

Minnesota's High School Graduation Requirements

Students must meet state and local high school graduation requirements

In order to graduate from a Minnesota public high school, a student must meet the state's course credit requirements and any additional local course credit requirements established by the school district. State graduation requirements are outlined in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 120B](#), and [Minnesota Rules, chapter 3501](#). Students also must take standards-based tests in reading and math.

Minnesota requires students to complete 21.5 required and elective course credits

State course credit requirements for graduating from high school require students to complete the following 21.5 course credits:

- four language arts credits
- three math credits in algebra, geometry and statistics, and probability; students in the class of 2015 and later also must complete an algebra II credit (or its equivalent) as part of this three-credit requirement
- three science credits that include one biology credit and one physics or chemistry credit as part of the three-credit science requirement
- three-and-a-half social studies credits in U.S. history, geography, world history, economics, and government and citizenship that includes civics, or three social studies credits in U.S. history, geography, world history, government and citizenship that includes civics, and half a credit in economics taught in the social studies, business, or agriculture education department of a high school; civics instruction must include test questions given to applicants seeking to become naturalized U.S. citizens
- one art credit
- seven elective credits

Students may use: an agriculture science course to meet a general science credit other than the science credit in biology; a career and technical education credit to meet a science, math, or arts credit; a computer science credit to meet a math credit; and a Project Lead the Way credit to meet a science or math credit.

Students also must have physical education based on the most recent K-12 standards developed by the National Association of Sport and Physical Education, which MDE may modify and adapt to accommodate state interests.

A course credit signifies that a student successfully completed an academic year of study in a particular subject area or the district otherwise determined that the student mastered the subject area.

State graduation requirements apply to ELL students and children with disabilities

Students with limited English proficiency, or English language learners (ELL), must meet the same graduation requirements as all other students. English learners must take the Access for ELLs so districts can measure their progress toward meeting Minnesota standards for English language development. Children with disabilities must be given accommodations that are appropriate to their strengths and needs, and that permit equal access to and work toward grade-level content standards.

Students also must complete local graduation requirements

Districts must establish local health standards. Districts also must establish standards in career and technical education and world languages, and must offer elective courses in these two subject areas. Districts may impose additional local graduation requirements.

Students must take annual summative tests under federal and state law

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs): Public school students in grades 3 through 8 must take annual statewide MCAs in reading and math; students in grade 10 take the reading MCA and students in grade 11 take the math MCA; students in grade 9 must take a statewide writing test when it becomes available.

College entrance exams: To the extent state funding is available, districts must pay the cost, one time, for students in grade 11 or 12 to take a nationally normed college entrance exam at the student's high school during the school day.

Graduation assessments: Students are not required to achieve a specified score or level of proficiency on any statewide assessment in order to graduate from high school.

Students must answer questions from the U.S. naturalization test

Students enrolled in grade 9 in the 2017-2018 school year and later must take a civics test, correctly answering 30 of 50 questions from the U.S. naturalization test. A district cannot prevent a student from graduating or deny a student diploma who does not correctly answer 30 civics test questions.

Students are subject to career and college readiness expectations

Districts and schools annually must help students, beginning no later than grade 9, and their families prepare for postsecondary education and a career and must help these students and their parents develop an individualized plan for postsecondary education or a career. Underlying the planning process are career and college-ready benchmarks that inform students and their parents and teachers about what knowledge and skills the students must learn and how well the students must perform to have a reasonable chance to succeed in a career or college without need for postsecondary remediation.

The education commissioner, in consultation with the chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), must establish benchmarks on the high school reading and math tests to show progress toward career and college readiness. Students who receive a college-ready ACT or SAT score or meet a career and college-ready MCA benchmark are not required to take a remedial noncredit course at a MnSCU institution in the corresponding subject area.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities can take the MTAS

Students with IEPs and significant cognitive disabilities can take the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) instead of the MCA reading and math tests. The MTAS is an alternative assessment in reading, math, and science that is based on alternative achievement standards and measures the extent to which students are making progress in the general curriculum.

The MCA II high school science test is not a graduation requirement

Although federal law requires states to administer a science test to high school students, students do not need to pass the high school science test to graduate. Under state law, students are not required to receive a passing score on high school science assessments as a condition of receiving a diploma.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Lisa Larson at 651-296-8036. Also the House Research publication [*Minnesota's Statewide Assessments*](#), August 2016.

The Research Department of the Minnesota House of Representatives is a nonpartisan office providing legislative, legal, and information services to the entire House.

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