

The Watauga County Board of Education (the “board”) recognizes the importance of setting rigorous graduation requirements to help ensure that students are receiving an education that will prepare them to be career and college ready and productive members of society.

In order to graduate from high school, students must meet the following requirements:

1. successful completion of all State Board of Education course unit requirements as described in Section A;
2. successful completion of cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction and pass a skills test; and
3. successful completion of all other requirements mandated by the board, as provided in this policy.

Principals shall ensure that students and parents are aware of the number and nature of credits required for high school graduation, the potential to complete high school graduation requirements in three years, and the availability of early graduate college scholarships.

**A. COURSE UNITS REQUIRED**

As described in State Board of Education Policy GRAD-004, all students must fulfill the course unit requirements of the Future-Ready Core Course of Study, unless they are approved for the Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study. The table in subsection A.1 below lists the course unit requirements for the Future-Ready Core Course of Study applicable to students who entered ninth grade for the first time before 2020-21. Students should consult their school counselor to determine applicable course unit requirements for graduation.

In accordance with policy 3101, Dual Enrollment, and State Board of Education requirements, students may earn high school credit for college courses completed. In addition, students may earn credit for certain high school courses in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study completed prior to grade 9, as authorized by the State Board of Education. Students also have the opportunity to meet course unit requirements without completing the regular period of classroom instruction by demonstrating mastery of the course material in accordance with policy 3420, Student Promotion and Accountability, and State Board of Education requirements. Watauga High School students may earn one or two units of credit upon successful completion of a course, depending on how the course is offered.

School counseling program staff shall assist students in selecting high school courses to ensure that students are taking all required units and selecting electives consistent with their postgraduation plans.

For students who have transferred to the school system during high school or who, for other reasons, have completed course work outside of the school system, the principal shall determine what course work will be applied as credit toward graduation. See policy 3420 for information regarding receiving credit toward graduation for courses taken abroad.

All awards of high school course credit must be consistent with State Board of Education requirements. Any inconsistency between board policy and State Board graduation requirements will be resolved by following the State Board requirements. While the board endeavors to keep its policy up to date with current State Board of Education graduation requirements, students should verify current requirements with their school counselors when planning course schedules or making other decisions based on graduation requirements. Watauga High School students may graduate and receive a high school diploma when a combination of the following state and local requirements are met:

1. Future-Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required

| Types of Courses     | State Requirements/ Local Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| English              | 4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Mathematics          | 4 (NC Math 1, 2, and 3 and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans.)**<br>(A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. Exempt students will be required to pass NC Math 1 and 2 plus two additional courses identified on the NC DPI math options chart.)***          |
| Science              | 3 (a physical science course, Biology, and an earth/environmental science course)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Social Studies       | 4 (including American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics; American History Parts I and II; and World History)****                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Health/P.E.          | 1 beginning for the Class of 2025/ 2- one in Health; one in P.E. for Class of 2021-Class of 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Electives            | 6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Language; 4 must be from one of the following: Career and Technical Education, J.R.O.T.C., Arts Education, or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary course. A four-course concentration is recommended.) |
| <b>Total Credits</b> | <b>22***** beginning with the Class of 2025</b><br><b>23 for Class of 2021- Class of 2024</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

\* Certain International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and Cambridge International Examination (CIE) courses will satisfy specific graduation requirements. See SBE Policy GRAD-008.

\*\* Students entering ninth grade for the first time in 2014-2015 and beyond shall pass the Future-Ready Core Course of Study. See SBE Policy GRAD-004.

\*\*\* Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a fourth math course with Math 3 as a prerequisite. The math options chart is available at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts->

[schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/standard-course-study/mathematics/standard-course-study-supporting-resources](#)

\*\*\*\* American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics must follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) in its entirety and may not be satisfied by an AP/IB/CIE course, dual enrollment, or any other course that does not fully address the NCSCOS, except as provided in SBE Policy GRAD-008. See also SBE Policies CCRE-001 and GRAD-004.

\*\*\*\*\*Students may earn course credit for the successful completion of courses through a university, community college, or distance learning. (See Watauga County Board of Education Policy 3101: Dual Enrollment and Policy 3102: Online Instruction)

## 2. Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study Credits Required (only available to certain students with disabilities who have an IEP)

| Types of Courses         | State Requirements/ Local Recommendations                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| English                  | 4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)                                                                                                                                              |
| Mathematics              | 3 (including Introduction to Math, NC Math I, and Financial Management)                                                                                                               |
| Science                  | 2 (including Applied Science** and Biology)                                                                                                                                           |
| Social Studies           | 2 (including American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics; and American History I or American History II)                                                              |
| Health/P.E.              | 1beginning for the Class of 2025/ 2- one in Health; one in P.E. for Class of 2021-Class of 2024                                                                                       |
| Career/Technical         | 4 (Career/Technical Education electives)                                                                                                                                              |
| Occupational Preparation | 6 (including Occupational Preparation I, II, III, and IV, which require 150 hours of school-based training, 225 hours of community-based training, and 225 hours of paid employment*) |
| Electives                | 0                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Other Requirements       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of IEP objectives</li> <li>• Career Portfolio</li> </ul>                                                                          |
| <b>Total Credits</b>     | <b>22*** beginning with the Class of 2025<br/>23 for Class of 2021- Class of 2024</b>                                                                                                 |

\* Paid employment is the expectation; however, when paid employment is not available, 225 hours of unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship experience, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community service hours may substitute for 225 hours of paid employment.

\*\* Applied Science is no longer an option starting with students entering the ninth grade in the 2025-2026 school year.

\*\*\*Students may earn course credit for the successful completion of courses through a university, community college, or distance learning. (See Watauga County Board of Education Policy 3101: Dual Enrollment and Policy 3102: Online Instruction)

## B. HIGH SCHOOL FINAL EXAMS AND END-OF-COURSE TESTING

High school students must take all end-of-course (EOC) tests and Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Assessments required by the State Board of Education and pursuant

to policy 3410, Testing and Assessment Program. Students shall attain passing scores on exit standards adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education and administered by Watauga County Schools.

### **C. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

#### **1. Honor Graduates**

Honor graduates may be designated by principals on the basis of criteria established by the superintendent. Recognition of honor graduates may be included in graduation programs.

#### **2. Students with Disabilities**

Graduation requirements must be applied to students with disabilities to the extent required by state and federal law and State Board policy.

#### **3. Children of Military Families**

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, as defined in policy 4050, Children of Military Families, school officials shall comply with the requirements of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (G.S. 115C-407.5), G.S. 115C-407.12, and the following requirements.

##### **a. Waiver Requirements**

Specific course work required for graduation will be waived for children of military families if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another school system. If a waiver is not granted, school administrators shall provide the student with reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the superintendent or designee shall provide the student with an alternative means of acquiring the required course work so that the student may graduate on time.

##### **b. Testing Requirements for Graduation**

The superintendent shall accept from children of military families the following in lieu of any local testing requirements for graduation: (1) the end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state; (2) national norm-referenced achievement tests; or (3) alternative testing. If these alternatives are not feasible for a student who has transferred in his or her senior year, subsection c below will apply.

##### **c. Transfers During Senior Year**

If a child of a military family who has transferred at the beginning of or during his or her senior year is ineligible to graduate from the school system after all of the alternatives listed above have been considered and the student meets the graduation requirements at his or her sending school, then school officials from the school system shall collaborate with the sending school system to ensure that the student will receive a diploma from the sending board of education.

4. Early Graduation

Students have the option of graduating early by completing the State Board of Education minimum graduation requirements on an accelerated three-year pathway. Students choosing to use an accelerated pathway must follow the process required for early graduation as described in State Board Policies GRAD-001 and GRAD-006.

5. Graduation Certificates, Transcripts, and Participation

Graduation certificates will be awarded to eligible students in accordance with the standards set forth in State Board policy.

Transcripts may be issued to all students receiving a diploma or certificate. The transcript shall provide all information required by State Board of Education policy GRAD-009 and/or other State Board policies as appropriate.

Participation in graduation and baccalaureate ceremonies is optional. Students who have completed all graduation requirements, have paid all fees, and have the approved graduation attire and diploma may participate in graduation exercises.

Exceptional Children who have satisfactorily completed the course of study prescribed in their Individual Education Plans are eligible to participate in graduation exercises.

6. Diploma Endorsements

Students have the opportunity to earn diploma endorsements as described in State Board Policy GRAD-007. No endorsement is required to receive a diploma.

7. Grade Replacement

Students are permitted to repeat a course for credit when they have failed a course. Students are permitted to repeat a passed course for grade replacement. The repeated course must be a seated class taken during the normal school day and must be taken within one year of initial completion of the course in question.

Legal References: G.S. 115C- 47, -81.25(c)(10)(c), -81.45(d), -81.65, -81.90(c), -83.31, - 83.32, -174.11, -276, -288, -407.5, -407.12; GS 116-11(10a); 16 N.C.A.C. 6D .0309, .0503, .0506, 0510; State Board of Education Policies CCRE-001, GRAD-004, GRAD-006, GRAD-007, GRAD-008, GRAD-009, GRAD-010, TEST-003

Cross References: Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program (policy 3000), Dual Enrollment (policy 3101), Online Instruction (policy 3102), Testing and Assessment Program (policy 3410), Student Promotion and Accountability (policy 3420), Citizenship and Character Education (policy 3530), Children of Military Families (policy 4050)

Adopted: September 14, 2015

Revised: November 9, 2015; October 10, 2016; August 14, 2017; June 11, 2018; September 10, 2018; October 5, 2020; March 8, 2021; July 26, 2021; December 13, 2021; June 30, 2022; March 13, 2023; July 11, 2024; April 15, 2025; February 9, 2026

Replaces: Policy 4.04.50, Exit Documents at Graduation; policy 4.04.70, Graduation Requirements; policy 4.03.35 Accountability Standards (in part)