

# PENNSYLVANIA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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### INTRODUCTION

Act 158 of 2018 (Act 158) and Act 6 of 2017 (Act 6) amended [§121](#) of the Pennsylvania Public School Code, establishing five different pathways by which students may meet the statewide graduation requirements under Title 22 [Chapter 4](#). The Keystone Proficiency and Keystone Composite Pathways rely on student performance in three academic areas (Algebra I, Biology, and Literature), proven to be predictive of postsecondary success; whereas the Career & Technical Education (CTE) Concentrator, Alternative Assessment, and Evidence-Based Pathways were designed to more fully illustrate students' college, career, and community readiness through other student artifacts and experiences.

In response to the pandemic, Act 136 of 2020 (Act 136) further amended [§121](#) to delay implementation of Act 158 by one year, making statewide graduation requirements first effective with the graduating class of 2023.

All students 21 years of age or younger legally entitled to attend a commonwealth public school and enrolled in school entities as defined are subject to Pennsylvania graduation requirements. Special considerations are provided for students in specific situations; however, no students are exempted.

This document is designed to provide guidance on each of the five pathways to graduation, as well as other diploma options, and on the implementation of statewide graduation requirements. Additional information and resources are available at <https://www.pdesas.org/Page/Viewer/ViewPage/56/>.

### LEA POLICIES & PRACTICES

This section is a compendium of select key actions related to policies and practices that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) should implement on an ongoing basis:

- Ensuring stakeholders have a clear understanding of graduation requirements and responsibilities
- Tracking student progress toward meeting graduation requirements
- Providing student services and supports to ensure on-time graduation
- Evaluating the adequacy, accessibility, and appropriateness of available opportunities
- Reviewing the continued alignment of local graduation policies

NOTE: The above is not a comprehensive checklist or representative of all protocols and procedures necessary to ensure students graduate on time and are prepared for post-secondary success.

### LOCAL & STATE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Minimally, local graduation policies must include statewide graduation requirements – but LEAs are not required to offer every option identified in legislation (e.g., not all schools offer International Baccalaureate coursework or CTE Concentrator Programs).

Conversely, LEAs may expand upon statewide requirements with local board approval. By way of example, an LEA might require:

- Options beyond those delineated in statute or PDE guidance be met
- More rigorous options be met (such as Proficiency or better on all three Keystone Exams)

However, local requirements may only supplement, not supplant, statewide graduation requirements.

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### COMMUNICATING REQUIREMENTS

LEAs are encouraged to work with their solicitors to ensure their local high school graduation policies comply with Section 121 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code (24 P.S. § 1-121) and Title 22, Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code.

No later than the beginning of each school year, every LEA must publish on its publicly accessible website its board-approved high school graduation requirements (including statewide requirements as well as any additional requirements established by the LEA). Education stakeholders, including staff and community partners, should be apprised of expectations regarding their roles in assisting students to graduate prepared for post-secondary success.

No later than the beginning of the school year in which a student may start to satisfy graduation requirements, an LEA should notify the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s) of the requirements and engage them in an ongoing, reciprocal dialog designed to support the student in graduating on time. Communications should allow for student voice when considering which pathway options best exemplify their aspirations and abilities and should identify potential barriers to student participation or circumstances that might suggest other diploma options.

### MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS AND EVALUATING OPTIONS

LEAs should have robust systems and processes for ensuring students stay on track and should actively maintain a team, including school leaders as well as educators and counselors, who can support those efforts.

The team should closely monitor progress toward meeting graduation requirements so that interventions or alternative options may be offered before a student is identified as at risk of not graduating. Frequent conferences provide the opportunity to adjust a student's path based upon not only academic performance but also evolving student interests and goals; parents or guardians should be notified of a student's off-track status and be engaged in assisting the student to re-orient and graduate on time.

The team should also regularly evaluate whether there are sufficient and appropriate opportunities for the student to graduate and consider how the LEA might enhance or expand offerings to better meet student needs. For example:

- Are currently available pathway options timely and easily accessible, with participation barriers (such as scheduling, transportation, fees, or language) removed?
- Are currently available pathway options aligned to students' abilities and interests?
- Might additional student experiences or evidence (such as a service-learning project) be embedded within existing curricular or extra-curricular offerings?
- What would be needed to offer new options (such as work-based learning experiences through community partnerships)?

### REPORTING GRADUATION DATA

Between October 1 and December 1, each LEA must submit a Grad Report annually via the Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal (FRCPP) indicating the aggregate numbers of students graduating by pathway/option and by exception (e.g., waiver, IEP).

The Grad Report should reflect students *eligible to graduate* during the prior school year: i.e., students completing their academic requirements prior to October 1. *Eligible to graduate* refers to LEA-enrolled students (including outplaced students) who were on-track to graduate by the end of the prior school

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year, students in Grade 12, students identified as seniors based upon credits earned, and multi-year seniors. This number should include dropouts – but not students who transferred out of the LEA.

Students with IEPs who will graduate via successful completion of their special education program or who will reach age 21 without having completed their academic requirements should be reported as eligible to graduate *only* for the year in which they will either be issued a diploma or based on age are no longer eligible to participate in the program (whichever comes first).

### REPORTING GRADUATES BY PATHWAY OR EXCEPTION

For the **Proficiency Pathway** (numeric and non-numeric), **Composite Pathway** (2-score and 3-score), or the **CTE Concentrator Pathway**, LEAs will report the total number of students who graduated via the pathway.

For the **Alternative Assessment Pathway** or the **Evidence-Based Pathway**, LEAs will report the total number of students who graduated via the pathway and, by criterion, the number of students who utilized that criterion to satisfy the pathway. Where a student completes more criteria than required for the pathway, the LEA may select which to report for that student.

For the **Alternative Assessment Pathway**, the subtotals will *equal* the total number of students satisfying the pathway because students are only required to meet one criterion.

For the **Evidence-Based Pathway**:

- Section One subtotals *must equal or exceed* the total number of students reported as graduating via this pathway because students are required to meet at least one of the criteria listed in this section.
- The Sections One and Section Two combined subtotals will *never exceed* three times the total number of students satisfying the pathway; however, the combined subtotals *might equal* an amount less than three times the total number of students satisfying the pathway. LEAs report the number of students utilizing the criteria - not the number of artifacts/evidence produced.

For **Waivers**, LEAs will report by reason the number of waivers granted to students in Grade 12 or who experience an extenuating circumstance: serious illness, death in the student's immediate family, family emergency, frequent school transfers, transfer from an out-of-state school in Grade 12, or pandemic (for the graduating classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025 only).

For reporting students with disabilities, LEAs will report the number of students who graduated based upon successful completion of their **Special Education Program**.

For students who experience education instability ([Act 1 of 2022](#)) and are unable to meet local graduation requirements but meet minimal statewide graduation requirements, LEAs will report the number of students for whom they are requesting **Keystone Diplomas**. NOTE: Students who graduate via a Keystone Diploma are reported as non-graduates for the LEA.

### SPECIAL POPULATIONS GUIDANCE

#### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Most students with disabilities should be able to graduate via one of the five pathways. When a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines the pathways are not appropriate, it is their responsibility to determine how successful completion is defined based on completion of IEP goals in accordance with Pa. Code.

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It is important to note that Pa. Act 158 of 2018 did not alter the existing provision under Chapter 4.24 (High School Graduation Requirements). That provision was designed to accommodate students whose special education programs, by design, would not meet the statewide graduation requirements:

“Children with disabilities who satisfactorily complete a special education program developed by an Individualized Education Program team under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and this part shall be granted and issued a regular high school diploma by the school district of residence, charter school (including cyber charter school) or AVTS, if applicable. This subsection applies if the special education program of a child with a disability does not otherwise meet the requirements of this chapter.” [Title 22 Chapter 4.24(d)]

NOTE: Students who graduate in this manner are not considered to have been granted waivers under Act 158.

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### ENGLISH LEARNERS (EL)

EL students who do not participate in one or more Keystone Exams or who do not qualify for non-numeric Proficient scores may meet graduation requirements utilizing pathways other than those reliant on Keystone Exams or may graduate via a waiver. However, students who do not participate in one or more Keystone Exams or who do not qualify for non-numeric Proficient scores must meet locally established grade-based requirements for academic content associated with each Keystone Exam in which they did not have a Proficient or Advanced.

When satisfying the Alternative Assessment or Evidence-Based pathway, ELs may utilize evidence attained in a foreign language or from outside the United States provided it meets both the definition and parameters of the criterion. By way of example:

- Work-based or service-learning experiences occurring in a foreign language setting
- Concurrent enrollment or postsecondary courses conducted in a foreign language
- Exams (such as for an industry-recognized credential) conducted in a foreign language
- Postsecondary acceptance into an accredited nonprofit institution of higher education situated in an independent territory or foreign country
- Offer of employment or enlistment with an entity situated in an independent territory or foreign country

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### STUDENTS EXPERIENCING EDUCATION INSTABILITY

Act 1 of 2022 (Act 1) was enacted to promote timely high school graduation and to facilitate equal access to academics and extracurricular activities and the removal of systemic barriers for students who experience “education instability”, defined by the legislation as one or more LEA changes due to homelessness, foster care, adjudication, or involvement with the juvenile justice system.

If a student identified as experiencing education instability is not eligible to graduate on time, the LEA may collaborate with the chief school administrator of the sending school to determine whether the student meets the local graduation requirements of the prior entity. Regardless of which school entity confers the diploma, the LEA in which the student is enrolled at the time of graduation shall report the student as part of its graduating class (FRCPP Grad Report) and graduation cohort (PIMS).

If the student is unable to meet local graduation requirements at either their current or prior school entities despite the LEA’s exhaustive measures, the LEA may request a PDE-issued Keystone Diploma; however, a student granted a Keystone Diploma will be considered a non-graduate at the local level – reducing the LEA’s Grad Rate in the FRPA Index.

NOTE: A student requesting a Keystone Diploma minimally must meet locally established, grade-based requirements for each Keystone content area in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric Proficient or Advanced.

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### KEYSTONE ACADEMIC CONTENT

#### NUMERIC AND NON-NUMERIC PROFICIENCY

Numeric scores are attained through participation in Keystone Exams. A student who participates in a Keystone Exam receives both a numeric score (e.g., 1500) and a corresponding performance level (e.g., Proficient).

Non-numeric ‘scores’ (performance level only) are attained by demonstrated proficiency through comparable coursework and an equivalent assessment in a prior educational setting (transfer student), or through successful completion of a Keystone-associated course during the 19/20 school year (per Pa. Act 136 of 2020). Non-numeric scores may not be assigned a numeric equivalency; *Proficient* is the only non-numeric score that may be awarded.

To award a non-numeric Proficient for student performance in a prior educational setting (during a school year other 19/20), the LEA must:

- Determine a standardized assessment the student completed aligns with the state academic standards assessed by the Keystone Exam, AND
- Evaluate the student’s performance to be commensurate with a Keystone Exam score of Proficient or better, AND
- Verify the transcript shows credit earned in the associated academic content (Algebra 1 or equivalent, Literature or equivalent, Biology 1 or equivalent).

Where a student has earned an NNP and has also tested, whichever score (numeric or non-numeric) is most advantageous may be utilized.

The table below details the pathways in which numeric and non-numeric scores may be applied.

	NUMERIC SCORE Proficient/Advanced	NON-NUMERIC SCORE Proficient
<b>Keystone Proficiency Pathway</b>	√ [Requires three]	√
<b>Keystone Composite Pathway (3 Score)</b>	√ [Requires minimally one]	NA
<b>Keystone Composite Pathway (2 Score)</b>	√ [Requires minimally one]	[Eligibility based on receipt of <b>one NNP per Act 136</b> , but NNP not used to satisfy Pathway requirements]
<b>Evidence-Based Pathway (Section 2 criteria)</b>	√	√
Abrogates locally-established grade-based requirement for related Keystone content	√	[LEGBR met while earning NNP]

NOTE: Students are not required to participate in Keystone Exams for purposes of meeting statewide graduation requirements; however, students must take the Keystone Exams for purposes of federal accountability. Failure to do so will affect a Local Education Agency (LEA) and school’s participation rate.

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### LOCALLY ESTABLISHED GRADE-BASED REQUIREMENTS FOR KEYSTONE CONTENT

Locally established, grade-based requirements are performance criteria identified by the LEA and reflected in the local graduation policy as consistent with proficiency in the Keystone academic content. Requirements may include successful completion of a:

- 'trigger course',
- course that covers the breadth and depth of the Keystone content but is not considered a 'trigger course' (e.g., AP Bio or Bio credit recovery), or
- Project-Based Assessment (PBA).

There may be situations where a student does not participate in a Keystone associated course (e.g., directly placed into more advanced coursework, declines instruction based on religious objection) or where the eligible content is embedded within a comprehensive program or over a series of related courses (as may be the practice in career and technical centers).

In those instances, local policy may allow for the student to be considered as having met locally established, grade-based requirements provided the alternative coursework:

- addresses the Keystone eligible content, or
- is a course for which the Keystone content would be a pre-requisite, or
- is a science, technology, environment, or ecology course (may be used in lieu of Biology under the CTE Concentrator, Alternative Assessment, or Evidence-Based Pathways only).

NOTE: Project-based assessments are available on the PDE [Standards Aligned System](#) website as a resource for LEAs. School administrators may download the projects and utilize them in the local setting, but the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will not manage or score the project-based assessments.

### KEYSTONE PROFICIENCY PATHWAY

Students achieving minimum scaled scores of 1500 or better (or who qualify for non-numeric scores of Proficient) in each of the three Keystone Exams meet the Keystone Proficiency statewide requirements for high school graduation.

Students who do not have numeric or non-numeric scores of Proficient or Advanced in all three Keystone Exam areas (Algebra I, Biology, and Literature) do not qualify for this pathway.

Where a student performance level on Keystone academic content is determined without the associated Keystone Exam result, a non-numeric score is assigned. There are two allowable circumstances under which this might occur:

- The student has demonstrated proficiency through comparable coursework and an equivalent assessment in a prior educational setting (i.e., transfer student), or
- The student has demonstrated proficiency through Keystone related coursework per [Pa. Act 136 of 2020](#).

Students who meet locally established, grade-based requirements for the Keystone content but who do not meet one of the two circumstances above may not be assigned a non-numeric score.

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### KEYSTONE COMPOSITE PATHWAY

#### KEYSTONE COMPOSITE PATHWAY (3-SCORE)

To qualify for the Keystone Composite Pathway (3-score), a student must have taken all three Keystone Exams and must have:

- at least one Keystone Exam scaled (numeric) score of Proficient or Advanced
- no Keystone Exam scaled (numeric) score of Below Basic, AND
- a composite of the three scaled (numeric) scores *equal to* or greater than 4452.

Students without a numeric score in all three Keystone Exams, including students with one or more non-numeric Keystone Exam scores, do not qualify for the Keystone Composite Pathway (3-score). However, students without the requisite numeric scores may elect to participate in all three Keystone Exams in order to pursue this pathway.

#### KEYSTONE COMPOSITE PATHWAY (2-SCORE)

To qualify for the Keystone Composite Pathway (2-score), a student must have earned *one\** non-numeric Proficient (per Act 136 of 2020) and have achieved a Keystone Composite score of 2939 or greater in the *other two* Keystone Exams (not associated with the academic content for which the student earned a non-numeric Proficient). The 2-score composite is calculated using the highest numeric score in each of the other two Keystone Exams attained by the student, neither of which may be Below Basic and at least one of which must be Proficient or better.

NOTE: Unlike the 3-score composite, the student must successfully complete locally established, grade-based requirements for the academic content associated with the Keystone Exam in which the student has a Basic.

\*Students who earned two non-numeric scores of Proficient per Act 136 are ineligible for the two-score Composite Pathway regardless of their participation in one or more Keystone Exams for which they were awarded the non-numeric score of Proficient.

### CTE CONCENTRATOR PATHWAY

In addition to meeting local grade-based requirements\* for each Keystone Exam content area in which a student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient/Advanced, the student must also meet one of the following:

- Attainment of an Industry-Based Competency Certification related to the CTE concentrator's program of study.  
**OR**
- Demonstration of high likelihood of success on an approved Industry-Based Competency Assessment as demonstrated by performance on benchmark assessments, course grades, and other factors consistent with the CTE concentrator's goals and career plan and as determined by a chief school administrator in consultation with an area vocational-technical school director or principal of a comprehensive high school. The determination shall be made no later than the end of the eleventh grade, or, if a student enrolled in a one-year program, the end of the first semester of twelfth grade.  
**OR**
- Demonstration of readiness for continued meaningful engagement in a CTE Concentrator Program of Study as demonstrated by performance on benchmark assessments, course grades, and other factors consistent with the CTE concentrator's goals and career plan and as determined by a chief school administrator in consultation with an area vocational-technical school director or principal of a

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comprehensive high school. The determination shall be made no later than the end of the eleventh grade, or, if a student enrolled in a one-year program, the end of the first semester of twelfth grade.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

In addition to meeting local grade-based requirements for *each* Keystone content area in which a student has neither a numeric score  $\geq 1500$  nor a non-numeric score of Proficient, the student must also meet **one** of the following.

#### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON AN APPROVED ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

The student must meet or exceed any **one** of the established scores for the following approved alternative assessments *regardless of the number of Keystone Exams for which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced*.

- ACT - composite score of 21  
**OR**
- ACT WorkKeys NCRC (National Career Readiness Certificate) - Gold Level\*  
**OR**
- ASVAB [Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT)] - composite score of 31\*\*  
**OR**
- PSAT/NMSQT - total score of 970\*\*\*  
**OR**
- SAT - total score of 1010

For example, a student who only demonstrated Proficiency in the Keystone Literature Exam would need to:

1. Meet locally established grade-based requirements in both the Algebra I and the Biology courses, and
2. Achieve the established score or higher on one of the above approved alternative assessments.

The ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is a credential earned by completing the following three WorkKeys assessments: Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents. Gold Level signifies that an individual has scored at least a Level 5 on each of the three ACT Workplace assessments.

\*\* A subset of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), the AFQT score determines basic qualification for enlistment and is comprised of Paragraph Comprehension, Word Knowledge, Mathematics Knowledge, and Arithmetic Reasoning. Neither the PiCAT nor the ASVAB with accommodations may be utilized to satisfy this criterion.

A student may participate in the ASVAB prior to senior year; however, the student's AFQT score must meet or exceed the minimum score for admittance to a branch of the armed services during the year in which the student graduates.

\*\*\* A PSAT score of 970 or better attained in either grade 10 or 11 satisfies this criterion; however, a score in the PSAT 8/9 may not be utilized as it is a different exam.

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### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM EXAM IN AN ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA ASSOCIATED WITH EACH KEYSTONE EXAM ON WHICH THE STUDENT DID NOT ACHIEVE AT LEAST A PROFICIENT SCORE

The student must score a 3 or higher on an approved Advanced Placement (AP) Exam for **each** Keystone Exam content area in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced.

For example, a student who scored Proficient in only the Keystone Literature Exam would need to satisfy the following under this criterion:

1. Meet local grade-based requirements for both Algebra 1 and Biology, and
2. Score a 3 or higher on an approved AP Exam for Algebra I and score a 3 or higher on an approved AP Exam for Biology (see chart below).

NOTE: AP Exams aligned to more than one content area may only be attributed to one Keystone Exam (e.g., a score of 3 or better on AP Chemistry may be attributed only to Algebra I or to Biology, not both).

Courses that apply to each Keystone Exam are listed below.

Approved AP Exams		
Algebra I	Biology	Literature
AP Calculus AB	AP Biology	AP English Language and Composition
AP Calculus BC	AP Chemistry	AP English Literature and Composition
AP Chemistry	AP Environmental Science	
AP Computer Science A	AP Physics 1: Algebra-Based	
AP Computer Science Principles	AP Physics 2: Algebra-Based	
AP Physics 1: Algebra Based	AP Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism	
AP Physics 2: Algebra Based	AP Physics C: Mechanics	
AP Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism		
AP Physics C: Mechanics		
AP Statistics		

### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON AN INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME EXAM IN AN ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA ASSOCIATED WITH EACH KEYSTONE EXAM ON WHICH THE STUDENT DID NOT ACHIEVE AT LEAST A PROFICIENT SCORE

The student must score a 4 or higher on an approved International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme for **each** Keystone Exam content area in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced.

For example, a student who scored Proficient in only the Keystone Literature Exam would need to satisfy the following under this criterion:

1. Meet local grade-based requirements for both Algebra 1 and Biology, and
2. Score a 4 or higher on an approved IB Exam for Algebra I and score a 4 or higher on an approved IB Exam for Biology (see chart below).

NOTE: IB Exams aligned to more than one content area may only be attributed to one Keystone Exam (e.g., a score of 4 or better on IB Chemistry may be attributed only to Algebra I or to Biology, not both).

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Courses that apply to each Keystone Exam are listed below.

Approved IB Exams		
Algebra	Biology	Literature
Chemistry	Biology	Language A: Literature
Computer Science	Chemistry	Language A: Language and Literature
Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches Standard Level	Design Technology	Literature and Performance
Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches Higher Level	Environmental Systems and Societies	
Mathematics: Applications and Interpretation Standard Level	Physics	
Mathematics: Applications and Interpretation Higher Level	Science	
Physics	Sports, Exercise and Health	

### SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT COURSE IN AN ACADEMIC CONTENT AREA ASSOCIATED WITH EACH KEYSTONE EXAM IN WHICH THE STUDENT DID NOT ACHIEVE AT LEAST A PROFICIENT SCORE

The student must earn dual credit (both high school credit and postsecondary credit) on an LEA-approved concurrent enrollment course for **each** Keystone Exam content area in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced.

For example, a student who scored Proficient in only the Keystone Literature Exam would need to satisfy the following under this criterion:

1. Meet local grade-based requirements for both Algebra 1 and Biology, and
2. Pass two LEA-approved concurrent enrollment courses, one aligned to Algebra I and one aligned to Biology.

A concurrent enrollment course is defined in legislation as “a course in which a secondary student is enrolled and, upon successful completion of which, *both* high school and postsecondary credit are earned”. For an LEA to approve a concurrent enrollment course for the purpose of meeting this criterion, the credit-bearing, non-remedial college-level course must be aligned to the respective Keystone Exam (i.e., includes the majority of the Eligible Content for the respective Keystone Exam). Concurrent enrollment courses aligned to more than one content area may only be attributed to one Keystone Exam (e.g., a passing grade in a concurrent enrollment Chemistry course may be attributed only to Algebra I or Biology, not both).

NOTE: Where an additional fee may be required for the credit to appear on a postsecondary transcript, the LEA/student does not need to assume the cost in order to meet statewide high school graduation requirements.

### SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The student must earn a passing grade in **one** LEA-approved, PA Labor & Industry and/or US Department of Labor registered [pre-apprenticeship program](#) (aligned to an existing registered apprenticeship) *regardless of the number of Keystone Exams in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced.*

For example, a student who scored Proficient in only the Keystone Literature Exam would need to:

1. Meet locally established grade-based requirements for both Algebra 1 and Biology, and
2. Show evidence of successful completion of one PA Labor & Industry and/or US Department of Labor registered pre-apprenticeship program.

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### ACCEPTANCE TO AN ACCREDITED FOUR-YEAR NONPROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND EVIDENCE OF THE ABILITY TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE-LEVEL, CREDIT-BEARING COURSEWORK

The student must demonstrate acceptance into **one** 4-year program in an accredited non-profit institution of higher education *regardless of the number of Keystone Exams in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced.*

For example, a student who scored Proficient in only the Keystone Literature Exam would need to:

1. Meet locally established grade-based requirements for both Algebra 1 and Biology, and
2. Show evidence of acceptance into one accredited, non-profit IHE and evidence of the ability to enroll in college-level coursework, per below.

To demonstrate acceptance into an accredited 4-year non-profit institution of higher education, students must provide:

- A letter of admittance confirming non-conditional acceptance\* into an explicit 4-year program  
**OR**
- A letter of general admittance and evidence of the ability to enroll in college-level coursework through one of the following:
  - Placement test results indicating the student may enroll in college-level coursework in every subject area tested  
**or**
  - College registration confirmation of enrollment in college-level courses (non-remedial) only  
**or**
  - A graduate profile established by the LEA but recommended to include:
    - ✓ GPA of 3.0 (or B average) or higher
    - ✓ Attendance rate of 85% in grades 11 and 12
    - ✓ Successful completion in an advanced\*\* secondary-level math course other than the course leading to the Algebra I Keystone Exam
    - ✓ Successful completion in an advanced\*\* secondary-level English course other than the course leading to the Literature Keystone Exam

\* Non-conditional acceptance explicitly waives any pre-requisites for non-college level, non-credit, or remedial coursework.

\*\*Determined by the LEA to be of equal or greater rigor than the Keystone-associated course.

### EVIDENCE-BASED PATHWAY

In addition to meeting local grade-based requirements for *each* Keystone content area in which a student has neither a numeric score *equal to* or greater than 1500 nor a non-numeric score of Proficient, the student must provide **three** pieces of evidence under this pathway *regardless of the number of Keystone Exams in which the student does not have a numeric or non-numeric score of Proficient or Advanced.*

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Evidence should reflect readiness for meaningful postsecondary engagement consistent with the student's goals and career plan. At least one of the three pieces of evidence must come from the list in Section One, and no more than two pieces of evidence may come from the list in Section Two.

Section One # pieces of evidence	Section Two # pieces of evidence	Section Requirements Met
0	3	No
1	2	Yes
2	1	Yes
3	0	Yes

A student may satisfy certain types of evidence more than once, *provided each piece of evidence is earned through a different course, exam, credential, project, or program*. For example, in addition to meeting locally established grade-based requirements (where required), a student might satisfy this pathway through one industry-recognized credential under Section One and two different service-learning projects under Section Two.

NOTE: The same service-learning project may be used to satisfy both statewide graduation requirements and local graduation requirements, where applicable.

Section One <i>Evidence that may be satisfied once</i>	Section One <i>Evidence that may be satisfied more than once</i>
ACT WorkKeys	SAT Subject Test
IHE Acceptance & College Coursework Ability	AP Exam Score
	IB Exam Score
	Concurrent Enrollment or Other Postsecondary Course
	Industry-Recognized Credential
Section Two <i>Evidence that may be satisfied once</i>	Section Two <i>Evidence that may be satisfied more than once</i>
NCAA Compliance & Minimum GPA	Keystone Proficiency
Guarantee of Full-Time Employment	Service-Learning Project
	Internship, Externship, or Cooperative Education Program

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### EVIDENCE-BASED REQUIREMENTS: SECTION ONE

#### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON THE ACT WORKKEYS

The student must meet or exceed the established score of Silver Level on the ACT WorkKeys NCRC.

The ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is a portable, evidence-based credential earned by completing the following three WorkKeys assessments: Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace

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Documents. Silver Level signifies that an individual has scored at least a Level 4 on each of the three ACT Workplace assessments.

### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON AN SAT SUBJECT TEST

The student must meet or exceed the established score of 630 on *any* SAT Subject Test.

NOTE: While the College Board no longer offers the SAT Subject Tests, students who have previously taken the test(s) may use the score(s) as evidence, provided that they have met the established score.

### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM EXAM

The student must score a 3 or higher on *any* Advanced Placement (AP) Exam consistent with the student's goals and career plan.

### ATTAINMENT OF AN ESTABLISHED SCORE ON AN INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME EXAM

The student must score a 3 or higher on *any* International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme Exam consistent with the student's goals and career plan.

### SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT COURSE

The student must earn dual credit (both high school credit and postsecondary credit) on *any* LEA-approved concurrent enrollment course consistent with the student's goals and career plan.

A concurrent enrollment course is defined in legislation as "a course in which a secondary student is enrolled and, upon successful completion of which, *both* high school and postsecondary credit are earned". The course must be a credit-bearing, non-remedial college-level course.

\*NOTE: Where an additional fee may be required for the credit to appear on a postsecondary transcript, the LEA/student does not need to assume the cost in order to meet statewide high school graduation requirements.

### SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A POSTSECONDARY COURSE

The student must earn postsecondary credit on *any* college-level course consistent with the student's goals and career plan. The course must be an LEA-approved, credit-bearing, non-remedial college-level course.

A postsecondary course is defined in legislation "as a course in which a secondary student is enrolled and, upon successful completion, postsecondary credit is earned"; therefore, the student may not necessarily be awarded high school credit.

### ATTAINMENT OF AN INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED CREDENTIAL (IRC)

The student must earn an industry-recognized credential, consistent with the student's goals and career plan, as identified in PDE guidance documents for [Career & Technical Education Programs](#) or for non-CTE [Career Readiness Programs](#) (see *Guidance for Identifying and Reporting Industry-Based Learning Credentials for Non-CTE Students*).

NOTE: Per Pa. Act 55 of 2022, IRCs attained by a student shall be included on the student's [transcript](#). An earned credential that has expired may be used to meet a pathway criterion and should be included on the student

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transcript. Additionally, an earned credential not attained in the school setting may be used to meet a pathway criterion and should be included on the student transcript if certified by the LEA as meeting PDE guidance for minimal non-technical requirements.

### ACCEPTANCE TO AN ACCREDITED OTHER-THAN-4-YEAR NON-PROFIT INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND EVIDENCE OF THE ABILITY TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE-LEVEL CREDIT-BEARING COURSEWORK

The student must demonstrate acceptance into an accredited other-than-4-year non-profit institution of higher education by providing:

- A letter of admittance confirming non-conditional acceptance\* into an explicit other-than 4-year program

**OR**

- Written confirmation of general admittance and evidence of the ability to enroll in college-level coursework through one of the following:
  - Placement test results (or equivalent criteria established by the IHE) indicating the student may enroll in college-level coursework in every subject area
- or**
- College registration confirmation of enrollment in college-level courses (non-remedial) only
- or**
- A locally-established graduate profile recommended minimally to consist of:
  - ✓ GPA of 2.6 (or C average) or higher
  - ✓ Attendance rate of 80% in grades 11 and 12
  - ✓ Successful completion in an advanced\*\* secondary-level math course other than the course leading to the Algebra I Keystone Exam
  - ✓ Successful completion in an advanced\*\* secondary-level English course other than the course leading to the Literature Keystone Exam

\* Non-conditional acceptance explicitly waives any pre-requisites for non-college level, non-credit, or remedial coursework.

\*\*Determined by the LEA to be of equal or greater rigor than the Keystone-associated course.

### EVIDENCE-BASED REQUIREMENTS: SECTION TWO

#### ATTAINMENT OF A SCORE OF PROFICIENT OR ADVANCED ON A KEYSTONE EXAM

The student must earn either a scaled (numeric) score of 1500 or higher on a Keystone Exam **or** qualify for a non-numeric score of Proficient (See Numeric & Non-Numeric Proficiency under the Keystone Academic Content section of this document).

#### SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF AN APPROVED SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT

The student must successfully complete a service-learning project of sufficient duration and intensity to address identified community needs and meet a specified project learning goal(s). While LEAs may use discretion, a minimum of 10 hours is recommended.

A service-learning project may be embedded within a course, including one that might count as another piece of evidence (e.g., a CHS leadership course), provided the service-learning project is evaluated as a separate artifact

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and includes a practical (not just theoretical) application resulting in a community benefit. Service-learning projects completed as part of local graduation requirements may be used to meet this criterion.

A project proposal must be submitted to the school official for pre-approval and must be supervised and assessed by an adult with successful completion verified in writing by the adult supervisor. LEAs should enter into written understandings with hosting entities to identify the supervisor and establish the terms of the supervision of the students in the program. [Background/clearance checks](#) for those adults responsible for supervising students should comply with board policy as well as state and federal regulations.

Proposals should include a project description, learning goal(s), timeline, number of service hours, the project's contribution to the community, and the sponsoring organization.

NOTE: The CCR and Graduation – Student Evidence Comparison (provided in the Resources section of the toolkit site) highlights similarities/differences in student service-learning projects for College & Career Readiness (as reflected in the Future Ready PA Index) and the Pennsylvania Pathways to Graduation.

### CERTIFICATE OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF AN INTERNSHIP, EXTERNSHIP, OR COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The student must successfully complete an internship, externship, or cooperative education program, as evidenced by locally established documentation.

- Internships place students at a workplace for a defined period to participate in and observe work within a given industry, with specified learning objectives and assessment of student performance.
- Externships often occur during non-school hours and mainly explore interests as opposed to internships, which act as the bridge from student life to professional life.
- Cooperative Education programs alternate or coordinate high school studies with jobs in fields related to students' academic or career objectives.

Internship, externship, or cooperative education programs must comply with related federal and state laws and regulations. Additionally, LEAs should enter into written understandings with hosting entities to identify the supervisor and establish the terms of the supervision of the students in the program. [Background/clearance checks](#) for those adults responsible for supervising students should comply with board policy as well as state and federal regulations.

NOTE: The CCR and Graduation – Student Evidence Comparison (provided in the Resources section of the toolkit site) highlights similarities/differences in student work-based learning experiences for College & Career Readiness (as reflected in the Future Ready PA Index) and the Pennsylvania Pathways to Graduation.

### SATISFACTORY COMPLIANCE WITH THE NCAA CORE COURSES FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT ATHLETES

Regardless of postsecondary intent and for the purpose of meeting this criterion only, the student must comply with [NCAA's Division II core course requirements](#) for college-bound student athletes. Students are not required to register with the NCAA or meet other NCAA eligibility requirements – they are only required to earn the 16 NCAA-approved core-course credits and to attain a core-course GPA of 2.0 or the equivalent on an alternate grading scale in order to satisfy this graduation requirement.

NOTE: If the student is interested in competing at an NCAA Division II or Division I school as a student athlete, the student will be required by the NCAA to meet a higher GPA and additional eligibility standards.

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### GUARANTEE OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT

The student must provide documentation guaranteeing sustained full-time employment:

- averaging at least 30 hours per week, or
- 130 hours per month, or
- multiple jobs that, in aggregate, are reasonably commensurate with full-time work.

Work that is timebound or terminates with project completion (such as freelance work) may be considered sustained, providing the LEA deems likely a continuation or recurrence of work in a manner consistent with ongoing employment. It is at the LEA's discretion as to whether salary is a factor in determining full-time employment status.

Full-time employment should be scheduled to commence no later than 30 calendar days after the date of high school graduation (i.e., date of receipt of diploma or 30 calendar days after student has fulfilled academic requirements for graduation). If cause for a delay in employment is determined to be reasonable by the LEA, full-time employment may commence up to 90 calendar days after graduation.

In lieu of full-time employment, the student may provide verification of military enlistment (to include enrollment in a Delayed Enlistment Program which permits a delay of up to 365 days).

### WAIVERS

A chief school administrator may waive *pathway-specific* criteria to accommodate a student in Grade 12 or a student who experiences extenuating circumstances, defined as:

- serious illness,
- death in the student's immediate family,
- family emergency,
- frequent school transfers,
- transfer from out-of-state in grade 12, or
- COVID-19 pandemic.\*

A student granted a 'waiver' is still required to successfully complete *locally established, grade-based requirements* for academic content areas associated with each Keystone Exam in which the student does not have a numeric score  $\geq 1500$  or a non-numeric score of Proficient.

Where waivers are granted to more than 5% of a graduating class for reasons **other** than extenuating circumstances (i.e., granted to students in Grade 12 who've not experienced extenuating circumstances), the LEA must complete an improvement section within the annual Grad Report. If the improvement section is required in two consecutive years, the LEA is subject also to a comprehensive audit and a 3-year corrective action plan.

Conversely, where waivers are granted to more than 5% of a graduating class due to **extenuating circumstances**, the LEA is not required to complete an improvement section - although, excessive and/or consistent overage may result in a PDE review.

\*approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education for students in the graduating classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025 only.