

Ohio's Assessment and Graduation Requirements Classes of 2021 and Beyond Guidance for Districts and Schools

This guidance document provides a preliminary outline of the changes to testing and graduation requirements for the classes of 2021 and beyond. Updates will be made to this document as more information becomes available and additional guidance is finalized. Please note the version date at the bottom of the document.

State law introduced new, permanent graduation requirements that are available for the classes of 2021 and beyond. Students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 have the option to meet the new requirements outlined in this guidance document or the requirements of the [original three pathways](#) to graduation. Students in the classes of 2023 and beyond must meet the [new requirements outlined in this document](#), which provides an overview of the changes to Ohio's state testing system and high school graduation requirements.

Introduction

[Each Child, Our Future](#), Ohio's strategic plan for education, calls for a student-centered system that addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and prepares students for a rapidly changing workplace. Specifically, the plan seeks to ensure that high school inspires students to identify paths to future success and recognizes that students demonstrate a variety of skills and knowledge in different ways. These important sets of knowledge, skills and dispositions are necessary for high school graduates to be successful in the workplace, college, the military or other self-sustaining professions.

To that end, Ohio law provides new graduation requirements that offer students the opportunity to demonstrate competency and readiness as they pursue their chosen next steps after high school. Students will demonstrate academic and technical competency in the foundational areas of English language arts and mathematics, as well as readiness for their next steps by earning a series of state diploma seals. These seals allow students to demonstrate well-rounded academic, technical and professional knowledge and skills, as well as develop the social and emotional competencies and leadership and reasoning skills that are necessary for post-high school success.

Changes to Ohio's State Testing Requirements

Ohio law recently changed the state testing requirements for students in the classes of 2023 and beyond. State tests are an essential component for measuring student learning and ensuring that every Ohio student receives a high-quality education. As a foundational component of Ohio's graduation requirements, Ohio's State Tests give students the opportunity to show what they know and are able to do and help ensure that every student who graduates from an Ohio high school is prepared for success.

STATE TESTING REQUIREMENTS – CLASSES OF 2021 AND 2022

For students who entered grade 9 on or after July 1, 2014, but prior to June 30, 2019, state and federal testing laws require districts to administer seven end-of-course tests to all students at the completion of the associated course. The seven end-of-course tests are algebra I (or integrated math I), geometry (or integrated math II), English language arts I, English language arts II, biology, American government and American history.

Additionally, districts and schools are required to administer the state-funded ACT or SAT to all juniors (see exceptions [here](#)) during the spring of the junior year.

STATE TESTING REQUIREMENTS – CLASSES OF 2023 AND BEYOND

For students who enter grade 9 on or after July 1, 2019, state and federal testing laws require districts to administer end-of-course tests to all students at the completion of the associated course. The required end-of-course tests include **algebra, geometry*, English language arts II, biology, American government and American history.**

Districts may adopt local policies that require participation on state tests in order to be promoted to the next grade level.

Additionally, districts and schools are required to administer the state-funded ACT or SAT to all juniors (see exceptions [here](#)) during the spring of the junior year.

**Recent changes to state law direct the Department to work with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure compliance with federal testing requirements for high school mathematics. Following these discussions, the geometry end-of-course test may be removed from the state assessment system. However, at this time, districts and schools should plan to administer the geometry end-of-course assessment to any student who is enrolled in a geometry course for the first time and who has not already taken the test. The Department will communicate any changes once a final determination is made in consultation with the U.S. Department of Education.*

General Graduation Requirements – Overview

Ohio law provides new graduation requirements for students in the classes of 2021 and beyond. Students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 may meet the new requirements or one of [the original three pathways](#) that were in place when they entered grade 9. Students in the classes of 2023 and beyond (those who entered grade 9 on or after July 1, 2019) must meet the new requirements.

Ohio's new graduation requirements consist of three key components:

1. Course Completion

Students will satisfy Ohio's curriculum requirements and any additional local requirements. Students will complete the state minimum 20 units, with specific units required in each content area.

2. Competency Demonstration

Students will demonstrate competency in the foundational areas of English language arts and mathematics or through alternative demonstrations, which include College Credit Plus, career-focused activities or military enlistment.

3. Readiness Demonstration

Students will demonstrate readiness for their post-high school paths by earning two seals that allow them to demonstrate important foundational and well-rounded academic and technical knowledge, professional skills, social and emotional competencies, and leadership and reasoning skills.

This guidance document outlines each of the components of Ohio's graduation requirements.

Course Completion

Ohio law outlines the course requirements all students must complete to earn a diploma. Ohio students must earn a minimum of 20 course units in specified subject areas. Districts and schools may have requirements that exceed the state minimums outlined below.

General Course Requirements	State Minimum
English language arts	4 units
Health	½ unit
Mathematics	4 units
Physical education	½ unit
Science	3 units
Social studies	3 units
Electives	5 units
Students must receive instruction in economics and financial literacy (in high school) and complete at least two semesters of fine arts (during grades 7-12).	

ADDITIONAL COURSE CRITERIA BY CONTENT AREA

Mathematics

Students must earn 4 mathematics units, which must include one unit of algebra II or the equivalent of algebra II. Exceptions: Algebra II or advanced computer science is not a requirement for students following a career-technical pathway. However, students still must have four units in mathematics. A student may choose to apply one unit of advanced computer science to satisfy one unit of algebra II/math III or equivalent. Districts also may use credit in a computer science course approved by the Department to satisfy a student's mathematics credit. Here is a link to the [Computer Science Guidance Document](#).

Notes:

[Curriculum Choice](#) expired with the class of 2019 and is no longer an available option for students.

Postsecondary institutions may require algebra II, or its equivalent, for college admission.

Physical Education

School districts may adopt policies that would exempt students who participate in interscholastic athletics, marching band or cheerleading for two full seasons or an approved Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program for two years from the physical education requirement. Starting with the 2019-2020 school year, districts may include show choir as a permissible activity as part of the PE Waiver policy. Students satisfying the physical education waiver must take another course of study of at least 60 hours of instruction (1/2 unit).

Science

Science units must include one unit of physical sciences, one unit of life sciences and one unit of advanced study in one or more of the following sciences: chemistry, physics or other physical science; advanced biology or other life science; astronomy, physical geology or other earth or space science. A student can choose to apply one credit in advanced computer science to satisfy one unit of advanced science (excluding biology or life sciences). Here is a link to the [Computer Science Guidance Document](#).

Social Studies

Students must include ½ unit of American history, ½ unit of American government, and ½ unit in world history and civilizations in the three required social studies units.

Electives

Elective units must include one or any combination of world language, fine arts, business, career-technical education, family and consumer sciences, technology, agricultural education or English language arts, mathematics, science or social studies courses not otherwise required.

Note: While not a state requirement for graduation, many four-year colleges and universities require a minimum of two years of sequential world language study at the secondary level as a college admissions requirement. This is the case for many in-state and out-of-state colleges and universities.

Financial Literacy

Ohio law requires students to receive instruction in financial literacy as part of the high school graduation requirements. However, it is up to local districts to determine how to best meet the needs of their students. For example, the financial literacy content may be incorporated into another course, or some districts may require students to take a standalone financial literacy course for a half credit that can meet either a graduation requirement for social studies or an elective.

Demonstrating Competency

Students must earn a "competency" score on the English II and algebra I end-of-course tests. Students not earning passing scores on the first attempt must be offered appropriate remediation and supports and retake the test at least once. In lieu of attaining passing scores on the state tests, students can utilize alternative ways to demonstrate competency. Prior to being eligible to demonstrate competency in alternative ways, students must first retake the test and receive remedial supports. The three alternative ways to demonstrate competency for the subject area not passed are as follows:

1. **College Credit Plus** – Earn college credit in a non-remedial math or English course (for the subject area not passed) to demonstrate competency.
2. **Career Experience and Technical Skill** – Complete two demonstrations to show competency, at least one of which must be foundational.

Foundational:

- a. Earn a score of proficient or higher on three or more WebXams in a single career pathway;
- b. Earn an approved industry-recognized credential;
- c. Complete a pre-apprenticeship in the student's chosen career field or show evidence of acceptance into an apprenticeship program (for students ages 18 and older) after high school.

Supporting:

- a. Complete a 250-hour work-based learning experience with evidence of positive evaluations;
- b. Earn the workforce readiness score on WorkKeys; or
- c. Earn the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal.

3. **Military Readiness** – Competency can be achieved by meeting the requirements to enlist in the military, as demonstrated by a contract with the military to enlist upon graduation.

**State law directs the Department, in consultation with the chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Governor's Office for Workforce Transformation, to set the competency score for the English language arts II and algebra I tests by March 1, 2020.*

Note: For any students receiving special education and related services under ORC Chapter 3323, the individualized education program specifies the manner in which the student will participate in the assessments for the purpose of demonstrating competency. More information is forthcoming.

Demonstrating Readiness

In addition to fulfilling curriculum requirements and earning the competency requirements listed above, students also must show they are prepared for college or careers.

Ohio law created 12 seals for students to demonstrate academic, technical and professional readiness for careers, college, the military or self-sustaining professions. Each seal allows students to demonstrate knowledge and skills essential for future success.

Students will demonstrate readiness **by earning at least two diploma seals, one of which must be state defined**. Seals help students develop an array of critical skills that are valuable to them as they transition to the next steps after high school.

State-Defined Diploma Seal*	Requirements
OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal	Meet the requirements and criteria established for the readiness seal, including demonstration of work-readiness and professional competencies.
State Seal of Biliteracy	Meet the requirements and criteria, including proficiency requirements on assessments in a world language and English.
Industry-Recognized Credential Seal	Earn an approved industry-recognized credential that is aligned to a job considered in demand in this state and its regions. (More information is forthcoming.)
College-Ready Seal	Earn remediation-free scores on the ACT or SAT. Current remediation-free scores can be found here .
Military Enlistment Seal	Provide evidence that a student has enlisted in a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces; or Participate in an approved JROTC program. (More information is forthcoming)
Citizenship Seal	A student can: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earn a score of proficient or higher on both the American history and American government end-of-course exams; 2. Earn a score that is at least equivalent to proficient on appropriate Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams; or 3. Earn a final course grade that is equivalent to a "B" or higher in appropriate classes taken through the College Credit Plus program.

State-Defined Diploma Seal*	Requirements
Science Seal	<p>A student can:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earn a score of proficient or higher on the biology end-of-course exam; 2. Earn a score that is at least equivalent to proficient on appropriate Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams; or 3. Earn a final course grade that is equivalent to a “B” or higher in an appropriate class taken through the College Credit Plus program.
Honors Diploma Seal	<p>Earn one of six Honors Diplomas outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic Honor Diploma 2. International Baccalaureate Honors Diploma 3. Career-Tech Honors Diploma 4. STEM Honors Diploma 5. Arts Honors Diploma 6. Social Science and Civic Engagement Honors Diploma
Technology Seal	<p>A student can</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earn a score that is at least equivalent to proficient on an appropriate Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam; 2. Earn a final course grade that is equivalent to a “B” or higher in an appropriate class taken through the College Credit Plus program; or 3. Complete a course offered through the district or school that meets guidelines developed by the Department. (A district or school is not required to offer a course that meets those guidelines.)
Locally-Defined Diploma Seals**	Requirements
Community Service Seal (locally defined)	Complete a community service project aligned with the guidelines adopted by the student’s local board of education or school governing authority.
Fine and Performing Arts Seal (locally defined)	Demonstrate skill in the fine or performing arts according to an evaluation aligned with guidelines adopted by the student’s local board of education or school governing authority.

Locally-Defined Diploma Seals**	Requirements
Student Engagement Seal (locally defined)	Participate in extracurricular activities such as athletics, clubs or student government to a meaningful extent, as determined by guidelines adopted by the student's local board of education or school governing authority.

****State law requires districts and schools to develop guidelines for at least one of the locally defined diploma seals.**

General Questions and Answers

The Department is working to identify policy questions and provide responses in this questions and answers section. The list will be updated as more information becomes available.

1. Are students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 who have satisfied one of the three original pathways to graduation required to earn diploma seals to graduate?

No. Students in the classes of 2021 and 2022 who have satisfied one of the three original pathways to graduate have met the graduation requirements and will qualify for a diploma upon completing the required coursework.

2. Can students in the classes of 2018-2020 satisfy the new graduation requirements in order to earn a diploma?

Yes. Students in the classes of 2018-2020 are able to use the newly passed graduation requirements. These students may meet one of the three original pathways to graduation, the two additional graduation options for students in the classes of 2018-2020 or the newly passed graduation requirements outlined in this document.

3. Are districts required to provide programming to offer all diploma seals to students?

State law requires each district or school to develop guidelines for at least one of the locally defined state diploma seals identified in the chart above. Most districts already offer programming to support many of the state seals but may not currently offer programming for all seals. The Department encourages districts to offer programming and support opportunities for students to satisfy competency demonstrations and earn diploma seals under the new requirements provided by state law.

4. What are the “competency scores” for the algebra I and English language arts II tests and when will they be set?

The Department is working to establish the process for setting the competency scores for the English language arts II and algebra I tests. State law requires consultation with the chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Governor's Office of Workforce transformation. The score must be set by March 1, 2020. More information regarding the process and establishment of the competency score will be provided during fall 2019.

5. Are districts required to administer the biology, American history and American government tests to all students, even if they do not plan to earn the Science Seal or Citizenship Seal?

YES. As part of the state assessment system, districts and schools must administer the biology, American history and American government end-of-course tests to all students. Students who earn scores of proficient or higher on the biology test will meet the requirements for the Science Seal. Students who earn scores of proficient or higher on both the American history and American government tests will meet the requirements of the Citizenship Seal. Students not meeting the proficiency requirements for the Science and Citizenship Seals may retake the tests or pursue other seals.

6. What College Credit Plus courses are considered “appropriate courses” for the Science, Citizenship and Technology Seals?

The Ohio Department of Higher Education, in coordination with the Department of Education, has developed the [High School Graduation Course Substitution Crosswalk](#), which provides guidance outlining general criteria for determining appropriate courses that satisfy state testing requirements.

7. If a student earns an industry-recognized credential to satisfy the foundational requirements for the career-focused activities, can that credential also be used to earn the Industry-Recognized Credential Seal under “demonstrating readiness”?

Yes. Students who earn one industry-recognized credential, or group of credentials, that meets the requirements outlined for the foundational competency demonstration and requirements for the seal may satisfy both requirements, as long as the credential is aligned to a job that is in demand in this state and its regions.

8. If a student earns the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal to satisfy the supporting requirements for the career-focused activities (under demonstrating competency), can that seal count toward one of the two seals required under “demonstrating readiness”?

Yes. Students who earn the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal will satisfy a supporting component of the career-focused activities (under demonstrating competency) and one of the seal requirements.

9. If a student satisfies the military enlistment criteria (under demonstrating competency), can enlistment also count toward earning the military enlistment seal as one of the two seals required under “demonstrating readiness”?

Yes. Students who provide evidence of enlistment into a branch of the armed services will satisfy both the alternative competency requirements and the requirements for the Military Enlistment Seal.

Statutory References:

The information in this guidance document is based on the requirements in the following sections of the Ohio Revised Code, as amended by [House Bill 166 of the 133rd Ohio General Assembly](#): 3301.0712 (College and work ready assessment system), 3313.61 (Diploma or honors diploma), 3313.6111 (State seal of biliteracy), 3313.6112 (OhioMeansJobs-readiness seal), 3313.6113 (Committee to develop a list of industry-recognized credentials and licenses), 3313.618 (Extra-curricular requirements for diploma), and 3313.603 (Requirements for high school graduation; workforce or college preparatory units).