COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

One of the requirements for graduation in Massachusetts is a determination of competency in subjects previously covered by the MCAS. In addition to other requirements for graduation, students must have been determined by the district to have achieved mastery of the common core of skills, competency, and knowledge in said areas, and satisfactorily completed coursework that has been certified by the student's district as showing mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the state academic standards and curriculum frameworks.

Competency Determination Requirements

A determination of competency shall include:

Demonstrating a mastery of skills in English language arts, mathematics, and science; **and the satisfactory completion of relevant coursework** aligned to the standards measured by the high school English language arts, mathematics, and science MCAS assessments administered in 2023.

A student enrolled in the Manchester Essex Regional School District must have satisfactorily completed coursework, earned full credit and passed the end of course assessment in the content areas below:

Content Area	Coursework Requirements	Notes
English Language Arts	The equivalent of two years of high school English language arts courses.	To satisfy this course requirement, the English Language Arts courses must be taken in grades 9-12.
Mathematics	The equivalent of one year of both Algebra I and Geometry courses.	To satisfy this course requirement, the Mathematics courses must be taken in grades 8-12.
Science	The equivalent of one year of any one of the following disciplines: Biology, Physics, Chemistry, or Technology/Engineering.	To satisfy this course requirement, the science course must be taken in grades 9-12.
U.S. History	The equivalent of a one-year United States history course.	To satisfy this course requirement, the U.S. History course must be taken in grades 9-12.

Aligned Courses:
Manchester Essex Regional School District offers the following courses in alignment with the state curriculum frameworks that meet the above requirements.

Content Area	Aligned Courses	Evidence of Mastery
English Language Arts	English 9 (All Levels) ACE Humanities English 10 (All Levels) ACE Humanities ACE Literacy ELL *(For students at Levels 1- 2 on ACCESS)*	• End of course assessment • Successful completion of aligned course
Mathematics	Algebra 1 (All Levels) ACE Algebra ACE Applied Math Geometry 1 (All Levels) ACE Geometry	• End of course assessment • Successful completion of aligned course

	ACE Applied Math	
Science	Biology (All Levels) Physics (All Levels) Chemistry (All Levels) ACE Biology	• End of course assessment • Successful completion of aligned course
U.S. History	US History I (All Levels) US History II (All Levels) ACE Humanities	• End of course assessment • Successful completion of aligned course

**Students who met the CD standard in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and/or Science prior to January 3, 2025 (i.e., students who earned a CD through a regular or retest administration of the MCAS, or through a DESE appeal process) retain that benefit.*

Additional Considerations

Students with Disabilities

The Manchester Essex Regional School District must both provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities and must also determine that the student has met the competency determination and local graduation requirements prior to graduating that student. Students unable to complete an end of course assessment will be assessed via alternative demonstration such as a portfolio review or modified assessment, based on their Individualized Education Plans.

Students with disabilities who have been placed in out-of-district placements must meet the requirements of the competency determination policy of the placing school district. Discussion of the competency determination must be a part of the IEP Team's transition planning.

English Language Learners

The Manchester Essex Regional School District shall, on a case-by-case basis, determine the appropriate courses necessary for English Language Learners to both achieve language proficiency and meet the competency determination requirements.

Late-Enrolling Students

Students who enroll in a Massachusetts public high school after their ninth-grade year may be granted a determination of competency by the Manchester Essex Regional School District in one or more of the following ways:

- Transcript review by the MERHS Principal.
- Additional course requirements as determined by the MERHS Principal.
- A qualifying MCAS score of at least meeting or exceeding expectations achievement levels on the relevant high school MCAS assessment; or by meeting the standard for a substituted equivalent that the district certifies satisfies the same academic standards.

Appeals Process

The appeals process ensures that students and families have a clear and fair pathway for challenging a Graduation Competency Determination (GCD). The process follows the district's problem-solving framework and emphasizes resolving concerns at the level closest to the issue whenever possible.

Level 1: Student/Parent - Teacher Conference and Parent Follow-Up

- When a student/parent believes that a Graduation Competency Determination (GCD) decision may be in error, the student must first meet with the classroom teacher most directly associated with the assessment(s) or academic requirement in question.

- The teacher will review the evidence used in making the determination and explain how it aligns with the graduation competency standards.
- In some cases, additional evidence (such as student work, assessment data, or accommodations provided) may be reviewed at this level.
- Parents should expect a response within two school days to schedule a meeting.
- If the student's concerns are not resolved, the parent/guardian may appeal to the Curriculum Chair.

Level 2: Department Review

- If concerns remain after meeting with the teacher, the student and/or parent may request a review with the appropriate Curriculum Chair.
- The Curriculum Chair will review the grading criteria, course expectations, and graduation competency standards to ensure that the determination was consistent with school policy.
- A written determination and summary of the review will be provided within five (5) school days.

Level 3: School-Level Administrative Review

- If the issue is not resolved at the department level, the student and/or parent may request a review with the Principal.
- At this stage, the administrator will:
    - Review all prior documentation and communications.
    - Confirm whether policies, procedures, and accommodations (IEP/504, if applicable) were correctly applied.
    - Determine if additional evidence of competency can or should be considered.
- The administrator will issue a written decision within five (5) school days of the meeting.

Those enrolled in the Manchester Essex Regional School District in the classes of 2003 through 2024 that did not earn a diploma as a result of failing to mee the states Competency Determination requirement may request a transcript review with the building principal. The principal will utilize the above criteria to determine if the student has met MERSD's competency determination and award a diploma.

LEGAL REFS: DESE Graduation Requirements and Related Guidance
DESE Graduation and Transition Planning for Students with IEPs
DESE Competency Determination Guidance and Policy Submission Process
603 CMR 30.00
M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D

CROSS REFS: Student Handbook
IKF Graduation Requirements

SOURCE: MASC - 2025