

THE VIRGINIA ASSESSMENT PROGRAM AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS REGULATIONS

I. Definitions

A. Standard Unit of Credit

A “standard unit of credit” or “standard credit” is a credit awarded for a course in which the student successfully completes 140 clock hours of instruction and the requirements of the course. A standard unit of credit for world languages may be awarded based on a waiver of the 140 clock hour requirement as provided in Policy IKFD, Alternative Paths to Attaining Standard Units of Credit: Credit by Exam for World Languages.

B. Verified Unit of Credit

A “verified unit of credit” or “verified credit” is a credit awarded for a course in which a student earns a standard unit of credit and completes one of the following:

1. Achieves a passing score on a corresponding end-of-course SOL test.
2. Achieves a passing score on an additional test, as defined in 8 VAC 20-131-5, as a part of the Virginia Assessment Program.
3. Meets the criteria for the receipt of a locally awarded verified credit when the student has not passed a corresponding SOL test.

Students may also earn verified credits by taking alternative tests to the SOL assessment. Such tests may only be those approved by the Virginia Board of Education, and the student may earn verified credits only by achieving that score established by the Board of Education.

Upon demonstration of mastery of course content and objectives, the Superintendent or designee may recommend that qualified students may receive a standard unit(s) of credit and be permitted to sit for the relevant SOL Assessment to earn a verified credit(s) without having to meet the 140 clock hour requirement, in accordance with Policy IGBG.

C. Virginia Assessment Program

The “Virginia Assessment Program” is a system used to evaluate student achievement that includes SOL tests and additional tests that may be approved from time to time by the Board of Education.

II. Virginia Assessment Program

Each student in middle and high school takes all applicable end-of-course SOL Assessments following course instruction. The Superintendent certifies to the Department of Education that the Division’s policy for dropping courses ensures that students’ course schedules are not changed to avoid end-of-course SOL tests.

- A. Students who achieve a passing score on an end-of-course SOL Assessment and a passing grade for the course shall be awarded a verified unit of credit in that course.
- B. Students may earn verified units of credit in any course for which end-of-course SOL Assessments are available.
- C. Students are not required to take an end-of-course SOL test in an academic subject after they have earned the number of verified credits required for that academic content area for graduation unless such test is necessary in order for the school to meet federal accountability requirements.
- D. Students may also earn verified credits by taking alternative assessments approved by the Board of Education that may be used in lieu of a Standards of Learning Assessment to obtain verified credit. The Board of Education will set the score that must be achieved to earn a verified unit of credit on the additional assessment options.
- E. Students who are accelerated take the test aligned with the highest grade level, following instruction in the content. No student takes more than one test in any content area in each year, except in the case of expedited retakes as provided for in 8 VAC 20-131-30.
- F. English Learner Students: Any student identified as an English Learner (EL) participates in the Virginia Assessment Program.
 - 1. A school-based committee convenes and makes determinations regarding the participation of EL students in the Virginia Assessment Program and which, if any, testing accommodations and/or exemptions are appropriate in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Certain EL students in grades 3-8 may be considered for a one-time exemption from SOL testing under the following circumstances:
 - a. There is an exemption consideration for the grades 3-8 Reading SOL for EL students who have been in U.S. schools for less than 12 months at the time of test administration; and
 - b. Decisions regarding possible one-time exemptions for the grades 3-8 writing, and history and social sciences SOLs are made on a case-by-case basis by the school-based EL committee.

All exemptions apply only to grades 3-8 assessments and not End-of-Course (EOC) assessments.

- 2. Exemptions from testing must be documented in the student's EL Student Assessment Participation Plan and conveyed to the EL student's parent(s) or guardian(s).

G. Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities shall be assessed in accordance with state and federal guidelines:

1. Participation in the Virginia Assessment Program by students with disabilities is prescribed by provisions of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
2. All students with disabilities must be considered for participation in the SOL Assessments.
3. Generally, decisions about how a student with a disability will be assessed should be made independently for each content area.
4. All students with disabilities are assessed with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments where necessary.

III. Graduation Requirements and Parent/Guardian Notification of Student Status Related to Graduation

A. In order to graduate from ACPS, a student must meet all applicable requirements set forth in the Standards of Accreditation, the Standards of Quality and this regulation. The requirements for a student to earn a diploma are those in effect when he or she enters the ninth grade for the first time.

B. Notification of Student Status in Completing Graduation Requirement
ACPS will notify the parent/guardian of rising eleventh- and twelfth-grade students of:

1. The number of standard and verified units of credit required for graduation pursuant to the Standards of Accreditation; and
2. The remaining number of such units of credit the individual student requires for graduation.

C. Notification Related to Students' Failure to Graduate:

1. School Board designees shall notify the parent/guardian of students who fail to graduate or who fail to achieve the number of verified credits required for graduation as provided in the Standards of Accreditation and who have not reached 20 years of age on or before August 1st of the school year of the right to a free public education.
2. School Board designees will notify the parent/guardian of students with disabilities who have an IEP and who fail to meet the requirements for graduation of the student's rights to a free and appropriate education to age 21, inclusive, pursuant to Va. Code §22.1-213 et seq.

3. If a student who does not graduate or achieve such verified units of credit is a student for whom English is a second language and who entered school in Virginia for the first time after reaching his/her twelfth birthday, the School Board designees will notify the parent/guardian of the student's opportunity for a free public education to age 21, in accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-5.

IV. Types of Verified Credit Diplomas Offered in Alexandria City Public Schools

ACPS will offer two verified credit diplomas:

A. Advanced Studies Diploma

ACPS shall award an Advanced Studies Diploma to any student who successfully completes the requirements set forth in the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Quality, which are reflected in the current Program of Studies. Advanced Studies Diploma requirements from the 2017-18 Program of Studies are listed below:

GENERAL INFORMATION

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Please note: Graduation requirements are subject to change. You may refer to the following link for more information, <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/index.shtml>.

ADVANCED STUDIES DIPLOMA			
Discipline Area	Standard Credits Revised Advanced Studies Diploma Effective with the 9th Grade Class of 2011–12	Verified Credits 2011–2021	Verified Credits 2022 and beyond
English	4	2	2
History and Social Sciences	4	2	1
Mathematics	4	2	1
Laboratory Sciences	4	2	1
World Languages	3		
Health and Physical Education	2		
Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education (CTE)	1		
Economics and Personal Finance	1		
Electives	3		
Student-Selected Tests		1	
Total	26*	9	5

Note: Requirements for a student to earn a diploma from a Virginia high school shall be those in effect when that student enters the 9th grade for the first time.

* Advanced Studies Diplomas – One credit must be earned in an Advanced Placement or Dual Enrollment course.

EXPLANATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

1. DISCIPLINES AND COURSES

English –

English 9, honors or standard

English 10, honors or standard

English 11, honors or standard, Advanced Placement

(AP) English Language or Dual Enrollment (DE) College Composition

English 12, honors or standard, AP English Literature and

Composition, DE College Composition or DE Survey of World Literature

Mathematics –

At or above the level of Algebra, credits shall include at least three course selections from among Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra Functions and Data Analysis, Algebra II or above Algebra II. Students in grades 7 and 8 who take Algebra and Geometry during middle school will earn a high school credit for each subject.

Laboratory Sciences –

Four credits must be earned from among three different science disciplines: Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry or Physics. Students who enroll in AP Science courses must co-enroll in and complete the appropriate AP Science Lab Seminars. When planning course selections, students must count two full periods for each AP science course. The AP course earns science credit and the AP Science Lab Seminar earns elective credit.

Social Sciences –

World History and Geography, Part I, standard or honors

World History and Geography, Part II, standard or honors, or AP World History

Virginia and U.S. History, Honors, AP or DE

Virginia and U.S. Government, standard, honors or AP

World Languages –

Three years of one language or two years each of two languages. Students in grades 6, 7 and 8 who successfully complete both parts 1A and 1B and year two of a World Language will earn two high school credits.

Electives –

Within core academic discipline areas, Fine Arts and/or CTE courses. Students must take two electives that are sequential (coursework that builds similar skills, as defined by the Virginia Department of Education).

Virtual Courses –

A student must successfully complete one virtual course, which may be non-credit bearing, to graduate with either a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma, beginning with students entering 9th grade for the first time in 2013-14.

2. VERIFIED CREDITS – To earn Verified Credits, students must pass Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) end-of-course tests in certain subjects, in addition to two end-of-program English tests administered in Grade 11. Students must pass the courses and the corresponding SOL test(s) to be awarded Verified Credit. (Refer to “Standards of Learning, End-of-Course Tests and Verified Credits” on page 42.)

3. CERTIFICATE OF PROGRAM COMPLETION –

Students who successfully complete all academic coursework required for the Advanced Studies Diploma, but who have not earned/been awarded the necessary number of Verified Credits required by the state for the awarding of a diploma, will be awarded Certificates of Program Completion. These students may continue to take the SOL tests needed to upgrade their Certificates of Program Completion to diplomas.

NOTE – Each middle and high school student shall take ALL applicable SOL, AP and CTE tests following course instruction.

NOTE – Grades earned in Algebra, Geometry and/or World Languages during middle school will be used to calculate the high school grade point average (GPA) unless the parents/legal guardians exercise the option to omit the grades and credits from the high school transcript. When these high school courses are omitted from the student's transcript, all graduation requirements must be met. For example, omitting Algebra I in middle school will require the student to earn three or four standard and Verified Credits of high school mathematics to meet graduation requirements.

B. Standard Diploma

ACPS shall award a Standard Diploma to any student who successfully completes the requirements set forth in the Standards of Accreditation, the Standards of Quality and the current Program of Studies.

Standard Diploma requirements from the 2017-18 Program of Studies are listed below:

GENERAL INFORMATION

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Please note: Graduation requirements are subject to change. You may refer to the following link for more information, <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/index.shtml>.

STANDARD DIPLOMA			
Discipline Area	Standard Credits Revised Standard Diploma Effective with the 9th Grade Class of 2011–12	Verified Credits 2011–2021	Verified Credits 2022 and beyond
English	4	2	2
History and Social Sciences	4	1	1
Mathematics	3	1	1
Laboratory Sciences	3	1	1
Health and Physical Education	2		
World Languages, Fine Arts or CTE**	2		
Economics and Personal Finance	1		
Electives**	3**		
Student-Selected Tests		1	
Total	22	6	5

Note: Requirements for a student to earn a diploma from a Virginia high school shall be those in effect when that student enters the 9th grade for the first time.

* Courses to satisfy the electives requirement shall include at least two sequential electives.

** A student must earn a board-approved CTE credential to graduate with a Standard Diploma, beginning with students entering 9th grade for the first time in 2013-14. Please see page 32 for a list of approved CTE credentials.

EXPLANATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

1. DISCIPLINES AND COURSES

English –

English 9, honors or standard
English 10, honors or standard
English 11, honors or standard, Advanced Placement (AP)
English Language or Dual Enrollment (DE) College Composition
English 12, AP English Literature and Composition, DE College Composition or
DE Survey of World Literature

Mathematics –

At or above the level of Algebra, credits shall include at least three course selections from among Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra Functions and Data Analysis, Algebra II, or above Algebra II. Students in grades 7 and 8 who take Algebra and Geometry during middle school will earn a high school credit for each subject.

Laboratory Sciences –

Three credits must be earned from at least two different science disciplines: Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry or Physics. Students who enroll in AP Science courses must co-enroll in and complete the appropriate AP Science Lab Seminars. When planning course selections, students must count two full periods for each AP science course. The AP course earns science credit and the AP Science Lab Seminar earns elective credit.

Social Sciences –

World History and Geography, Part I, standard or honors
World History and Geography, Part II, standard or honors, or AP World History
Virginia and U.S. History, Honors, AP or DE
Virginia and U.S. Government, standard, honors or AP

World Languages –

Students in grades 6, 7 and 8 who successfully complete both parts 1A and 1B and year two of a World Language will earn two high school credits.

CTE –

A student must earn a board-approved career and technical education credential to graduate with a Standard Diploma, beginning with students entering 9th grade for the first time in 2013-14. Please see page 32 for a list of approved CTE credentials.

Electives –

Within core academic discipline areas, Fine Arts and/or CTE courses. Students must take two electives that are sequential (coursework that builds similar skills, as defined by the Virginia Department of Education).

Virtual Courses –

A student must successfully complete one virtual course, which may be non-credit bearing, to graduate with either a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma, beginning with students entering ninth grade for the first time in 2013-14.

2. VERIFIED CREDITS – To earn Verified Credits, students must pass Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) end-of-course tests in certain subjects, in addition to two end-of-program English tests administered in Grade 11. Students must pass the course and the corresponding SOL test(s) to be awarded Verified Credit. (Refer to “Standards of Learning, End-of-Course Tests and Verified Credits” on page 42.)

3. CERTIFICATE OF PROGRAM COMPLETION –

Students who successfully complete all academic coursework required for the Standard Diploma, but who have not earned/been awarded the necessary number of Verified Credits required by the state for the awarding of a diploma, will be awarded Certificates of Program Completion. These students may continue to take the SOL tests needed to upgrade their Certificates of Program Completion to diplomas.

NOTE – Each middle and high school student shall take ALL applicable SOL, AP and CTE tests following course instruction.

NOTE – Grades earned in Algebra, Geometry and/or World Languages during middle school will be used to calculate the high school grade point average (GPA) unless the parent/legal guardian exercises the option to omit the grades and credits from the high school transcript. When these high school courses are omitted from the student's transcript, all graduation requirements must be met. For example, omitting Algebra I in middle school will require the student to earn three or four standard and Verified Credits of high school mathematics to meet graduation requirements.

V. Alternatives to Verified Credit Diplomas (Including Special Education and Adult Education Programs)

Special Education Alternative

In addition to the Advanced Studies and Standard Diplomas, ACPS offers an additional option to students with disabilities:

A. Applied Studies Diploma

1. ACPS shall award an Applied Studies Diploma to each student with a disability who successfully completes the requirements set forth in his/her IEP (Individualized Education Program) but does not meet the requirements for other diplomas.
2. The School Board will notify the parent/guardian of students with disabilities who have an IEP and who fail to meet the requirements for graduation of the student's rights to a free and appropriate education to age 21, inclusive, pursuant to Va. Code §22.1-213 et seq.

VI. Assessment of Students with Disabilities and Notification to Parents/Guardians of Special Education Alternative to the Advanced and Standard Diplomas

- A. Students with disabilities shall be assessed in accordance with state and federal guidelines.
- B. The IEP Team or 504 Committee makes decisions about participation in each of the assessments and the need for and selection of accommodations.
- C. All students with disabilities must be considered for participation in the SOL Assessments. Generally, decisions about how a student with a disability will be assessed should be made independently for each content area.
- D. The IEP Team or 504 Committee should consider the available assessment options.

VII. Adult Education Alternatives

For students 18 years or older, the Office of Adult Education offers the following three Adult Education programs:

A. General Educational Development (GED) Certificate

1. The Board of Education has established a program for testing for General Educational Development (GED) through which persons may earn a high school equivalency certificate. Under no circumstances shall persons under the age of 16 be eligible for the testing program.

2. The following persons may participate in the General Education Development testing program:
 - a. Persons who are at least 18 years of age and not enrolled in public school or not otherwise meeting the school attendance requirements set forth in Va. Code § 22.1-254. Under special circumstances consistent with Va. Code § 22.1-254 and 22.1-254.2, the age limit may be lowered to 16;
 - b. Persons 16 years of age or older who have been instructed by their parents/guardians pursuant to Va. Code § 22.1-254.1 and who have completed such home school instruction;
 - c. Persons who have been excused from school attendance pursuant to subsection B and C of Va. Code § 22.1-254;
 - d. Persons for whom an individual student alternative education plan has been granted pursuant to subsection D of Va. Code § 22.1-254; and
 - e. Persons 16 through 18 years of age who are housed in adult correctional facilities and who are actively pursuing a GED certificate or have achieved a passing score on a Board of Education-approved high school equivalent examination but who are not enrolled in an Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) pursuant to subsection D of Va. Code § 22.1-254.

C. Adult High School Diploma Program

The Adult High School Diploma Program enables an adult who is no longer enrolled in public education to complete the required coursework to earn an Adult High School Diploma, a credential approved by the Virginia Board of Education (BOE).

To obtain this credential, the adult student must complete all of the course requirements that were in place at the time they entered the ninth grade, with the exception of health and physical education. Certain requirements for specific assessments may be waived if the assessments are no longer administered to students in Virginia public schools.

Students who entered ninth grade prior to the year 2000 must either pass the SOL assessment or the GED exam for English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in order to earn this diploma. For students who entered ninth grade after the year 2000 end-of-course assessments are used in lieu of specific state assessments, as recommended by the BOE.

Requirements for graduation with an Adult High School are as follows:

DISCIPLINE AREAS	STANDARD UNITS OF CREDIT REQUIRED
English	4
Mathematics	3
Science	2
History and Social Sciences	2
Electives	9
TOTAL	20

1. Courses completed to satisfy the requirements in mathematics and science shall include content in courses that incorporate or exceed the content of courses approved by the Virginia Board of Education (BOE) to satisfy any other BOE-recognized diploma.
2. Courses completed to satisfy the history and social science requirement shall include one unit of credit in Virginia and U.S. history and one unit of credit in Virginia and U.S. government in courses that incorporate or exceed the content of courses approved to satisfy any BOE-recognized diploma.
3. Courses completed to satisfy the electives requirement shall include at least two sequential electives, which may include career and technical education and training.

Established: June 23, 2016

Revised: December 15, 2016

Revised: April 26, 2018

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-253.13:1, 22.1-253.13:4.

8 VAC 20-131-5.

8 VAC 20-131-30.

8 VAC 20-131-40.

8 VAC 20-131-50.

8 VAC 20-131-51.

8 VAC 20-131-110.

Guidelines for Graduation Requirements; Local Alternative Paths to Standard Units of Credit (Virginia Board of Education Oct. 2015).

Cross Refs.:	IAA	Notification of Learning Objectives
	IGBG	Homebound, Correspondence and Alternative Means of Instruction
	IGBGA	Online Courses and Virtual School Programs
	IGBF	English Learners
	IKEB	Acceleration
	IKF	The Virginia Assessment Program and Graduation Requirements

IKFA	Locally Awarded Verified Credits
IKFD	Alternative Paths to Attaining Standard Units of Credit: Credit-by-Exam for World Languages
IKFD-R	Credit-by-Exam for World Languages Regulations
IKH	Retaking SOL Assessments