

Kentucky

High School Graduation Requirements for Current Seniors

Students must complete at least 22 units to earn a regular high school diploma.

Subjects	Diploma Units	Course Requirements
English	4	English I, II, III, and IV
Mathematics	3	Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II
Science	3	All three credits must be lab-based
Social Studies	3	
Health	.5	
Physical Education	.5	
Arts	1	
Electives	7	Four of the seven required credits must be academic or career-interest courses, as determined in the student's individual learning plan.
TOTAL	22	

Assessment Requirements

Senate Bill 1 (2009) allows the state to give end-of-course (EOC) tests at the high school level, which it does for English II, Algebra II, biology, and American history. The Kentucky State Board of Education recommends the EOCs count for at least 20 percent of a student's final course grade, but each School Decision Making Council makes the final decision.

College and Career Readiness

Kentucky adopted the Common Core State Standards in February 2010—the first state in the nation to do so. Districts implemented the new English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics standards, known as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, starting in the 2010-11 school year. They were taught and tested for the first time in the 2011-12 school year.

State Board of Education rules require districts to provide readiness courses or interventions for students who do not meet the statewide college readiness benchmarks for English and math, as measured by the ACT. These courses and programs, generally offered to high school juniors and seniors, provide academic support, instruction, and college readiness assessments to minimize the need for remediation in a college or university setting.

Kentucky's **Strategic Plan** identifies key strategies that districts and schools may adopt to increase the number of students who graduate ready for college and careers. These strategies include (1) **Persistence to Graduation** (e.g., early identification and intervention, early graduation and alternative programs); (2) **Career Readiness Pathways** [e.g., Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) Program and the National Academy Foundation career academies]; and (3) **Learning Systems** (e.g., vertically aligned curricula responsive to diverse learner needs, strong formative assessment systems including the Kentucky System of Interventions and Response to Intervention). The learning systems address the needs of the whole child and establish pathways toward college and career advising and planning.

The Kentucky Department of Education holds districts and schools accountable through the **Unbridled Learning: College/Career-Readiness for All Accountability System** as reported publicly through the Kentucky School Report Card. The high school reports contain several metrics, including: (1) student performance on college entrance exams and other academic and career-technical measures; (2) the percentage of students who are college and career ready; (3) success in closing the achievement gap; (4) student growth; and (5) graduation rates. High schools also conduct program reviews to ensure quality

learning opportunities in arts and humanities, practical living and career studies, and writing as part of state accountability requirements.

College and Career Planning

By the end of sixth grade, students develop **individual learning plans** (ILPs) aligned with academic and career interests. Each district must provide information on career opportunities and financial aid. House Bill 87 (2014) now requires the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet to publish information on the employment and earning of college graduates in the state, so that high school students can make better-informed decisions about future careers.

Each student writes the ILP with the help of parents and school counselors; the plan outlines the student's learning goals and helps guide the course of their studies through the middle grades, high school, and into college. The plan emphasizes postsecondary goal-setting and the pursuit of a robust academic experience, including appropriate extracurricular activities and electives.

Kentucky administers a statewide, federally funded GEAR UP program to prepare middle grades students for college and to create or expand programs that strengthen schools. Kentucky also administers the EXPLORE high school readiness test to eighth-grade students and the PLAN college-readiness test to 10th-graders. The state administers the ACT for all 11th-grade students. In addition, all preparatory seniors who are enrolled in Career and Technical Education are eligible to take the ACT WorkKeys exams at state expense. These four assessments are part of ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS).

Kentucky launched a new online portal in 2008 called **Graduate Kentucky**. Its mission is to reach out to students at risk of dropping out of school and to encourage them to continue in school through graduation. The site also contains information for students, parents, school counselors, community volunteers and business leaders. Its website is Graduate.KY.gov.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority provides access to multiple online tools for Kentucky students and their families to help them plan, apply, and pay for college. Current Web resources can be found at KHEAA.com and Knowhow2goKY.org.

Accelerated Learning Options

Dual and Concurrent Enrollment

Dual credit allows students to take a college-level course and earn high school and college credit concurrently. Public colleges and universities partner with a district to provide dual credit opportunities. The location (i.e., at high school, on college campus, or online) and cost varies based on the district-institution agreement.

Dual enrollment allows students to earn college credit at a postsecondary institution.

Although most Kentucky high school students pursue dual credit/dual enrollment options through open enrollment in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), students also may pursue college credit online through the Kentucky Virtual University or in the classroom through state and private universities, if they fulfill institutional admissions requirements.

Early High School Graduation

Students may pursue an early graduation pathway through which they may qualify to receive a diploma and be eligible for acceptance into any SACS accredited two- or four-year public or private, nonprofit college in Kentucky. To qualify, the student must (1) document their intent to graduate early; (2) score proficient on the four end-of-course exams required by the state board of education; and, (3) meet the

state's college readiness benchmarks. An **early graduation certificate** provides some financial support for students to attend college immediately after early graduation.

Advanced Placement

Articulated credit is awarded to new college freshmen, usually for successfully taking Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate (AP or IB) classes while in high school and earning a specified score on the related exam.

Kentucky leverages federal funds to lower exam fees for low-income students. Students scoring 3 or higher on an AP exam are awarded credit toward degree and credentials at all of Kentucky's public postsecondary institutions.

Performance-Based Credit

The Kentucky State Board of Education authorizes districts to award **performance-based credits**, as long as the experiences for which credits are awarded align with the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. Examples include senior year or capstone projects and work-based learning (e.g., internships, apprenticeships, cooperative learning experiences, and credit recovery).

Career and Technical Education

Kentucky has adopted the National Career Clusters Framework. The department of education administers the ACT WorkKeys to measure students' academic readiness for careers. State law allows for the substitution of career-technical courses for specific graduation course requirements.

Postsecondary Admissions and Placement

University Admissions

First-time freshmen must show that they have completed the Pre-College Curriculum (PCC), which is identical to Kentucky's high school graduation requirements. In addition to the Kentucky high school diploma curriculum, the PCC requires two consecutive years of a world language (or demonstrated proficiency) and specifies that three of the five elective courses must be academically rigorous.

Students who do not meet admissions standards may be admitted provisionally at the discretion of the admitting institution.

Community and Technical System Admissions

Students must have a standard high school diploma or GED credential or must be eligible to pursue a GED credential.

Statewide Placement Requirements

Students whose ACT (or SAT equivalent) subject test scores are below 18 in English, 20 in reading or 19 in math must take subject-area placement tests and receive academic support.

Students who do not meet placement cut scores must take remedial or entry-level courses with academic supports. Institutions may establish plans for students to meet all deficiencies and deadlines by which students must meet them. Kentucky guarantees that students who meet specified score thresholds on the ACT (or equivalent on SAT or COMPASS) in English, reading and math will be placed into appropriate credit-bearing courses.

Feedback Reports

The *Kentucky High School Feedback Report* provides high schools with the following information:

- Postsecondary enrollment rates
- Developmental education rates
- Number of freshman year courses attempted and earned
- Comparison of high school and college GPAs
- Freshman retention rates

State Need- and Merit-Based Aid

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority administers the **Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship** (KEES), which provides financial support for state residents based on their academic performance throughout high school.

The value of the award increases for each year of high school in which a student maintains a 2.5 or higher GPA in the Pre-College Curriculum. Students may earn additional increases based on their ACT or SAT composite scores. Students who were eligible for free or reduced-priced meals at any time during high school may earn additional supplements based on their performance on Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams.

Students receive a scholarship equivalent to the total accumulated amount each year that they are enrolled in Kentucky postsecondary institutions, as long as they meet GPA requirements. To maintain the scholarship unconditionally, a student must earn a 3.0 GPA for each year in college. Students can receive half of the award amount if they fall below the 3.0 GPA threshold but maintain at least a 2.5 GPA. Students may regain the scholarship if they meet renewal criteria by the end of the spring semester.

Special Thanks

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Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
Kentucky Department of Education

Sources

Kentucky Community and Technical College System
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
Kentucky Department of Education
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
Kentucky Legislature

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