

**Policy GRAD-004: State Graduation Requirements**

**Status:** ADOPTED

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**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Policy Manual**

Item	Description
Policy Title	State Graduation Requirements
Policy Category	Graduation Requirements and Related Policies (GRAD)
Policy ID	GRAD-004
Policy Date	10/06/2022* 6/2024
Previous Policy Dates	12/01/1999, 05/04/2000, 06/01/2000, 07/12/2001, 10/04/2001, 03/07/2002, 05/02/2002, 07/11/2002, 06/03/2004, 01/06/2005, 10/06/2005, 05/03/2007, 09/11/2008, 06/04/2009, 10/07/2010, 12/02/2010, 10/06/2011, 04/05/2012, 07/11/2012, 10/04/2012, 02/07/2013, 08/06/2015, 02/02/2017, 07/06/2017, 01/10/2019, 01/09/2020, 03/27/2020, 07/09/2020, 03/04/2021, 03/03/2022
Statutory Reference	GS 115C-12(9c); GS 115C-81(b)(4); GS 115C-12(9d); GS 115C-81.25(c)(10); GS 115C-12.9d and GS 115C-8 1.25.10; NC Constitution, Article IX, Section 5

***\*SBE approved removing COVID-19 Extenuating Circumstances Statement***

The year a student enters grade nine for the first time determines the graduation course requirements the student must meet in order to graduate and receive a high school diploma. Students entering grade nine for the first time in 2014-2015 and beyond shall pass the Future-Ready Core course of study as described below.

The Occupational Course of Study is available for those students with disabilities who are specifically identified for this program. These requirements are listed in Sections II, IV and VI and VII.

For information regarding how course credits may be earned and other courses that satisfy these

requirements, such as dual enrollment and other advanced courses, see SBE policies CCRE-001 and GRAD-008.

The Military Interstate Compact, of which North Carolina is a part, addresses the educational transition issues of children of military families. This Compact must be considered in the planning towards high school graduation for children of military families.

- I. **FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2026-27.** Students following the Future-Ready Core of Study must pass the following 22 credits.
  1. Four sequential English credits which shall be:
    - a. Starting with English I
    - b. English II
    - c. English III
    - d. English IV
  2. Four Mathematics credits which shall be either
    - a. NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth mathematics course to be aligned with the student's post high school plans, or
    - b. In the rare instance a principal exempts a student from the Future-Ready Core mathematics sequence, except as limited by N.C.G.S. §115C-81(b), the student will be required to pass: NC Math 1 and Math 2 plus two additional courses identified on the NC DPI Math options chart.
  3. Three Science credits which shall be:
    - a. a physical science course
    - b. Biology
    - c. an earth/environmental science course
  4. Four Social Studies credits which shall be:
    - a. Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy
    - b. Economics and Personal Finance
    - c. American History
    - d. World History
  5. One Health and Physical Education credit
    - a. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
    - b. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.

**6. One Computer Science credit**

a. Courses for this requirement involve the Computer Science, IT, and Technology Education area of CTE.

b. If a student enrolls in a NC public school after completion of Grade 11 or if a student's IEP states that the student's disability would prevent completing this course, the student shall be exempt from this specific requirement and shall earn one additional elective credit.

**7. Two Elective credits of any combination from either:**

- a. Career and Technical Education (CTE) or
- b. Arts Education (e.g., dance, music, theater arts, visual arts) or
- c. World Language

**8. Three Elective credits from any subject area or cross-disciplinary course.**

**9. Note: Students entering Grade 9 for the first time in 2025-26 shall have at least one arts education course in grades 6-12.**

- a. Students must complete the standard course of study (no local electives) for a given arts education course in its entirety to satisfy this requirement. After school activities or partial courses do not fulfill this graduation requirement.
- b. Students who transfer into a public school unit beginning in the ninth grade or later may be exempt, if such a requirement would prevent a student from graduating with the graduation cohort to which the student was assigned when transferring.

**II. FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2021-22** Students following the Future-Ready Core of Study must pass the following 22 credits.

**10. Four sequential English credits which shall be:**

- a. Starting with English I
- b. English II
- c. English III
- d. English IV

**11. Four Mathematics credits which shall be either**

- a. NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth mathematics course to be aligned with the student's post high school plans
- b. In the rare instance a principal exempts a student from the Future-Ready Core mathematics sequence, except as limited by N.C.G.S. §115C-81(b), the student will be required to pass: NC Math 1 and Math 2 plus two additional courses identified on the NC DPI Math options chart.

12. Three Science credits which shall be:
  - a. a physical science course
  - b. Biology
  - c. an earth/environmental science course
  
13. Four Social Studies credits which shall be:
  - a. Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy
  - b. Economics and Personal Finance
  - c. American History
  - d. World History
  
14. One Health and Physical Education credit
  - a. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
  - b. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.
  
15. Two Elective credits of any combination from either:
  - a. Career and Technical Education (CTE) or
  - b. Arts Education or
  - c. World Language

Note: For clarification, possible elective combinations may include 2 World Language credits; or 1 CTE credit and 1 Arts Education credit; or 2 CTE credits; or 1 Arts Education credit and 1 World Language credit; or other combinations from a, b and
  
16. Four Elective credits from the following (four-course concentration recommended):
  - a. Career and Technical Education (CTE)
  - b. ROTC
  - c. Arts Education (e.g., dance, music, theater arts, visual arts)
  - d. Any other subject area or cross-disciplinary courses (e.g., mathematics, science, social studies, English and dual enrollment course
  
17. Beginning in fall 2022, students entering Grade 6 and subsequently entering Grade 9 for the first time in 2025-26 shall have at least one arts education course in grades 6-12.
  - a. Students must complete the standard course of study (no local electives) for a given arts education course in its entirety to satisfy this requirement. After school activities or partial courses do not fulfill this graduation requirement.

- b. Students who transfer into a public school unit beginning in the ninth grade or later may be exempt, if such a requirement would prevent a student from graduating with the graduation cohort to which the student was assigned when transferring.

III. **FOR ELIGIBLE EC STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME in 2021-2022.** Students following the Occupational Course of Study must pass the following 22 credits plus any local requirements:

3. Four English credits that shall be:
  - a. English I
  - b. English II
  - c. English III
  - d. English IV
4. Four Mathematics credits that shall be:
  - a. Introduction to Mathematics
  - b. NC Math I
  - c. Financial Management
  - d. Employment Preparation IV: Math (to include 150 work hours)
5. Three Science credits that shall be:
  - a. Applied Science
  - b. Biology
  - c. Employment Preparation I: Science (to include 150 work hours)
6. Four Social Studies credits that shall be:
  - a. Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy
  - b. Economics and Personal Finance
  - c. Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1A (to include 75 work hours)
  - d. Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IB (to include 75 work hours)
7. One Health and Physical Education credit
  - a. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
  - b. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided
8. Two Additional Employment Preparation Education credits, which shall be:
  - a. Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II A (to include 75 work hours)
  - b. Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II B (to include 75 work hours)

The work hours included in Employment Preparation I, II, III, IV shall be as follows:

- a. 150 hours of school-based training work with activities and experiences that align with student's post school goals, and
- b. 225 hours of community-based training, and
- c. 225 hours of paid employment or 225 hours of unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community services hours.
- d. Total work hours: 600

- 7. Four Career/Technical Education Elective Credits
- 8. A career portfolio
- 9. Completion of the student's IEP objectives

III. FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME in 2020-21. Students following the Future-Ready Core of Study must pass the following 22 credits.

- 1. Four sequential English credits which shall be:
  - a. Starting with English I
  - b. English II
  - c. English III
  - d. English IV
- 2. Four Mathematics credits which shall be either
  - a. NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth mathematics course to be aligned with the student's post high school plans
  - b. In the rare instance a principal exempts a student from the Future-Ready Core mathematics sequence, except as limited by N.C.G.S. §115C-81(b), the student will be required to pass: NC Math 1 and Math 2 plus two additional courses identified on the NC DPI Math options chart.
- 3. Three Science credits which shall be:
  - a. a physical science course
  - b. Biology
  - c. an earth/environmental science course
- 4. Four Social Studies credits which shall be:
  - a. a founding principles course which shall be either:
    - 1. American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics
    - 2. Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy
  - b. an American history course which shall be either:
    - 1. American History I
    - 2. American History II
    - 3. American History
  - c. World History
  - d. Economics and Personal Finance

NOTE: It is strongly recommended that these students take World History in the first year of their high school Social Studies course sequence due to the nature of the adoption of the new Social Studies Standard Course of Study effective in 2021-22. Economics and Personal Finance is strongly recommended to be offered later in the student's high school career.

- 5. One Health and Physical Education credit

- a. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
  - b. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.
6. Two Elective credits of any combination from either:
- a. Career and Technical Education (CTE) or
  - b. Arts Education or
  - c. World Language

NOTE: For clarification, possible elective combinations may include 2 World Language credits; or 1 CTE credit and 1 Arts Education credit; or 2 CTE credits; or 1 Arts Education credit and 1 World Language credit; or other combinations from a, b and c.

7. Four Elective credits from the following (four-course concentration recommended):
- a. Career and Technical Education (CTE)
  - b. ROTC
  - c. Arts Education (e.g., dance, music, theater arts, visual arts)
  - d. Any other subject area cross-disciplinary courses (e.g., mathematics, science, social studies, English and dual enrollment courses)

**IV. FOR STUDENTS WHO ENTERED GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2020-21.** Students following the Occupational Course of Study must pass the following 22 credits plus any local requirements:

- 1. Four English credits that shall be:
  - a. English I
  - b. English II
  - c. English III
  - d. English IV
- 2. Three Mathematics credits that shall be:
  - a. Introduction to Mathematics
  - b. NC Math I
  - c. Financial Management
- 3. Two Science credits that shall be:
  - a. Applied Science
  - b. Biology
- 4. Two Social Studies credits that shall be:
  - a. Founding Principles, Civics and Economics or Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy
  - b. Economics and Personal Finance
- 5. One Health and Physical Education credit
  - a. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
  - b. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.
- 6. Six Occupational Preparation Education Credits and 600 work hours, which shall be:

- a. Occupational Preparation I or Employment Preparation I: Science
- b. Occupational Preparation II or Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1A and Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1B
- c. Occupational Preparation III or Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIA and Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II B
- d. Occupational Preparation IV or Employment Preparation IV: Math

The work hours shall include:

- a. 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with student's post school goals, and
  - b. 225 hours of community-based training, and
  - c. 225 hours of paid employment or 225 hours of unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community services hours.
  - d. Total work hours: 600
- 7. Four Career/Technical Education Elective credits
  - 8. A career portfolio
  - 9. Completion of the student's IEP objectives

**V. FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME between 2014-2015 and 2019-**

**20.** Students following the Future-Ready Core of Study must pass the following 22 credits.

- 1. Four sequential English credits which shall be:
  - a. Starting with English I
  - b. English II
  - c. English III
  - d. English IV
- 2. Four Mathematics credits which shall be either
  - a. NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth mathematics course to be aligned with the student's post high school plans
  - b. In the rare instance a principal exempts a student from the Future-Ready Core mathematics sequence, except as limited by N.C.G.S. §115C-81(b), the student will be required to pass: NC Math 1 and Math 2 plus two additional courses identified on the NC DPI Math options chart.

Note: Credit shall be awarded for Math I, II, III if taken prior to the 2016-17 school year.

- 3. Three Science credits which shall be:
  - a. a physical science course
  - b. Biology
  - c. an earth/environmental science course
- 4. Four Social Studies credits which shall be:
  - 1. Effective 2020-21:
    - a. a founding principles course which shall be either:
      - 1. American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics
      - 2. Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy

- b. American history courses which shall be either:
    - 1. American History I and American History II
    - 2. American History I or II and another Social Studies course
    - 3. American History and another Social Studies course
  - c. World History
2. Prior to 2020-21:
- a. American History: Founding Principles, Civics, and Economics

Note: This course must follow the NCSCOS in its entirety and may not be satisfied by any other courses.

American History I

American History II

World History

5. Health and Physical Education credit
- a. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
  - b. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.

6. Two Elective credits of any combination from either:

- a. Career and Technical Education (CTE) or
- b. Arts Education or
- c. World Language

Note: For clarification, possible elective combinations may include 2 World Language credits; or 1 CTE credit and 1 Arts Education credit; or 2 CTE credits; or 1 Arts Education credit and 1 World Language credit; or other combinations from a, b and c.

7. Four Elective credits from the following (four-course concentration recommended):

- a. Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- b. ROTC
- c. Arts Education (e.g., dance, music, theater arts, visual arts)
- d. Any other subject area or cross-disciplinary courses (e.g., mathematics, science, social studies, English and dual enrollment courses)

**VI. FOR ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO ENTERED GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME between 2017-2018 and 2019-2020.** Students following the Occupational Course of Study must pass the following 22 credits plus any local requirements:

- 1.
  - 1. Four English credits that shall be:
    - a. English I
    - b. English II
    - c. English III
    - d. English IV
  - 2. Three Mathematics credits that shall be:

- a. Introduction to Mathematics
  - b. NC Math I
  - c. Financial Management
3. Two Science credits that shall be:
    - a. Biology
    - b. Applied Science
  4. Two Social Studies credits that shall be:
    - a. American History I or American History II or American History
    - b. American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics or Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy
  5. One Health and Physical Education credit
    - a. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.
    - b. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
  6. Six Occupational Preparation Education credits and 600 work hours, which shall be:
    - a. Occupational Preparation I or Employment Preparation I: Science
    - b. Occupational Preparation II or Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1A and Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1B
    - c. Occupational Preparation III or Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIA and Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II B
    - d. Occupational Preparation IV or Employment Preparation IV: Math

The work hours shall include:

- a. 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with student's post school goals, and
  - b. 225 hours of community-based training, and
  - c. 225 hours of paid employment or 225 hours of unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community services hours.
  - d. Total work hours: 600
7. Four Career/Technical Education Elective Credits
  8. A career portfolio
  9. Completion of the student's IEP objectives

**VII. FOR ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WHO ENTERED GRADE 9 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2014-2015. Students following the Occupational Course of Study must pass the following 22 credits plus any local requirements:**

1. Four English credits that shall be:
  - a. English I
  - b. English II

- c. English III
  - d. English IV
2. Three Mathematics credits that shall be:
  - a. Financial Management
  - b. Introduction to Mathematics
  - c. NC Math I
3. Two Science credits that shall be:
  - a. Biology
  - b. Applied Science
4. Two Social Studies credits that shall be:
  - a. American History II
  - b. American History I
5. One Health and Physical Education credit
  - a. Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.
  - b. Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation.
6. Six Occupational Preparation Education credits and 600 work hours, which shall be:
  - a. Occupational Preparation I or Employment Preparation I: Science
  - b. Occupational Preparation II or Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1A and Employment Preparation II: Citizenship 1B
  - c. Occupational Preparation III or Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIA and Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II B
  - d. Occupational Preparation IV or Employment Preparation IV: Math

The work hours shall include:

  - a. 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with student's post school goals, and
  - b. 225 hours of community-based training, and
  - c. 225 hours of paid employment or 225 hours of unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community services hours.
  - d. Total work hours: 600
7. Four Career/Technical Education Elective credits
8. A career portfolio
9. Completion of the student's IEP objectives

These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

**State**

GS 115C-(9d)

**Description**

[Power to Develop Exit Standards and Graduation Requirements](#)

GS 115C-12

[Powers and duties of the Board generally](#)