



Frequently asked Questions about Approval of Online Non-credit Classes

Why do we need criteria?

It is great that online trainings are so easy to find and take. They can help Vermont early childhood and afterschool professionals learn, and can grow Vermont's professional development system. Because there are so many on-line trainings available on the internet, it is even more important that Vermont professionals choose those that are meaningful to them and meet quality standards. By reviewing and posting the best sponsors of online, non-credit trainings, we help Vermont professionals continue to have many choices. You can help us by recommending sponsors to include. Once reviewed and posted, it is easier to find quality trainings. You will also be assured that they will count for annual training hours, and help meet education requirements for Northern Lights certificates and credentials, and STARS staff qualifications.

Why aren't the criteria the same for all non-credit training, whether face to face or online?

All professional development training and coursework in Vermont - whether face to face or online - should be high quality and effective for the learner. It can be harder to evaluate whether online training is effective because of how it is offered, so we added some additional safe guards. The same criteria for online training are common to states that have early childhood and afterschool training systems. Many organizations who offer online, non-credit training are eager to meet our criteria and be approved in Vermont.

What are online classes? Are classes and courses and modules and training the same thing?

Basically, they are the same. Usually a module or course includes a series of classes. Online non-credit training can be completed in one time block, or over several sessions. It can be done in a group or individually. Online classes can include many interesting visual and sound images, and usually include some reading. They can include a live instructor who connects with you by presentations, on-line posts or in a chat room. They may include a computer program that presents to you and gives you homework that is then evaluated by a live person online. Often you interact only with a computer program. There are many different formats for learning online but all of them should have clear learning objectives, require you to respond, and assess your learning.

What about webinars? Do they count?

A webinar is a presentation that people watch and listen to through the computer screen. A webinar can take place in real time or can be viewed later, after it is actually over. There is no requirement to participate or interact with the presenter or other students during a webinar, and no requirement that the participant's learning is evaluated. In Vermont, if professionals want to receive training credit for completing a webinar, they need to treat it like face to face group training. They need to ensure the training content is relevant to the early childhood or afterschool field and to at least one of the core knowledge areas. The students must watch the webinar with an approved instructor who facilitates discussion and interaction about what they are learning and how they will apply it. The Instructor helps assess if the learning objectives are met by the participants, and then creates and signs a documentation of professional development form for the participants. For further information about counting webinars for professional development training hours, contact Northern Lights.