

Policy Code: 3460 Graduation Requirements

The board recognizes the importance of setting rigorous graduation requirements to help ensure that students are receiving an education that will prepare them to be career and college ready and productive members of society. Graduates of New Hanover County Schools will earn an additional six credits in locally required electives.

In order to graduate from high school, students must meet the following requirements:

1. successful completion of all course unit requirements as described in Section A; and
2. successful completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction.

The principal shall ensure that students and parents are aware of all graduation requirements. School counseling program staff shall assist students in selecting their high school courses to ensure that students are taking all of the required units and selecting electives consistent with their post-graduation plans. For students who have transferred to the school system during high school or who, for other reasons, have completed course work outside of the school system, the principal shall determine what course work will be applied as credit toward graduation. The principal shall consider the requirements of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children ([G.S. 115C-407.5](#)), [G.S. 115C-407.12](#), and the requirements of subsection C.3 of this policy in determining the graduation requirements for children of military families.

A. Course Units Required

All students must fulfill the course unit requirements of the Future-Ready Core Course of Study, unless they are approved for the Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study. The tables below list the course unit requirements for the Future-Ready Core Course of Study and the Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study based on the student's year of entry into ninth grade for the first time.

In accordance with policy 3101, Dual Enrollment, and State Board of Education (SBE) requirements, students may earn high school credit for college courses completed. In addition, students may earn credit for certain high school courses in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study completed prior to grade 9, as authorized by the State Board of Education. Students also have the opportunity to meet course unit requirements without completing the regular period of classroom instruction by demonstrating mastery of the course material in accordance with policy 3420, Student Promotion and Accountability, and SBE requirements.

All awards of high school course credit must be consistent with SBE requirements. Any inconsistency between board policy and SBE graduation requirements will be resolved by following the SBE requirements. While the board endeavors to keep its policy up to date with current SBE graduation requirements,

students should verify current requirements with their school counselors when planning course schedules or making other decisions based on graduation requirements.

1. Future-Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time before 2020-2021

Courses Required*	State Requirements	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans.)** (A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. Exempt students will be required to pass NC Math 1 and 2 and two other application-based math courses or selected CTE courses, as identified on the NC DPI math options chart.)***	
Science	3 (a physical science course, Biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	4 (including: (1) a founding principles course which shall be either American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics or Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy;† (2) two American history courses which shall be either (a) American History I and II, (b) American History I or II and another Social Studies course, or (c) American History and another Social Studies course; and (3) World History)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Electives	6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Language; 4 must be from one of the	6

	following: Career and Technical Education, J.R.O.T.C., Arts Education, or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary course. A four-course concentration is recommended.) [‡]	
Total Credits	22	28

* Certain International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and Cambridge International Examination (CIE) courses will satisfy specific graduation requirements. See SBE Policy [GRAD-008](#).

** Students who are learning disabled in math may have other options for meeting the four mathematics credits requirement. See DPI memo of August 24, 2016 available at <http://bit.ly/DPIMemo>, and the math options chart linked below.

*** Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a fourth math course with Math 3 as a prerequisite. The math options chart is available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/standard-course-study/mathematics/standard-course-study-supporting-resources>.

† The founding principles courses, American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics and Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy, must follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) in its entirety and may not be satisfied by any other courses, except as provided in SBE Policy [GRAD-008](#). See also SBE Policies [CCRE-001](#) and [GRAD-004](#).

‡ Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete two credits of a single world language.

2. Future-Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time in 2020-2021

Courses Required*	State Requirements	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans.)**	

	(A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. Exempt students will be required to pass NC Math 1 and 2 and two other application-based math courses or selected CTE courses, as identified on the NC DPI math options chart.)***	
Science	3 (a physical science course, Biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	4 (including: (1) a founding principles course which shall be either American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics or Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy;† (2) an American History course which shall be either (a) American History I, (b) American History II, or (c) American History; (3) World History;‡ and (4) Economics and Personal Finance^)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Electives	6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Language; 4 must be from one of the following: Career and Technical Education, J.R.O.T.C., Arts Education, or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary course. A four-course concentration is recommended.)‡	6
Total Credits	22	28

* Certain International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and Cambridge International Examination (CIE) courses will satisfy specific graduation requirements. See SBE Policy [GRAD-008](#).

** Students who are learning disabled in math may have other options for meeting the four mathematics credits requirement. See DPI memo of August 24, 2016 available at <http://bit.ly/DPIMemo>, and the math options chart linked below.

*** Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a fourth math course with Math 3 as a prerequisite. The math options chart is available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/standard-course-study/mathematics/standard-course-study-supporting-resources>.

† The founding principles courses, American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics and Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy must follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) in its entirety and may not be satisfied by any other courses, except as provided in SBE Policy [GRAD-008](#). See also SBE Policies [CCRE-001](#) and [GRAD-004](#).

‡ It is strongly recommended that 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 2021-2022.

^ This course must, at a minimum, include the standards established by the second edition of the Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics and the 2013 National Standards for Financial Literacy, as developed by the Council for Economic Education.

‡ Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete two credits of a single world language.

3. Future-Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time in 2021-2022 and Thereafter

Courses Required*	State Requirements	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans.)** (A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. Exempt students will be required to pass NC Math 1 and 2 and two other application-based math courses or selected CTE courses, as identified	

	on the NC DPI math options chart.)***	
Science	3 (a physical science course, Biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	4 (including: Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy;† Economics and Personal Finance;‡ American History; and World History)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Electives	6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Language; 4 must be from one of the following: Career and Technical Education, J.R.O.T.C., Arts Education, or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary course. A four-course concentration is recommended.)‡	6
Total Credits	22	28

* Certain International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and Cambridge International Examination (CIE) courses will satisfy specific graduation requirements. See SBE Policy [GRAD-008](#).

** Students who are learning disabled in math may have other options for meeting the four mathematics credits requirement. See DPI memo of August 24, 2016 available at <http://bit.ly/DPIMemo>, and the math options chart linked below.

*** Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a fourth math course with Math 3 as a prerequisite. The math options chart is available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/standard-course-study/mathematics/standard-course-study-supporting-resources>.

† This course must follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) in its entirety and may not be satisfied by any other courses, except as provided in SBE Policy [GRAD-008](#). See also SBE Policies [CCRE-001](#) and [GRAD-004](#).

‡ This course must, at a minimum, include the standards established by the second edition of the Voluntary National Content Standards in

Economics and the 2013 National Standards for Financial Literacy, as developed by the Council for Economic Education.

‡ Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete two credits of a single world language.

4. Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade prior to 2020-2021 (only available to certain students with disabilities who have an IEP)

Courses Required	State Requirements	Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	3 (including Introduction to Math, NC Math I, and Financial Management)	
Science	2 (including Applied Science and Biology)	
Social Studies	2 (including American History I and American History II* OR (1) American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics or Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy; and (2) American History I or American History II or American History)**	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (Career/Technical Education electives)	
Occupational Preparation	6 (including (1) Occupational Preparation I or Employment Preparation I: Science; (2) Occupational Preparation II or Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IA and Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IB; (3) Occupational Preparation III or Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIA and Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIB; and (4) Occupational Preparation	

	IV or Employment Preparation IV: Math)	
Work Hours***	600	
Electives	0	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of IEP objectives • Career Portfolio 	
Total Credits	22	22

* Applicable only to students entering the ninth grade for the first time prior to 2017-18.

** Applicable only to students entering the ninth grade for the first time between 2017-2018 and 2019-2020.

*** The work hours must include: (1) 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with the student's post-school goals; (2) 225 hours of community-based training; and (3) 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, for a total of 600 required work hours.

5. Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time in 2020-2021 (only available to certain students with disabilities who have an IEP)

Courses Required	State Requirements	Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	3 (including Introduction to Math, NC Math I, and Financial Management)	
Science	2 (including Applied Science and Biology)	
Social Studies	2 (including (1) a founding principles course which shall be either American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics or Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina:	

	Civic Literacy and (2) Economics and Personal Finance)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (Career/Technical Education electives)	
Occupational Preparation	6 (including: (1) Occupational Preparation or Employment Preparation I: Science; (2) Occupational Preparation II or Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IA and Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IB; (3) Occupational Preparation III or Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIA and Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIB; and (4) Occupational Preparation IV or Employment Preparation IV: Math)	
Work Hours*	600	
Electives	0	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of IEP objectives • Career Portfolio 	
Total Credits	22	22

* The work hours must include: (1) 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with the student's post-school goals; (2) 225 hours of community-based training; and (3) 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, for a total of 600 required work hours.

6. Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time in 2021-2022 and Thereafter (only available to certain students with disabilities who have an IEP)

Courses Required	State Requirements	Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	

Mathematics	4 (including Introduction to Math, NC Math I, Financial Management, and Employment Preparation IV: Math (to include 150 work hours))	
Science	3 (including Applied Science, Biology, and Employment Preparation I: Science (to include 150 work hours))	
Social Studies	4 (including Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy, Economics and Personal Finance, Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IA (to include 75 work hours), and Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IB (to include 75 work hours))	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (Career/Technical Education electives)	
Additional Employment Preparation*	2 (including Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIA (to include 75 work hours) and Employment Preparation III: Citizenship IIB (to include 75 work hours))	
Electives	0	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of IEP objectives • Career Portfolio 	
Total Credits	22	22

* The work hours included in Employment Preparation I, II, III, and IV are as follows: (1) 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with the student's post-school goals; (2) 225 hours of community-based training; and (3) 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, for a total of 600 required work hours.

B. High School End-of-Course and Other Testing

High school students must take all end-of-course (EOC) tests and Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Assessments required by the State Board of Education and all teacher developed examinations required by the board. See policy 3410, Testing and Assessment Program.

C. Promotion Requirements

If a student successfully completes a high school course while in middle school, that student will receive course credit toward high school graduation. However, the student's GPA will only be computed with courses taken during the high school years, which includes the summer before freshman year. Students must have the following credits for grade-to-grade promotion:

9th to 10th grade - 6 credits*

10th to 11th grade - 12 credits

11th to 12th grade - 20 credits

*Of these six credits required for promotion to 10th grade, two must be from English, math, science, or social studies. Note: Transfer students will have their course credits and promotion requirements evaluated at each school. Students transferring from schools that were not on the block schedule may be eligible for graduation credit adjustment. Transfer students should meet with a school counselor for academic advising on the number of credits required for them to graduate.

D. Special Circumstances

The board adopts the following policies with regard to graduation.

1. Honor Graduates

Honor graduates may be designated by principals on the basis of criteria established by the superintendent. Recognition of honor graduates may be included in graduation programs.

2. Students with Disabilities

Graduation requirements must be applied to students with disabilities to the extent required by state and federal law and State Board policy.

3. Children of Military Families

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, as defined in policy 4050, Children of Military Families, the board adopts the following policy provisions for children of military families.

a. Waiver Requirements

Specific course work required for graduation will be waived if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another school system. If a waiver is not granted, school administrators shall provide the student with reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the superintendent or designee shall provide the student with an alternative means of acquiring the required course work so that the student may graduate on time.

b. Testing Requirements for Graduation

The superintendent shall accept the following in lieu of any local testing requirements for graduation: (1) the end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state; (2) national norm-referenced achievement tests; or (3) alternative testing. If these alternatives are not feasible for a student who has transferred in his or her senior year, subsection c below will apply.

c. Transfers During Senior Year

If a child of a military family who has transferred at the beginning of or during his or her senior year is ineligible to graduate from the school system after all of the alternatives listed above have been considered and the student meets the graduation requirements at his or her sending school, then school officials from the school system shall collaborate with the sending school system to ensure that the student will receive a diploma from the sending board of education.

4. Early Graduation

Students wishing to graduate from high school in less than four years may request permission to complete their graduation requirements on an accelerated schedule. Students and parents or guardians shall consult with a school counselor to develop an early graduation plan. The principal shall submit a student's written intention to graduate early to the assistant superintendent of instruction and academic accountability. The student will acknowledge in the written intention that they are not enrolled in the school system after they obtain their diploma.

5. Graduation Certificates

Graduation certificates will be awarded to eligible students in accordance with the standards set forth in State Board policy [GRAD-010](#).

6. Diploma Endorsements

Students have the opportunity to earn one or more of the following diploma endorsements identifying a particular area of focused study: (1) Career Endorsement, (2) College Endorsement (two options), (3) North Carolina Academic Scholars Endorsement, and/or (4) a Global Languages Endorsement. No endorsement is required to receive a diploma.

7. Reduced Elective Credit Diploma Option

In rare circumstances, a reduced elective credit high school diploma option may be considered for at-risk students who are experiencing difficulty meeting the specified local requirements of elective credits for graduation. High school principals shall have the right to explore this option with a student, their parent or guardian, the school counselor, and at least one other school representative. Standardized procedures and guidelines for all New Hanover County high schools must be adhered to when this option is utilized.

Legal References: [G.S. 115C-12\(40\)](#), [-47](#), [-81.25\(c\)\(10\)\(c\)](#), [-81.45\(d\)](#), [-81.65](#), [-174.11](#), [-276](#), [-288](#), [-366\(a\)](#), [-407.5](#), [-407.12](#); [16 N.C.A.C. 6D .0309](#); State Board of Education Policies [CCRE-001](#), [GRAD-001](#), [GRAD-004](#), [GRAD-007](#), [GRAD-008](#), [GRAD-010](#), [TEST-003](#)

Cross References: Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program (policy 3000), Dual Enrollment (policy 3101), Testing and Assessment Program (policy 3410), Student Promotion and Accountability (policy 3420), Citizenship and Character Education (policy 3530), Children of Military Families (policy 4050), [Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations \(policy 3620\)](#), [Staff-Student Relationships \(policy 4040/7310\)](#)

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New Hanover County Public Schools