COMPETENCY DETERMINATION POLICY

GREATER LOWELL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Table of Contents

1. **Purpose and Definitions** 2
   - **Diploma Requirements** 2
   - **Definitions** 3
2. **Competency Determination Requirements** 3
   - **English Language Arts** 3
   - **Mathematics** 4
   - **Science and Technology/Engineering** 4
   - **History and Social Science** 4
   - **Additional Opportunities for the Successful Completion of Coursework** 4
   - **Additional Opportunities for the Successful Demonstration of Mastery** 5
3. **Considerations for Students with Disabilities and English Learners** 5
   - **Students with Disabilities** 5
   - **English Learners** 6
4. **Considerations for Late-Enrolling and Transfer Students** 6
   - **Role of MCAS in Limited Circumstances** 7
5. **Demonstration of Mastery Appeal Process (for Enrolled Students)** 7
   - **Eligibility to Appeal** 7
   - **Appeal Submission** 7
   - **Review Process** 7
   - **Decision and Communication** 8
   - **Recordkeeping and Reporting** 8
6. **Graduation Eligibility Review for Former Students (Classes of 2003 through 2024)** 8
   - **Eligibility Criteria** 8
   - **Review Request Submission** 8
   - **Review Process** 8
   - **Decision and Communication** 9
   - **Recordkeeping and Reporting** 9

Appendix A: Demonstration of Mastery Appeal Request Form 10

Appendix B: Graduation Eligibility Review Request Form 13

1. Purpose and Definitions

The purpose of this policy is to formally establish how students at Greater Lowell Technical High School (GLTHS) will meet the Massachusetts Competency Determination (CD) requirement for high school graduation, in accordance with revised state law and regulations.

In November 2024, Massachusetts voters approved Ballot Question 2, known as the *Repeal Competency Assessment Requirement for High School Graduation Initiative*, which amended the state's graduation requirements by removing the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) as the measure for demonstrating competency. Subsequently, on May 20, 2025, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) voted to amend 603 CMR 30.00, the regulations governing Competency Determination, to reflect these changes.

Under the revised regulations, students must earn the Competency Determination by both:

1. Successfully completing certified coursework; and
2. Demonstrating mastery of the state's academic standards, as outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, and History and Social Science.

As required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), each school district must develop and publicly adopt a local Competency Determination policy that:

1. Clearly defines how students will meet these graduation requirements;
2. Is approved by the district's governing body;
3. Is posted publicly; and
4. Is submitted to DESE.

This policy establishes clear expectations and pathways for students to demonstrate mastery of essential academic knowledge and skills, while providing support structures to promote equity, rigor, and preparation for college, career, and citizenship.

This policy applies to all students seeking a high school diploma from GLTHS, in alignment with the implementation timeline established by DESE. Pursuant to 603 CMR 30.00 and M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D(i), all students must meet the state's Competency Determination requirements to be awarded a diploma.

Upon approval by the Greater Lowell Technical School Committee, this policy will be publicly posted on the district website and shared with all students, families, and staff. Translated versions will be made available to ensure meaningful access for all parents and guardians, consistent with 603 CMR 30.04 (3).

Diploma Requirements

It is important to note that Competency Determination is separate from GLTHS's local graduation requirements. To earn a diploma, students must:

1. Earn Competency Determination in all required subject areas; and
2. Meet all local graduation requirements as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Definitions

The following definitions are adopted directly from 603 CMR 30.02 (*Definitions; Standards for Competency Determination and Local Graduation Requirements*) and reflected within this policy.

Competency Determination shall have the same meaning as described in M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D(i). In accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D(i), as amended satisfaction of the requirements of the Competency Determination shall be a condition for high school graduation. A school committee (including the board of trustees of a charter school and, for publicly-funded Massachusetts special education students, the governing board of a private day or residential special education program) shall award the high school diploma or any other document connoting high school graduation only to a student who has satisfied the Competency Determination requirement and who has met local graduation requirements.

Local Graduation Requirements shall mean graduation criteria established by the student's school district including attendance, course completion and satisfactory grades.

Satisfactorily Completing Coursework shall mean a student earns full credit in accordance with the district's grading policy.

Showing Mastery shall mean a student successfully completes in accordance with the district's grading policy: (a) the final assessment for a course; (b) a capstone or portfolio project; or (c) an equivalent measure identified in the district's Competency Determination policy.

2. Competency Determination Requirements

Beginning with the graduating Class of 2026, all students at Greater Lowell Technical High School must meet updated Competency Determination (CD) requirements as defined by M.G.L. c. 69, § 1D(i), 603 CMR 30.00, and this district policy. To earn a Competency Determination, students must both:

1. Successfully complete required coursework in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, and, beginning with the Class of 2027, U.S. History; and
2. Demonstrate mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks through a standards-based final assessment or an approved additional pathway.

Students in the classes of 2026 and 2027, who earned a Competency Determination prior to January 3, 2025, whether through MCAS performance or a DESE-approved appeal, retain that qualification and are not required to meet the new criteria in that subject area. Students in the Class of 2026 who were on an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP) in English Language Arts (ELA) or Mathematics will demonstrate mastery through successful completion of their EPP. The EPP will include a review of the student's strengths and weaknesses in the content area, the courses the student will be required to complete, and the assessment measure used to determine proficiency.

English Language Arts

To meet the Competency Determination requirement in English Language Arts, students must:

1. **Successfully Complete Coursework (Both Courses)**
    - English 1 (College Prep. (CP) or Honors), and
    - English 2 (College Prep. (CP) or Honors)

2. **Demonstrate Mastery**
    - Successfully complete a standards-based final assessment at the conclusion of each course.
        - Assessments are aligned to the Massachusetts ELA Curriculum Frameworks.

Mathematics

To meet the Competency Determination requirement in Mathematics, students must:

1. **Successfully Complete Coursework (Both Courses)**
    - Algebra 1 (College Prep. (CP) or Honors), or Algebra 1/Algebra 2 Honors, and
    - Geometry (College Prep. (CP) or Honors)

2. **Demonstrate Mastery**
    - Successfully complete a standards-based final assessment at the conclusion of each course.
        - Assessments are aligned to the Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks.

Science and Technology/Engineering

To meet the Competency Determination requirement in Science and Technology/Engineering, students must:

1. **Successfully Complete Coursework (One Course)**
    - Biology (College Prep. (CP) or Honors), or
    - Chemistry (College Prep. (CP) or Honors), or
    - Physics (College Prep. (CP) or Honors)
2. **Demonstrate Mastery**
    - Successfully complete a standards-based final assessment at the conclusion of the course.
        - The assessment is aligned to the Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Frameworks.

History and Social Science

To meet the Competency Determination requirement in U.S. History, students must:

1. **Successfully Complete Coursework (One Course)**
    - U.S. History 1 (College Prep. (CP) or Honors), or
    - U.S. History 2 (College Prep. (CP) or Honors)
2. **Demonstrate Mastery**
    - Successfully complete a standards-based final assessment at the conclusion of the course.
        - The assessment is aligned to the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks.

All of the courses listed above are certified by Greater Lowell Technical High School as meeting the coursework requirements for the Competency Determination, consistent with DESE's Aligned Courses list (Student Course Schedule codes) and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Additional Opportunities for the Successful Completion of Coursework

If a student does not successfully complete required coursework in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, or History and Social Science, the following structured opportunities are available to earn credit and remain on track for graduation:

1. **Summer School:** Students may enroll in a district-approved summer school course aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
2. **Credit Recovery Program:** Students may complete a district-approved online or in-person credit recovery program.
3. **Course Repetition:** Students may retake the course during a subsequent academic year.

These options ensure students meet course expectations, earn credit, and maintain eligibility to pursue the Competency Determination.

Additional Opportunities for the Successful Demonstration of Mastery

Students who have not demonstrated mastery on the course final assessment have multiple pathways to continue building their skills and meeting standards. These opportunities do not change or replace the original grade earned in the course; that grade remains on the student's report card as the official score of record. Instead, these supplemental pathways provide additional opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for the purpose of satisfying Competency Determination requirements.

1. **Immediate Retakes**: With targeted instruction prior to the end of the school year, students may retake the sections of the final assessment in which mastery has not been demonstrated; results may be used to demonstrate mastery.
2. **Summer Tutoring and Exam**: Personalized summer tutoring is provided, followed by another opportunity to retake the sections of the final assessment in which mastery has not been demonstrated; results may be used to demonstrate mastery.
3. **Subsequent-Year Skill-Focused Course**: Students may be assigned to a course designed to strengthen targeted skills. At the conclusion of the course, students may take a final assessment aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; results may be used to demonstrate mastery.

3. Considerations for Students with Disabilities and English Learners

Greater Lowell Technical High School is committed to ensuring that all students, including students with disabilities (SWD) and English learners (ELs), have equitable access to the instruction and supports necessary to meet the Massachusetts Competency Determination (CD) requirements.

Students with Disabilities

Supports and accommodations for students with disabilities will be provided in accordance with:

1. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and
3. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71B.

The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team or 504 Team determines how the student will meet CD requirements in accordance with this policy, which may include, but are not limited to:

1. Completion of courses aligned to state standards with documented accommodations;
2. Use of instructional and testing accommodations identified in the IEP or 504 Plan;
3. Access to additional support classes or services designed to promote mastery; and/or
4. Alternative methods of demonstrating competency, such as approved assessments, projects, or performance-based tasks.

Students placed in out-of-district programs remain subject to the CD and graduation requirements of Greater Lowell Technical High School as the placing district.

In all cases, students must meet the CD requirements and local graduation requirements before receiving a diploma. Graduation decisions will be made through the IEP/504 process and reflect both course completion and demonstrated mastery, ensuring that each student's right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is upheld.

English Learners

Supports for English learners will be provided in accordance with:

1. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
2. Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); and
3. Massachusetts Regulations for the Education of English Learners (603 CMR 14.00).

English learners will receive supports and instructional opportunities to ensure equitable access to meet CD requirements. These supports include, but are not limited to:

1. Testing accommodations such as extended time, translated directions, or bilingual glossaries;
2. Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) integrating language development with content learning; and/or
3. Scaffolded assessments appropriate to the student's English proficiency level.

The district will monitor student progress and provide interventions as needed to ensure that English learners can successfully meet Competency Determination for graduation.

4. Considerations for Late-Enrolling and Transfer Students

Students who enroll at Greater Lowell Technical High School after the start of ninth grade will be provided a fair and equitable opportunity to earn the Competency Determination (CD) required for graduation. The district will evaluate each late-enrolling student's prior academic work through transcript review, course placement; and, in limited cases, qualifying MCAS scores.

1. **Transcript Alignment:** Completed coursework will be reviewed to determine alignment with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the district's requirements for course completion and mastery demonstration. Aligned coursework may count toward CD.
2. **Additional Coursework and Mastery Opportunities:** If prior coursework does not meet alignment or mastery standards, students will be provided access to required courses and opportunities to demonstrate mastery through final assessments, portfolio, or other district-approved measures. Individualized support will be provided as needed.
3. **Transfer Students with Awarded CD:** Transfer students who were previously awarded a Competency Determination at another school may retain that qualification upon receipt of official documentation from the sending school. Documentation must be signed by a school administrator (or designee) and include the content areas in which CD was awarded, along with written verification that the student both demonstrated mastery and successfully completed the related coursework. In cases where coursework can be verified through transcript review but mastery cannot be confirmed, such as for students transferring from out-of-state schools, military families, or home school programs, students will be provided the opportunity to demonstrate mastery by completing the applicable final assessment.

Role of MCAS in Limited Circumstances

In rare cases where a student's prior coursework cannot be documented, the Competency Determination (CD) may be awarded based on performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Specifically, a student may meet the CD requirement by earning a score of Meeting Expectations or Exceeding Expectations on the relevant high school MCAS assessment.

5. Demonstration of Mastery Appeal Process (for Enrolled Students)

Greater Lowell Technical High School provides an appeal process for students who have not demonstrated mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks through standard pathways. The process ensures fairness, transparency, and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate academic proficiency.

Eligibility to Appeal

Appeals are available to students who have not yet demonstrated mastery in one or more required content areas (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, or History and Social Science) through the final assessment. Students must have successfully completed the applicable coursework prior to appealing the demonstration of mastery.

An appeal may be submitted by:

1. The student (with parent/guardian consent);
2. The student's parent or legal guardian; or
3. A school staff member acting on the student's behalf (with student and parent/guardian consent).

Appeal Submission

Appeals must be submitted using the "Demonstration of Mastery Appeal Request Form" (Appendix A). The form may be submitted electronically, by mail, or in person to the Curriculum Office, and must include:

1. The student's name and anticipated year of graduation;
2. The content area(s) for which the appeal is being submitted;
3. A rationale explaining how the student/parent/guardian believes that mastery has been demonstrated; and
4. Supporting documentation, including a standards-aligned portfolio of student work reflecting mastery of the relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Portfolio materials may include, but are not limited to, assessments completed within the course, major projects, written assignments, lab reports, MCAS score reports, or other standards-based work demonstrating mastery.

Review Process

1. **Initial Review:** The Curriculum Office will evaluate the submission for completeness and coordinate the review process.
2. **Multidisciplinary Review Committee:** The review will be conducted by a multidisciplinary committee composed of the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; the Director of School Counseling; the relevant Cluster Chairperson(s); and a School Counselor. In instances where the appellant is a student with disabilities or English learner, the committee will be expanded to include representatives from the Special Education and/or English Learner Education Departments to ensure appropriate expertise and equitable consideration.

3. **Review Criteria:** The committee will review the student's
    - Coursework and performance on final or supplemental assessments;
    - Evidence of mastery in the portfolio; and
    - Participation in instruction and any additional supports.

Decision and Communication

A written decision will be issued within 30 business days of the completed review and communicated to the student, parent/guardian, and relevant staff. The 30-day timeline begins after all required materials have been received.

1. If approved, the CD is awarded for the designated content area(s) and documented.
2. If denied, the student and parent/guardian will receive written notification including the rationale for the decision and guidance for next steps (e.g., additional instruction, summer tutoring, or re-assessment opportunities).

Recordkeeping and Reporting

The Curriculum Office will maintain all records related to the review process and ensure proper reporting to DESE in compliance with state guidelines.

6. Graduation Eligibility Review for Former Students (Classes of 2003 through 2024)

Under updated Massachusetts graduation guidance effective January 2025, Greater Lowell Technical High School may award diplomas to former students who meet all current local graduation requirements but did not previously meet the state Competency Determination (CD) standard through the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams required to earn a diploma.

Eligibility Criteria

Former students may request a graduation eligibility review, including for Competency Determination, if they:

1. Were enrolled at Greater Lowell Technical High School as part of the graduating Classes of 2003–2024;
2. Were not previously reported as a graduate in any district's SIMS submission;
3. Have not earned a diploma from another institution; and
4. Meet all current Local Graduation Requirements as outlined in the Student Handbook at the time of the eligibility review request.

Review Request Submission

Former students must complete and submit the "Graduation Eligibility Review Request Form" (Appendix B). The form may be submitted electronically, by mail, or in person, and must include all available supporting documentation.

Review Process

1. **Initial Review:** The Curriculum Office will evaluate the submission for completeness and coordinate the review process.
2. **Multidisciplinary Review Committee:** The review will be conducted by a multidisciplinary committee composed of the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; the Director of School Counseling; the relevant Cluster Chairperson(s); and a School Counselor. In instances where the appellant was

identified as a student with disabilities or English learner during their enrollment at GLTHS, the committee will be expanded to include representatives from the Special Education and/or English Learner Education Departments to ensure appropriate expertise and equitable consideration.

3. **Review Criteria:** The committee will review the former student's
   - Coursework and performance;
   - Evidence of mastery; and
   - Participation in instruction and any additional supports.

Decision and Communication

Former students will receive a written decision within 30 business days of the completed review. The 30-day timeline begins once all required documentation has been received.

1. If approved, the former student will be awarded a diploma dated the school year of approval (i.e., 2026 and beyond), and graduation status will be reported to DESE. Diplomas may be picked up in person or mailed.
2. If denied, the former student will receive written notification including the rationale for the decision and information about whether further documentation may be submitted for reconsideration.

Recordkeeping and Reporting

The Curriculum Office will maintain all records related to the review process and ensure proper reporting to DESE in compliance with state guidelines.

Appendix A: Demonstration of Mastery Appeal Request Form

This form is for currently enrolled Greater Lowell Technical High School students who have not yet earned Competency Determination (CD) in one or more subject areas and wish to request an appeal through the portfolio review process. Through this process, students may demonstrate mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks using a collection of coursework and performance evidence. Students must have successfully completed the applicable coursework prior to submitting an appeal.

Student Information:

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Local ID (LASID): _____

Anticipated Year of Graduation: _____

Current Address: _____

Current Phone Number: _____

Form Completed By (if not the Student):

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Relationship to Student: _____

Content Area(s) of the Appeal:

- ☐ English Language Arts
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science and Technology/Engineering
- ☐ History and Social Science

Portfolio Description and Evidence:

Provide a summary of the materials included in the portfolio and describe how each demonstrates mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for the applicable content area(s).

Portfolio materials may include, but are not limited to:

- Standards-aligned student work samples (e.g., projects, written assignments, lab reports)
- Assessments or portions of assessments completed within relevant courses
- Performance-based tasks or demonstrations aligned to course or program standards
- MCAS score reports or other evidence of partial proficiency
- Teacher evaluations, rubrics, or other documentation assessing mastery of key standards
- Additional evidence demonstrating consistent progress or achievement in the content area(s).

Students, parents/guardians, or Greater Lowell Technical High School staff supporting the appeal should use the space below to summarize evidence and explain how it demonstrates mastery. (Attach additional pages as needed.)

Note: Evidence should reflect substantial, standards-based learning and be sufficient to demonstrate mastery across the major learning objectives for the course or subject area.

Submission Instructions:
Please return this completed form along with all portfolio materials to:

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Greater Lowell Technical High School
250 Pawtucket Boulevard
Tyngsborough, Massachusetts 01879

Submissions may also be made electronically, or in person. All materials must be clearly labeled and organized by content area.

For Office Use Only:

Date Received: _____

Portfolio Materials Received: ☐ Yes ☐No

Reviewed By: _____

Date of Determination: _____

Outcome: _____

Appendix B: Graduation Eligibility Review Request Form

This form is for former Greater Lowell Technical High School students from the Classes of 2003-2024 who did not earn a high school diploma due to not meeting the MCAS Competency Determination (CD) requirements. Please complete the form below to request an eligibility review.

Personal Information:

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Local ID (LASID, if known): _____

Year of Graduation (or last year attended): _____

Former Address (while enrolled): _____

Current Address: _____

Current Phone Number: _____

Acknowledgment:

By signing below, I request Greater Lowell Technical High School to review my academic records for graduation eligibility under the updated Competency Determination and local graduation requirements.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Submission Instructions:
Please return this completed form to:

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Greater Lowell Technical High School
250 Pawtucket Boulevard
Tyngsborough, Massachusetts 01879

Submissions may also be made electronically, or in person

For Office Use Only:

Date Received: _____

Reviewed By: _____

Date of Determination: _____

Outcome: _____