



North Carolina High School Graduation Requirements

To graduate with a North Carolina High School Diploma, students with disabilities must meet the course credit and other requirements set by the NC State Board of Education that are in place when they enter 9th grade. Currently, a high school student must earn a minimum of 22 credits in order to receive a diploma. Although the state requires a designated number of courses and credits for students to graduate high school, local school districts and other public school units may recommend additional courses and credits to graduate in order for them to be most successful with their postsecondary plans. High school students on the Extended Content Standards receive a Certificate of Graduation, rather than a Diploma.

Eligible students can apply to be a 3-Year Graduate if they are at least 16 years old and meet the state's minimum graduation requirements. The request must be made by the student according to their school policies and must be signed by the parent if the student is under age 18. It is important to consider the impact that early graduation may have on a student with a disability, such as discontinued access to high school services and programming.

The IEP Team determines the student's course of study. If you have questions about your child's course of study or graduation requirements, be sure to check in with your child's IEP Team or guidance counselor.

Any child with a disability who requires special education and related services and who has not graduated from high school is eligible to continue to receive a free appropriate public education until the end of the school year in which that child reaches the age of 22.

Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC)



All Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC) students must earn at least 22 credits to graduate from high school. These requirements ensure that a student is prepared for life and whatever pathway they choose after they graduate, such as the workplace, colleges/university or the military. The FRC pathway is what students without IEPs follow and is often most appropriate for students with IEPs as well.

Occupational Course of Study



The Occupational Course of Study (OCS) is available for students with disabilities who are specifically identified for the program and has adapted course requirements and the same credit requirements as Future-Ready Course of Study. OCS is a diploma option intended to build work ready and community college ready skills. OCS is not appropriate for students who wish to attend a 4-year college or university.

Extended Content Standards



The Extended Content Standards (ECS) are for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. ECS provides alternate academic achievement standards that differ in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard. ECS students receive a Certificate of Graduation and can participate in their school's graduation ceremony.

Student with Specific Learning Disabilities in Math

There is special guidance for students who are eligible for special education under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in the area of Mathematics, if the learning disability will prevent the student from mastering Math 1 (or Algebra 1). SLD does not have to be the student's Primary category of eligibility. Under NC General Statute 115C-81b, these students are not required to pass Math 1 to meet state graduation requirements. Students receiving this exemption must still earn four mathematics credits by taking an alternative sequence of courses. Decisions on course options for individual students with disabilities are made at the local level. If you are concerned about your child's ability to meet the state math requirements, request an IEP Team meeting to discuss options. Include the school principal because they have authority to approve certain math course substitutions. Be sure to ask how alternate math courses might affect planning for college.

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$



North Carolina High School Graduation Requirements for Students Entering Grade 9 for the First Time in 2025-2026

Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC)	Occupational Course of Study	Extended Content Standards
<p>Leads to NC High School Diploma</p>	<p>Leads to NC High School Diploma</p>	<p>Leads to Certificate of Graduation</p>
<p>Students must pass the following 22 credits:</p> <p>Four Sequential English Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting with English I English II English III English IV <p>Four Math Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth mathematics course to be aligned with the student's post high school plans <p><i>In the rare instance a principal exempts a student from the FRC mathematics sequence, 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.</i></p> <p>Three Science Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A physical science course Biology An earth/environmental science course <p>Four Social Studies Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy Economics and Personal Finance American History World History <p>One Health and Physical Education Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation. <p><i>Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided.</i></p> <p>One Computer Science Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses for this requirement involve the Computer Science, IT, and Technology Education area of CTE. <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Two Elective Credits of any combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career and Technical Education (CTE) or Arts Education (e.g., dance, music, theater arts, visual arts) or World Language <p>Three Elective credits from any subject area or cross-disciplinary course.</p> <p>Note: Students entering Grade 9 for the first time in 2025-26 shall have at least one arts education course in grades 6-12. 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. 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.</p>	<p>Students must pass the following 22 credits plus any local requirements:</p> <p>Four English Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English I English II English III English IV <p>Four Math Credits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to Mathematics NC Math I Financial Management Employment Preparation IV: Math (to include 150 work hours)* <p>Three Science Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Science or Earth/Environmental Science Employment Preparation I: Science (to include 150 work hours)* Biology <p>Four Social Studies Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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)* Employment Preparation II: Citizenship IB (to include 75 work hours)* <p>One Health and Physical Education Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are required to successfully complete CPR instruction to meet Healthful Living Essential Standards as a requirement for high school graduation. <p><i>Accommodations/alternative assessments for students identified by ADA or IDEA will be provided</i></p> <p>Two Additional Employment Preparation Education credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II A (to include 75 work hours)* Employment Preparation III: Citizenship II B (to include 75 work hours)* <p>*The work hours included in Employment Preparation I, II, III, IV shall be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 150 hours of school-based training work with activities and experiences that align with student's post school goals, and 225 hours of community-based training, and 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. <p>Total work hours: 600</p>	<p>Students must pass the following 22 credits:</p> <p>Four English Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English/LA I English/LA II English/LA III English/LA IV <p>Four Math Credits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Management Financial Management II NC Math 1 A NC Math 1 B <p>Three Science Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earth/Environmental Science Biology A Biology B <p>Four Social Studies Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economics and Personal Finance World History American History Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy <p>One Health and Physical Education Credit</p> <p>Six Elective Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NC Vocational Preparation NC Health, Safety & Independent Living Four additional courses from Occupational Preparation and/or Career Technical Education <hr/> <p>Graduation Requirements for students entering 9th grade prior to 2025 can be found in the NC State Board of Education Policy Manual:</p> <p>Policy GRAD-004: State Graduation Requirements</p> <p>Policy GRAD-010: Graduation Certificates & Participation for Students with Disabilities</p> <p>Special Provision</p> <p>Participation in Graduation Exercises:</p> <p>Students with disabilities may participate in graduation exercises and receive a Graduation Certificate, if all the graduation requirements of the Occupational Course of Study, with the exception of the 225 hours of paid employment, have been met. Upon the documented completion of the 225 hours of paid employment, the student may request the exchange of the Graduation Certificate for a high school diploma, if the student satisfied the requirement before or during the school year in which the student turns age 22, commensurate with the student's eligibility for a free, appropriate, public education.</p>