

DRAFT TO REPLACE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY IKF - GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

Malden Public Schools students must meet the competency determination standard, as well as meeting local graduation requirements, in order to qualify for a Malden High School diploma.

The Malden School Committee shall issue a local Certificate of Attainment to those students who have met the local district requirements but have not met the Competency Determination. Said certificate shall be in a suitable form, signed by the Chair of the Committee and presented at the time of commencement exercises.

All students who have met the local district requirements for graduation shall be allowed to participate in commencement exercises.

Credit for International Study: Students who are away for a term or year to participate in a student exchange program or otherwise study abroad may receive credits toward high school graduation when (1) study plans are approved by the school administration in advance; and (2) the institution where the study occurred submits a record of the student's work. In these instances, the Principal and student's guidance counselor will evaluate the work and assign credit for it according to standards prevailing in Malden High School.

Eighth Grade Graduation Ceremonies will be held at the Beebe, Ferryway, Forestdale, Linden and Salemwood Schools annually in June and the School Committee shall issue to those graduates who are moving on to the ninth grade a suitable diploma or certificate, as the case may be.

Criteria for Meeting the Competency Determination Standard:

1. **Satisfactorily Complete Coursework:** Students must satisfactorily complete coursework in the areas measured by the 2023 MCAS high school tests, as evidenced by earning full credit for the course in accordance with the district's grading policy (earning a course grade of 60 or above at the end of the year is considered a "passing score," and shall result in awardance of full credit.) These courses include:
 - **ELA:** English 10 CP or H, or equivalent course
 - **Math:** Math II CP or H, or equivalent course
 - **Science:** Biology CP or H, Physics CP or H, Chemistry CP or H, The combination of: Introduction to Engineering (Half-year course) + one of the following three courses (Engineering for Our Community, Engineering for Our Future, and Creative Design & Engineering), or equivalent course
 - **US History:** US History II, Advanced Placement US History, or equivalent course (*class of 2027 onwards*)

2. **Demonstrate Mastery:** Students must demonstrate mastery of the skills, competencies and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the 2023 MCAS high school tests by:
- For students in the class of 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029, the determination of mastery shall be made based on the student's attainment of a passing score, according to the district's grading policy, in the following courses or equivalent courses:
 - i. **ELA:** English 10 CP or H, or equivalent course
 - ii. **Math:** Math II CP or H, or equivalent course
 - iii. **Science:** Biology CP or H, Physics CP or H, Chemistry CP or H, The combination of: Introduction to Engineering (Half-year course) + one of the following three courses (Engineering for Our Community, Engineering for Our Future, and Creative Design & Engineering), or equivalent course.
 - iv. **US History:** US History II, Advanced Placement US History, or equivalent course (*class of 2027 onwards*)
 - For students in the class of 2030 and beyond, the determination of mastery shall be made based on the student's successful completion, in accordance with the district's grading policy: (1) the final assessment for the course; or (2) a capstone or portfolio project; or (3) an equivalent measure identified in the district's Competency Determination policy for each of the courses listed above (or equivalent coursework, the definition of which is described in subsequent sections of this policy).

The School Committee will approve and communicate the specific assessments or portfolio requirements for each content area required by state regulations no later than May 4, 2026. These assessments and/or portfolios will be piloted in spring 2027 with students. After a thorough administrative review of assessment results, revisions to the definitions of mastery will be presented for School Committee approval no later than 8/1/2027.

Based on this work, the assessments or portfolio requirements will be fully operational for administration in Spring 2028, when the Class of 2030 will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery on these assessments for their Competency Determination. The specific assessments and/or portfolio requirements for each content area will allow students to demonstrate mastery of the required skills, competencies, and knowledge by content area, as specified in DESE guidelines.

Additional Considerations for Meeting the Competency Determination Standard:

1. **Equivalent Coursework:** The determination regarding equivalent coursework shall be made by the Principal; any appeals to the decision of the Principal shall be submitted to

and reviewed by the Director of Guidance and the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.

2. **Students with Disabilities:** Malden Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all students, including students with disabilities and those receiving a publicly funded education in out-of-district day or residential programs, have equitable access and opportunity to meet the Massachusetts Competency Determination (CD) requirements.

Students with disabilities are provided access to the same curriculum standards and competency expectations as their peers, aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan outlines the specialized instruction, accommodations, and/or modifications necessary to support progress toward these standards. For students educated in out-of-district placements, Malden Public Schools collaborates closely with host schools and program staff to ensure consistent implementation of accommodations and alignment with CD requirements.

In accordance with state guidance, Malden Public Schools will utilize an individual transcript review process as an equitable and flexible pathway for students—including those with disabilities—to demonstrate mastery of the required competencies.

This process will include:

- Review of completed coursework and grades in the identified cornerstone courses (e.g., English 10 and Math 2), and other evidence of mastery aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks;
- Consideration of specialized instructional pathways, alternative assessments, or modified learning standards, as documented in the student's IEP;
- Collaboration among the student's IEP Team, school-based administration, and district representatives to ensure that all relevant evidence of learning is fairly evaluated.

All determinations made through the transcript review process will be documented in the student's educational record, ensuring transparency and consistency. The district's Office of Student Services will oversee and review CD decisions for students with disabilities to ensure alignment with DESE policy and to maintain equity across placements.

3. **English Learners:** In Malden, students learning English, particularly newly arrived students, have equal opportunity to meet the Competency Determination requirements as their English-proficient peers. First and foremost, students arriving from other countries or communities have the opportunity for a transcript review, which is described in the section below entitled "late enrolling students," that allows them to receive credit for equivalent coursework; they also are entitled to participate in the appeals process if

they believe the transcript review does not reflect their level of course-passing or mastery attainment.

In addition, special considerations are offered to students whose English proficiency is determined to be Level 1 or 2 on the ACCESS exam (or WIDA screener used at enrollment). In Malden, these students take a grade-level ELA class taught by an ESL-certified educator to ensure that content is appropriately sheltered for their ELD level; passing of this course at the 10th grade level is considered an “equivalent course” when course-passing and mastery are determined.¹ The grade-level course focused on the 10th grade MA Frameworks is the course utilized for the purpose of competency determination. Assessment for this course will be developed along the same timeline as the general assessments for English 10.

4. **Late-Enrolling Students:** Malden Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all students, including those who enroll at Malden High School after beginning their secondary education elsewhere—whether in Massachusetts, another U.S. state, or internationally—have a fair and equitable opportunity to meet the Massachusetts Competency Determination (CD) requirements.
 - **Individual Transcript Review Process:** For students enrolling in Malden High School after grade 9, the district will conduct an individual transcript review to evaluate progress toward meeting CD requirements. This review will include:
 - i. Verification of completed coursework and earned credits from previous schools, ensuring alignment with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology/Engineering;
 - ii. Evaluation of course content, rigor, and instructional time to confirm equivalent course length and scope consistent with cornerstone courses (e.g., English 10 and Math 2) used for CD determination;
 - iii. Identification of any remaining coursework, assessment, or competency areas requiring completion.When applicable, the district will consult DESE course equivalency and transcript review guidance to ensure consistency with state standards.
 - **Course-Taking Opportunities:** If transcript review identifies areas where the student has not yet demonstrated mastery of required competencies, Malden High School will provide appropriate course-taking opportunities to complete the requirement. Options may include:

¹ It is important to note that in addition to this course, students at ELD1 and 2 are also provided, in accordance with their civil rights and DESE guidance, with an English Language Development course appropriate for their ELD level. This ELD course is not considered equivalent coursework, as it is anchored in English Language Development, rather than grade level ELA standards.

- i. Enrollment in the relevant cornerstone course (e.g., English 10, Math 2, or Biology);
 - ii. Targeted or accelerated instruction tailored to the student's prior experience and readiness;
 - iii. Credit recovery, independent study, or approved online coursework that meets Massachusetts Frameworks standards;
 - iv. Supplemental academic supports such as tutoring, extended learning, or after-school opportunities.
- **Qualifying MCAS Score Exception (in Limited Cases):** In limited cases where transcript review and coursework evidence do not establish clear mastery, Malden Public Schools may consider a qualifying MCAS score exception in accordance with DESE guidelines. This process will be reserved for students who:
 - i. Transferred from schools or systems where MCAS or equivalent assessments were not administered; and
 - ii. Demonstrate mastery through other standardized measures or rigorous coursework aligned to the Massachusetts standards.
 - iii. Have met our local graduation requirements.

All such determinations will be documented and approved in compliance with DESE CD policy and records kept with the School Counselor's office.

- Malden Public Schools ensures that all transcript reviews and CD determinations for late-enrolling students:
 - i. Align with state requirements related to course equivalency, content standards, and instructional time;
 - ii. Are based on evidence of mastery, not solely credit accumulation;
 - iii. Provide equitable access to pathways for demonstrating competency consistent with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance.
 - iv. The Office of Teaching and Learning will monitor implementation to ensure fidelity and equity across all CD determinations for late-enrolling students
5. **Appeals Process:** In the fall of grade 11, students will receive a message from the district indicating their competency determination status; counselors will meet with students who have not yet met the CD to determine an individualized plan to support attainment. This plan may leverage the appeals process below.

In addition, students and/or their parents or guardians may appeal a district determination that a student has or has not met the final Competency Determination requirements. Appeals must be submitted in writing up-to 30 days prior to the student's graduation date.

Appeals may be initiated under the following circumstances:

- Transcript Appeals: When a student believes prior coursework—completed in Malden, another Massachusetts district, another state, or an international school—demonstrates mastery of the relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks standards.
- Classwork Portfolio Appeals: When a student has not passed a course or demonstrated evidence of mastery and wishes to provide additional evidence of course-passing or mastery through a curated portfolio of classwork, assessments, or projects aligned to the CD cornerstone courses (e.g., English 10, Math 2).
- Equivalent Course Appeals: When a student has completed coursework that is substantially equivalent in content and rigor to the required course but is titled or structured differently (e.g., English 9/10, English 11/12, Physics, summer school, or DESE-approved online coursework).

Appeals Submission and Review Process

- Appeals must be submitted to the Building Principal at Malden High School, who will acknowledge receipt within five (5) school days.
- The Principal will convene a Competency Determination Appeals Review Team consisting of a building administrator, department head(s), the student's guidance counselor, and (when applicable) the special education liaison or English learner coordinator.
- The review team will evaluate all evidence provided, including transcripts, course descriptions, portfolios, and work samples, to determine whether the student has demonstrated mastery aligned to the relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- The review process will be completed within 20 school days of receipt of the appeal, barring exceptional circumstances.

Upon completion of the review:

- The Principal (or designee) will issue a written decision summarizing the evidence reviewed, the team's determination, and the rationale for the decision.
- The written outcome will be shared with the student and parent/guardian and documented in the student's cumulative record.
- If the appeal results in a change to the student's CD status, the district will update the student's transcript and internal records accordingly.

If the student or parent/guardian disagrees with the outcome of the district-level appeal, they may request a further review by the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services within 10 school days of the district's final written decision. The Assistant Superintendent will acknowledge receipt within 5 school days and issue a final written response within 15 school days of receiving the request.

6. **Previously Enrolled Students:** For students who graduated prior to 2020, eligible students may request a transcript review based on the current CD; if mastery is not demonstrable from the transcript review, they may utilize the appeals process to request a review of what they perceive to be equivalent coursework.