students receive free admission to the museum galleries by presenting their digital ID card.
- **Campus Cultural & Athletic Engagement:** To build a postsecondary identity, NUSTEP participants are invited to participate in campus community life. By showing your digital ID card at the box office, you are eligible to receive undergraduate student pricing and discounted tickets for all Niagara University Division I athletic events, as well as reduced-rate entry to all university theater productions.

High School-Provided Support Services (Programmatic Constraints)

Please note that Niagara University does not extend on-campus psychological counseling, mental health services, writing center support, or collegiate tutoring labs to NUSTEP students.

Because dual enrollment courses take place within secondary school facilities during standard school hours, the operational responsibility for academic tutoring, writing remediation, and personal/mental health counseling rests entirely with your home high school. Students are encouraged to utilize their high school's certified guidance counselors, localized academic resource centers, and remedial assistance labs to address personal wellness or coursework difficulties.

9. Mandatory Evaluations

Course Evaluations

- **Mandatory Digital Evaluations:** Every registered student must complete an online course evaluation at the end of the term, identical to on-campus student evaluations. Your instructor will provide the link before the course concludes.