

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.

An additional requirement for mastery in US History will apply to the graduating class of 2027, and beyond.

Showing mastery: A student shows mastery in accordance with the district's grading policy through a combination of:

1. The final assessment for a course with a passing grade
2. Performance-based assessments demonstrating real-world application of knowledge
3. Teacher-created formative and summative assessments
4. Capstone or portfolio projects (when applicable)
5. Cumulative assessment review by teachers considering all assessments, projects, and performance evaluations

Students must demonstrate mastery at or above the "Proficient" level on performance-based assessments and teacher assessments, with final certification through the student's final grade and credit awarded in applicable courses.

A student enrolled in the South Hadley Public Schools will be determined to have satisfactorily completed coursework and earned full credit in accordance with the district's grading policy and the requirements outlined below:

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

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, or the equivalent of one year of both Integrated Math I and Integrated Math II. Whether to follow an Algebra/Geometry or Integrated Math I/II course sequence is determined by the district, but the equivalent length of the courses must still be met.	Middle school math courses may be certified by the district as meeting the coursework requirement for the mathematics component of the CD. Districts must confirm that the course aligns to the high school Algebra I/Geometry/Integrated Math I/Integrated Math II standards as listed in the 2017 Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework.
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 (Beginning with the graduating class of 2027)	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:

SHPS offers the following courses in alignment with the state curriculum frameworks that meet the above requirements.

English Language Arts

Coursework Requirements: Students must satisfactorily complete coursework in the equivalent of two years of high school English language arts courses. Local course offerings that meet this requirement include:

- English 9 (required)
- English 10 (required)
- English 11 (required)
- English 12 (required)
- AP English Language and Composition

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

- AP English Literature and Composition
- ESL courses (for eligible English learners with grade-appropriate ELA standards integration)

Mastery Demonstration: Students will show mastery in English Language Arts through:

- Written essays and reports demonstrating critical thinking and analytical skills
- Research projects showing ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information
- Presentations and speeches articulating understanding of subject matter
- Performance-based assessments focusing on real-world application
- Teacher-created assessments aligned with Massachusetts State Standards
- Cumulative review of all assessments and performance evaluations

Mathematics

Coursework Requirements: Students must satisfactorily complete coursework in the equivalent of one year of both Algebra I and Geometry. Local course offerings that meet this requirement include:

- Algebra I (required)
- Geometry (required)
- Algebra II
- Pre-Calculus
- AP Calculus AB
- AP Calculus BC
- AP Statistics
- Integrated Math I and II (alternative pathway)

Mastery Demonstration: Students will show mastery in Mathematics through:

- Problem-solving tasks requiring application of mathematical principles
- Performance-based assessments demonstrating real-world mathematical application
- Teacher-created quizzes, tests, and assessments
- Final assessments in required courses
- Cumulative review of mathematical competency across all assessments

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

Science

Coursework Requirements: Students must satisfactorily complete coursework in the equivalent of one year of Biology, Physics, Chemistry, or Technology/Engineering. Local course offerings that meet this requirement include:

- Biology (required option)
- Physics (required option)
- Chemistry (required option)
- Technology/Engineering courses (required option)
- AP Biology
- AP Physics
- AP Chemistry
- Environmental Science
- Anatomy and Physiology

Mastery Demonstration: Students will show mastery in Science through:

- Lab reports and experiments demonstrating scientific reasoning
- Performance-based assessments requiring application of scientific methods
- Research projects involving scientific inquiry
- Teacher-created assessments aligned with Massachusetts State Standards
- Final assessments demonstrating competency in scientific reasoning and analysis

U.S. History (Beginning with Class of 2027)

Coursework Requirements: Students must satisfactorily complete coursework in the equivalent of a one-year U.S. History course. Local course offerings that meet this requirement include:

- U.S. History (required)
- AP U.S. History
- Honors U.S. History

Mastery Demonstration: Students will show mastery in U.S. History through:

- Historical analysis projects demonstrating understanding of key events, ideas, people, and movements
- Critical analysis of primary and secondary sources
- Written assignments showing cause-and-effect relationships and multiple perspectives
- Performance-based assessments requiring construction of well-supported historical arguments
- Teacher-created assessments aligned with Massachusetts State Standards

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

Section 2: Additional Requirements

In addition to the coursework and mastery requirements outlined in Section 1, South Hadley Public Schools requires:

- **Community Service:** All students must complete 10 total hours of documented community service due before the last day of senior year
- **MCAS Participation:** Although MCAS is not a diploma requirement, each student must sit for the MCAS in Math, ELA, and Science
- **Credit Requirements:** Students must meet local graduation requirements for their chosen diploma track (126, 150, STEM, or CTE diplomas)
- **Ongoing Assessment:** Students must participate in mid-year and end-of-year assessments (no longer an opt-out option if grade achieved is 93 or higher)

Additional Considerations

Students with Disabilities

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

South Hadley Public Schools provides students with disabilities equal opportunity to meet the CD requirements through:

Special Education Students - Certificate of Attainment/Alternative Portfolio:

- Students with IEPs not expected to meet standard MCAS requirements receive a Certificate of Attainment or utilize an Alternative Portfolio
- Alternative Portfolio includes: academic work samples, teacher assessments, progress toward IEP goals, functional performance evidence, individualized accommodations documentation, caregiver input, and postsecondary transition activities
- IEP Team reviews portfolio and determines Certificate of Attainment eligibility based on demonstrated progress, engagement in learning, functional skills development, and postsecondary transition success
- Accommodations and modifications provided based on individual IEP requirements

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

- Assessment based on progress toward personalized learning goals

English Language Learners

The South Hadley Public Schools 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.

South Hadley Public Schools provides English learners equal opportunity to meet CD requirements through:

- Specialized supports and accommodations as needed
- ESL courses that integrate grade-appropriate ELA standards may meet ELA coursework requirements for eligible students
- Determination of ESL course eligibility based on individual student language proficiency levels and educational background
- Ongoing assessment of progress toward English proficiency alongside academic content mastery

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 South Hadley Public Schools in one or more of the following ways:

South Hadley Public Schools evaluates eligibility for Competency Determination among late-enrolling students through:

South Hadley Public Schools

- Comprehensive transcript review to determine previously completed coursework
- Course-taking opportunities to complete missing requirements
- Individual education plans developed based on scheduling needs and student support requirements
- In limited cases, qualifying MCAS score exceptions may be considered
- Ensuring compliance with state requirements for equivalent course length, relevant coursework, and demonstration of mastery

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

Appeals Process

Students and/or parents/guardians may appeal the determination regarding Competency Determination through the following process:

- **Initial Appeal:** Submit written appeal to the principal within 10 school days of notification
- **Review Meeting:** Meeting with principal, guidance counselor, and relevant teachers within 15 school days of appeal submission
- **Evidence Review:** Comprehensive review of student's assessment records, academic performance, and additional evidence including:
 - Extra credit work
 - External assessments
 - Special projects
 - Alternative demonstration methods
- **Decision Communication:** Written decision provided within 10 school days of review meeting
- **Final Appeal:** If unsatisfied, appeal may be made to the Superintendent within 10 school days
- **Timeline:** Total appeals process completed within 45 school days of initial appeal

South Hadley Public Schools provides the following process for eligible students in classes 2003-2024 who did not earn a diploma due to failing to meet the state's CD requirement:

- **Eligibility Determination:**
 - Previously enrolled in South Hadley Public Schools
 - Previously met criteria for Certificate of Attainment
 - Not previously reported as graduate in any district's SIMS submission
- **Application Process:**
 - Submit written request to the Principal's office
 - Provide transcript and documentation of previous enrollment
 - Request processed within 30 school days
- **Review Process:**
 - Comprehensive review by administration and guidance counselors
 - Evaluation against current CD requirements
 - Determination of additional requirements if needed
- **Communication:**
 - Written decision provided within 45 school days
 - Clear explanation of determination and any additional requirements

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

- Information about next steps and support available
- **Responsible Personnel:** Principal or designee, Director of Counseling, and relevant department heads

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

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