

High School Graduation Framework

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Healey-Driscoll Administration released recommendations on requirements for all students to graduate from a Massachusetts public high school. These include completing specific core classes, taking a limited number of end-of-course exams and completing a final project or portfolio of work. Students would also make their own plan for college or career that includes completing or opting out of an application for financial aid, learning financial literacy, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital literacy and participating in work-based learning.

Overview

- **My child is currently in high school. Are the requirements for them to graduate changing?**

No. The plan is for these new requirements to start with students entering 9th grade in the future. There is no change for current high school students.

- **What is currently the graduation requirement for high school students in Massachusetts?**

Currently, students must complete required coursework in English, math and science set by their school district that align with statewide standards. Students also need to show mastery of those key subjects in line with their district's grading policy, which may include a final assessment for a course or a capstone or portfolio project.

As the current requirements are determined at the school district level, there may be significant differences in expectations from one district to another. The administration's recommendations aim to create a more uniform and consistent standard across the state.

- **How would my child show they are ready to graduate?**

Students would show they are ready by completing required courses, participating in end-of-course exams, developing a college or career plan and finishing a final project that demonstrates their learning.

- **Would these new requirements be the same across all schools in Massachusetts?**

There would be a consistent statewide set of expectations for graduation. Schools and districts would have some local flexibility in how they help students meet those requirements.

- **Would there be flexibilities for students with disabilities and English learners?**

Yes. Schools would be expected to provide accommodations, supports and flexible pathways so all students can meet graduation requirements.

- **My child does not know yet what they want to do when they graduate – does that change what requirements they would have to meet?**

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No. All students would complete the same core requirements that are designed to help them explore multiple options and keep many future pathways open.

- **Would my child's school be ready for these new graduation requirements?**

The state is planning for a multi-year rollout with time, guidance, and support for schools to prepare thoughtfully before the requirements would take full effect.

- **What kind of real-world skills will my child learn?**

Students would build real-world skills such as financial literacy, communication, problem-solving, digital and AI literacy, and career readiness through coursework and hands-on learning experiences.

Exams – End of Course Assessments (EOCs)

- **Does my child have to pass an exam?**

Students would take a small number of end-of-course exams in certain subjects, which count toward their overall academic record and progress toward graduation. Failure to pass an exam alone is not intended to prevent a student from getting a diploma.

- **Are the end-of-course assessments high stakes?**

No. The exams would be one part of a broader system to demonstrate learning and are not intended to be the single factor determining whether a student graduates.

- **Will there be both the 10th grade MCAS and EOCs at the same time?**

The goal is to phase out the 10th grade MCAS, in favor of EOCs. EOCs would be more directly related to course material a student just learned than the current high school MCAS.

Final Projects

- **What does a culminating experience mean?**

A culminating experience is a major project and learning experience where students show what they have learned by applying their skills and abilities in a real-world-connected way.

- **What is a capstone?**

Capstones are cumulative projects and usually include research, a written assignment and a final presentation.

- **What is a portfolio?**

Portfolios are collections of student work that document evidence of learning and proficiency over time. A student's reflection on their learning accompanies a portfolio.

High School Classes

- **What is MassCore?**

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[MassCore](#) is a set of high school courses that prepares students for college and careers, while keeping all post-graduation options open. It includes 4 units of English, 4 units of Math, 3 units of lab-based Science, 3 units of History/Social Science, 2 units of World Language, 1 unit of Arts, Physical Education, and 5 additional courses.

- **What classes would my child need to take?**

Students would complete a full set of core subjects (like English, Math, Science, and History), along with other courses and electives through MassCore.

Career and College Planning

- **What is MyCAP?**

MyCAP stands for My Career and Academic Plan. It is a structured plan that helps students set goals, explore careers, and prepare for life after high school through specified activities each year.

- **What work-based learning opportunities would be available?**

Specific work-based learning opportunities may vary by district and school, but some examples include internships, apprenticeships, or career-connected projects to explore interests and gain real-world experience.

- **Do I have to fill out the FAFSA?**

Families would have the choice to complete the FAFSA or opt out.

- **Do I have to fill out the MASFA?**

The [Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid \(MASFA\)](#) provides state financial aid to eligible non-U.S. citizens. Families would have the choice to complete the MASFA or opt out.