



## Lowell Public Schools High School Competency Determination Policy

### Section 1: Competency Determination (CD) Requirements

MCAS is no longer used to award the Competency Determination (CD) following the passage of Ballot Question 2. Beginning with the Class of 2025, students meet the CD requirement by earning a passing grade of 65 or higher in designated English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and U. S. History courses. To graduate from Lowell High School, students must meet both the district’s competency requirements and the school’s required coursework.

|                              |          |                             |          |                            |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| <b>Criteria 1</b>            | <b>+</b> | <b>Criteria 2</b>           | <b>=</b> | <b>High School Diploma</b> |
| LHS Competency Determination |          | LHS Graduation Requirements |          | LHS Diploma                |

Starting with the Class of 2026, Massachusetts requires students to demonstrate mastery in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, U.S. History, and science based on DESE standards. Students meet this state requirement by completing district-approved coursework aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

### Competency Determination (CD) Overview

Students meet CD requirements by passing full-year, district-certified courses in each content area aligned to the Massachusetts ELA Frameworks.

- ELA: Mastery of reading, writing, and communication.
- Math: Proficiency in reasoning, problem-solving, and quantitative analysis through courses such as Algebra, Geometry, or higher-level math.
- Science: Understanding of scientific concepts and inquiry skills through lab-based courses like Biology, Chemistry, or Physics.
- U.S. History: Demonstration of historical reasoning, source analysis, and civic understanding.

### General Requirements

#### Satisfactory Completion of Coursework

Students in Lowell Public Schools earn graduation credit and a CD by earning a final course grade of 65 or higher. Mastery is demonstrated through required course components, such as final exams, common assessments, or capstone/portfolio projects.

## Demonstration of Mastery

| Concept               | Details   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mastery Demonstration | Students show mastery by completing key course requirements aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.                               |
| Assessment Types      | Comprehensive final assessment<br>A series of common assessments throughout the year<br>Capstone or portfolio project demonstrating proficiency |
| Purpose               | Enables students to apply knowledge and skills in authentic ways  |
| Alignment             | Supports critical thinking, problem-solving, and mastery of academic standards required for CD.   |

All certified courses are designed to develop skills essential for college and career readiness, in keeping with the Lowell Public Schools' Portrait of a Graduate.

### English Language Arts (ELA)

To meet the CD in English Language Arts, students in Lowell Public Schools must complete four years of district-certified English Language Arts instruction. During this time, students analyze and synthesize ideas from diverse texts, produce and revise narrative, argumentative, and informative writing supported by evidence, and communicate effectively in discussions and presentations, considering multiple perspectives and using media strategically.

### Certified ELA Coursework

The following Lowell High School courses fulfill the ELA CD requirement:

- Grade 9: English I (College, Honors, High Honors)
- Grade 10: English II (College, Honors, High Honors)
- Grade 11: English III (College, Honors, High Honors)
- Grade 12: English IV (College, Honors, High Honors)

Advanced Options: AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, Dual Enrollment English (MCC).

\*Alternative/Support Options: Academic Support in ELA, ESL/ELD Levels 1 and 2 (when aligned with the Massachusetts ELA Frameworks and approved for ELA credit).

### Mathematics

Lowell Public Schools certifies that students who meet the CD in Mathematics must complete three years of district-certified instruction. During this time, students demonstrate mastery in mathematical reasoning, problem-solving, and quantitative analysis, as assessed through exams, common assessments, or capstone/portfolio projects. Lowell High School provides traditional, state-aligned pathways, including Algebra I and II, Geometry, and advanced courses such as Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Statistics, and select computer science classes.

## **Science**

Lowell Public Schools certifies that students meet the CD in science by completing three years of district-certified instruction. During this time, students demonstrate proficiency in scientific concepts, inquiry skills, and engineering practices through exams, common assessments, or capstone/portfolio projects. Lowell High School offers multiple pathways beginning in Grade 9, including Integrated Science & Engineering, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Biomedical Science, and PLTW engineering courses. Each district-certified course focuses on core disciplinary ideas, overarching concepts, and scientific and engineering practices, helping students develop critical thinking, data literacy, and problem-solving skills.

## **U.S. History**

Lowell Public Schools certifies that students meet the CD in Social Studies by demonstrating mastery in historical reasoning, inquiry, and analysis through exams, common assessments, or capstone/portfolio projects. Required courses include Survey of World History (Grade 9) and U.S. History 1 and 2 or AP History courses (Grades 10–12), along with certified social studies electives. Each district-certified course focuses on core disciplinary ideas, inquiry and civic practices, interdisciplinary concepts, and critical thinking skills, aligning with the Lowell Public Schools' Portrait of a Graduate, and prepares students to apply historical knowledge to real-world challenges.

## **Section 2: Additional Requirement**

Lowell Public Schools follows only the CD requirements outlined in Section 1 and has no additional requirements.

## **Section 3: Additional Considerations**

### **English Learners**

Lowell Public Schools ensures that English learners (ELs) have equitable opportunities to meet Massachusetts CD requirements. ELs receive standards-based ESL instruction aligned with the Massachusetts ELA Framework and WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards, which support language acquisition while accessing grade-level content.

### **English as a Second Language Meeting ELA Requirements**

Lowell Public Schools certifies certain ESL 1 and 2 courses as meeting the ELA coursework requirement for the CD for students whose English proficiency level and program placement indicate they will benefit from integrated language and literacy instruction. Students eligible to count these courses toward the ELA requirement are identified based on WIDA English proficiency levels, grade level, and placement in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) or co-taught ESL models, in consultation with ESL and content-area teachers.

Grade-appropriate ELA standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks are embedded into these ESL courses through targeted instruction in reading, writing, and academic language development. Instruction is scaffolded according to the students' English proficiency, and ESL and content teachers collaborate to ensure students access the full grade-level curriculum while meeting CD ELA requirements.

### **Students with Identified Disabilities**

Lowell Public Schools (LPS) ensures that all students with disabilities, including those attending publicly funded out-of-district day or residential programs have equitable opportunities to meet the CD requirements for graduation.

In alignment with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and 603 CMR 28.00, LPS provides a continuum of supports and services to ensure access to the general curriculum and participation in state assessments. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans identify the accommodations, modifications, and specialized instruction necessary for each student to demonstrate proficiency.

The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) guide inclusive practices that promote rigorous instruction aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. For students placed in approved out-of-district schools, LPS retains responsibility for compliance with all state graduation and assessment requirements and collaborates with providers to ensure access to appropriate instruction and assessment opportunities.

Through these coordinated practices, Lowell High School ensures that students with disabilities have full and equitable access to earn the CD and meet all state graduation requirements.

### **Late-Enrolling Students**

Lowell High School determines CD eligibility for late-enrolling students through transcript reviews, assessment of prior coursework. Students are placed in district-certified courses or accelerated pathways as needed to ensure equivalent instructional time and mastery of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. This process ensures all late-enrolling students have equitable access to meet CD requirements while maintaining full compliance with state standards.

### **Section 4: Appeals Process**

Students and families in Lowell Public Schools may appeal CD decisions if they believe mastery of required coursework or assessments was not accurately reflected. Appeals follow a three-step process to ensure fairness, transparency, and compliance with state requirements.

1. **Department Chair Review:** Submit a written appeal (letter or email) to the Department Chair of the relevant subject within 10 business days of receiving the CD decision. The Chair reviews the evidence and responds in writing within 10 business days.
2. **Graduation Committee Review:** If unresolved, the appeal moves to the Graduation Committee, which reviews the documentation and responds in writing within 10 business days.
3. **Final Appeal:** A final appeal may be submitted to the Head of School, whose written decision is the district's final determination, issued within 10 business days.

### **Section 5: Diploma Request Process for Previously Enrolled Students**

Previously enrolled students or their parents/guardians may request a diploma in writing from the principal or guidance office. Lowell Public Schools reviews transcripts, coursework, and assessments to confirm all graduation and CD requirements are met. If needed, students may complete courses or demonstrate mastery through approved alternatives. Once verified, the principal certifies eligibility, and the diploma is issued, ensuring equitable access and compliance with state standards.

### **Competency Determination Review for Classes of 2003–2024**

Students from the classes of 2003–2024 who did not earn a diploma due to the state’s CD requirement may request a review of their eligibility. Student Support Services reviews transcripts to verify all Lowell Public Schools graduation requirements. Eligible students will have their diplomas issued and will be notified by mail or email. Requests from students whose transcripts have not been previously reviewed will be processed within 30 days. This process ensures equitable access and timely communication for all eligible students.

### **Section 6: Certifications**

Lowell Public Schools will certify that the district’s CD policy will be formally approved by the Superintendent and School Committee, will be publicly posted on the district website and in each school’s main office, will align with DESE requirements, and will be applied consistently across all schools. Any future revisions will follow the same approval process and will be communicated to stakeholders, ensuring transparency and equitable access to CD information.