

Frequently Asked Questions

High School Policy 2.103

Uniform Grading Policy 3.301

This document addresses frequently asked questions about the State Board of Education's [High School Policy 2.103](#) and [Uniform Grading Policy 3.301](#). Information about how ACT/SAT scores will be factored into school and district accountability is also included.

High School Policy 2.103

1. **What is the ACT or SAT graduation requirement in High School Policy 2.103?**

Effective beginning in the 2017-18 school year, in order to earn a regular diploma, students enrolled in a Tennessee public school in their junior year of high school must complete the ACT or SAT.

NOTE: ACT or SAT scores are only submitted to postsecondary institutions at the student's discretion. Students can choose to have scores submitted to postsecondary institutions by their school or directly through the ACT or SAT. Schools and the state do not do any automatic reporting to postsecondary institutions.

2. **Does a student have to earn a college-reportable score to meet the ACT or SAT graduation requirement?**

No. The High School Policy 2.103 requires a student to complete the ACT or SAT in order to meet the graduation requirements for a regular high school diploma. For accountability purposes, however, students must earn a college-reportable score to count as having tested.

3. **Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a student who has an IEP but will be earning a regular diploma?**

Yes. In order to earn a regular diploma, students with an IEP who are enrolled in a Tennessee public school in their junior year of high school must complete the ACT or SAT. A student may use state-allowed accommodations for completion of the ACT or SAT; however, using state-allowed accommodations may result in a score that is not a college-reportable score, and therefore does not count toward ACT or SAT participation rates for accountability purposes.

NOTE: ACT or SAT scores are only submitted to postsecondary institutions at the student's discretion. Students can choose to have scores submitted to postsecondary institutions by their school or directly through the ACT or SAT. Schools and the state do not do any automatic reporting to postsecondary institutions.

4. Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a student who will be earning an occupational diploma, a special education diploma, or an alternate academic diploma?

No. While all students are encouraged to participate in the ACT or SAT, the graduation requirement only applies to students earning a regular diploma. For more information about graduation requirements for students earning a special education, occupational, or alternate academic diploma, please consult section 1, parts e, f, and g of [High School Policy 2.103](#).

5. When does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement go into effect?

The ACT or SAT requirement went into effect in the 2017-18 school year, for the graduating class of 2018.

6. Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a student who took the ACT or SAT in a different state and transferred to a Tennessee public school after taking the test?

Yes. If a student took the ACT or SAT out of state, the student's test completion counts toward the graduation requirement to earn a regular diploma in a Tennessee public school. This is only applicable to students who transfer to a Tennessee public school before the end of their junior year. For students who transfer to a Tennessee public school in their senior year, the graduation requirement does not apply. The Tennessee Department of Education must receive an official ACT or SAT score report or other official documentation from ACT or SAT.

7. If a student takes the ACT or SAT on a national test date in Tennessee (not the state test date), does their ACT or SAT participation count toward the graduation requirement?

Yes. If a student took the ACT or SAT on a national test date, the student's test completion counts toward the graduation requirement to earn a regular diploma in a Tennessee public school.

We recommend that districts develop a plan for verifying that a student completed the ACT or SAT on a national test date. For example, a district could identify students on track to graduate with a regular diploma who lack an ACT or SAT record. Then, the district could request confirmation from the student of their participation (e.g., score report, verification of receipt of scores by a postsecondary institution, etc.). Please note: Students who test on a national date receive paper score reports 3–8 weeks after taking the exam.

8. Does the ACT or SAT graduation requirement apply to a senior who was not enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their junior year, such as a student who was previously enrolled out of state, enrolled at a private school, or were home schooled?

No. The student must have been enrolled in a Tennessee public school during their junior year. If a senior transfers into a Tennessee public school during their senior year, we still encourage schools to support this student in taking the ACT or SAT since it is a valuable benchmark of postsecondary and career readiness; however, this is not a graduation requirement for a senior transfer student.

In addition, with regard to accountability, all students who earn a regular diploma and are part of that district's graduating cohort will be included in the calculation of the ACT participation rate, regardless of

when that student enrolled in a Tennessee public school. Districts should be mindful of their ACT or SAT participation rate in regards to students who transfer into their district from out of state or from a private or home school during their senior year.

9. What opportunities to take the ACT or SAT can districts provide to seniors who have not previously taken the ACT or SAT?

Seniors who were enrolled in a Tennessee public school as a junior must take the ACT or SAT in order to graduate.

Seniors with no prior ACT participation (i.e., they did not test at school as a junior, or they did not test on a national day) are eligible to test as seniors in two ways via the state ACT testing program:

1. Seniors may take the exam at their high school during the fall senior retake day, when the retake is offered.
2. Seniors may take the exam at their high school during the spring junior test day.

NOTE: Any senior, regardless of previous ACT participation, who meets the ACT, Inc. qualifications to be considered “economically disadvantaged” may receive up to two fee waivers from ACT, Inc. to take the ACT on any national test date.

Seniors who wish to take the SAT to fulfill their graduation requirement may take the SAT on a national test date at their own expense, or districts may pay for the student to take the SAT.

NOTE: Any senior, regardless of previous SAT participation, who meets the College Board's qualifications to be considered “economically disadvantaged” may receive up to two fee waivers from the College Board to take the SAT on any national test date.

10. What if our graduation ceremony is in May, but a senior will be taking the ACT or SAT for the first time at the June administration?

We recommend allowing the student to walk at graduation but holding the diploma until after the student takes the ACT or SAT during the June test administration. However, this is a district decision.

11. Are adult students working toward a regular high school diploma required to meet the ACT or SAT graduation requirements?

No. Adult students are exempt from state required assessments, including the ACT or SAT requirement.

Credit Recovery

12. *My school/district currently uses credit recovery, but we do not have any specific local school board policies in place. As long as we are following state board policy, is this acceptable?*

No. According to the High School Policy 2.103, local school boards are required to adopt policies that govern credit recovery, how credit recovery grades are calculated, how students are assigned to credit recovery courses, and how teachers of record and facilitators (if both are used in the district) interact. These policies are required to be adopted by the local board of education, posted on the district's website, and available in writing to stakeholders upon request.

13. *Do students in credit recovery have to retake the end-of-course (EOC) exam?*

No. State Board policy requires that students take the EOC in order to be awarded credit for the course, but there is no requirement for a student to retake an EOC that the student had previously taken in conjunction with an unsuccessful attempt at a specific course. However, if a student is placed in credit recovery for the first semester of a two-semester course, the student is not allowed to earn credit for the course until the student has enrolled in and passed the second semester, as well as taken the EOC for that specific course.

14. *High School Policy 2.103 requires a teacher of record, but my district uses a facilitator for credit recovery classes. Is this acceptable?*

All students enrolled in credit recovery must be assigned to a teacher of record who must be endorsed and certified in any content area(s) for which they teach recovery courses. The policy allows for the flexibility of using a facilitator to manage credit recovery programs but requires that this person is trained on the program and is in contact with the students' assigned teacher of record for a given subject area. The teacher of record for a student enrolled in credit recovery will support credit recovery facilitators in reviewing student work, signing off on placements and diagnostic results, consulting on content areas students may be struggling with, and signing off on students' final grades.

15. *How do I know which credit recovery programs are approved by the state?*

The High School Policy 2.103 requires districts—not the state—to ensure their credit recovery programs are aligned with the Tennessee Academic Standards and are able to differentiate instruction for students based on diagnostic assessment of student need. Because credit recovery programs are supplemental in nature and do not constitute a full 180-day curriculum, the state is not required to review credit recovery materials as is required with textbooks.

16. *The High School Policy 2.103 requires the credit recovery grade to be factored into a student's final grade for the course. How should this be accomplished?*

Students passing credit recovery must receive a grade of 70 percent, and the student transcript must denote that this grade was received through credit recovery. The original failing grade may be retained on the transcript but should not be included in the student's GPA. The original failing grade shall not factor into a student's final grade, as noted in the Uniform Grading Policy 3.301.

Graduation Requirements and Move on When Ready

17. *The High School Policy 2.103 requires students to take four years of math and four years of English. Can a student take a summer math and/or English dual enrollment course that could count toward this requirement?*

Yes. Credits received during the summer may count towards a required course during the subsequent school year.

18. *If a student's ACT score (or sub-score) exempts him or her from taking an entrance-level course, such as English Composition I, at a postsecondary institution, does the student still need to enroll in an English course each year of high school in order to meet high school graduation requirements?*

Yes. Although the student may be exempt from taking a particular course at the postsecondary level, the student is still required to satisfy high school graduation requirements by enrolling in the appropriate course(s) each year of high school. Course exemption does not equate to earning an early postsecondary credit or meeting high school graduation requirements.

19. *If a student sat for an early postsecondary culminating exam but was not enrolled in the aligned high school class, does this student still need to enroll in a high school course to meet high school graduation requirements?*

Yes. Students must meet all high school graduation enrollment requirements, even if a student has earned early postsecondary credit through an exam.

20. *A student's AP score may exempt him or her from taking an entrance-level course, such as English Composition I at a postsecondary institution. Does a student who takes and passes an AP exam without enrolling in the corresponding AP course still need to enroll in an English course each year of high school in order to meet high school graduation requirements?*

Yes. Although the student may be exempt from taking a particular course at the postsecondary level, the student is still required to satisfy high school graduation requirements by enrolling in an appropriate English course each year of high school. Postsecondary course exemption does not equate to earning high school course credit or meeting high school graduation requirements.

21. *What courses must a student take to meet the graduation requirements in social studies?*

Students are required to complete one credit of United States History and Geography, one credit of World History and Geography, one-half (½) credit of economics, and one-half (½) credit of United States Government and Civics.

22. *If a student with an IEP is not going to earn the required credits, what other graduation options are available for them?*

The High School Policy 2.103 includes four diplomas available within public schools: the regular high school diploma, alternate academic diploma, occupational diploma, and special education diploma. There is specific criteria outlined for each of the diploma options to guide the IEP team, student, and their family in determining the most appropriate diploma as well as to guide the student's course of study and transition services plan. The following is a basic summary of each option, and additional information can be found [here](#).

Diploma	Who Is Eligible?	Terminal (Yes or No)	Counts as a Graduate in Graduation Rate?
Regular Diploma	Everyone	Yes—terminates eligibility for IDEA services upon graduation	Yes
Alternate Academic Diploma (specific FAQ here)	Students assessed on the alternate assessment	No—student is still eligible for IDEA services through 21	Yes
Occupational Diploma	Students with disabilities who have not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma	No—student is still eligible for IDEA services through 21	No
Special Education Diploma	Students with disabilities who have not met the requirements for a regular high school diploma	No—student is still eligible for IDEA services through 21. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work toward a regular high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two (22) years old.	No

23. The High School Policy 2.103 states, “Students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics as documented in the IEP shall be required to achieve at least Algebra I and Geometry (or the equivalent Integrated Math I and Integrated Math II).” How do IEP teams determine students with a qualifying disability who have deficits in mathematics?

Multiple factors must be considered when determining the math course of study for students with disabilities. In March 2017 the department issued guidance through a memo titled [High School Math Course of Study for Students with Disabilities](#).

24. What kind of documentation is required to identify students who have taken and passed the U.S. Civics test in order to be recognized by the department as a “U.S. Civics All Star School?”

All districts are required to submit their compliance form by June 15 of each year for that year’s graduating cohort. More information can be found [here](#).

25. I have a student who would like to pursue early graduation through the Move on When Ready program. What guidelines or requirements must this student meet?

A public high school student may complete an early high school graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two-year institution of higher education or conditional entry into a public four-year institution of higher education, if the student meets the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-6-8303, also known as the [Move on When Ready Act](#). Students, who are interested in graduating significantly early through the *Move on When Ready* program, must complete this [intent form](#) available from the department. Copies of completed intent forms or questions about the program may be sent to MoveOn.WhenReady@tn.gov.

Graduation with Honors, State Honors, and Distinction

26. Who qualifies for the Seal of Biliteracy?

LEAs shall recognize students who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one (1) or more languages in addition to English with a Seal of Biliteracy. Students receiving this recognition shall meet all of the following criteria:

(a) Complete all English Language Arts (ELA) requirements for graduation with an overall grade point average of 3.0 or higher in those classes;

(b) Demonstrate English proficiency through one (1) of the following:

1. Score at the on-track or mastered level on each ELA end-of-course assessment taken;
2. Score 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement English Language or English Literature exam, or B1 or higher on a Cambridge International English exam; or score 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate English exam. Score 22 or higher on the ACT Reading subtest or 480 or higher on the SAT evidence based reading and writing subtest; or
3. Score 4.5 or higher on the WIDA Access, if the student is an English learner.

(c) Demonstrate proficiency in a world language through one (1) of the following:

1. Score Intermediate-Mid or higher in all three (3) communication modes (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) on a world language proficiency assessment recognized by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL);
2. Score 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement world language exam; B1 or higher on a Cambridge International world language exam; or 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate world language exam. Score at the Intermediate level or higher on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI:ASL);
3. Pass a foreign government’s approved language exam, or a nation’s high school level

standardized exam in a language from a country in which the language is taught in school at a level comparable to Intermediate-mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale; or

4. Score at a level comparable to Intermediate-Mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale on an LEA developed alternate model. Alternate models may only be used if the identified world language does not have an associated nationally recognized assessment and must address communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities.

Each school shall document and track students' progress toward the Seal of Biliteracy. Each local board shall affix an appropriate insignia to the diploma of the qualifying student indicating that the student has been awarded a Tennessee Seal of Biliteracy.

27. *Who will check that students have met the required qualifications for the Seal of Biliteracy?*

Districts should develop procedures for verifying that the requirements for the Seal of Biliteracy have been met. Records should be kept on the accepted local and state retention schedule. Each local board shall affix an appropriate insignia to the diploma of the qualifying student indicating that the student has been awarded a Tennessee Seal of Biliteracy.

28. *Who qualifies to become a Tri-Star Scholar?*

A student who earns a composite score of 19 or higher on the ACT, or an equivalent score on the SAT, and earns a department-promoted capstone industry certification by their graduation date, shall be recognized as a Tennessee Tri-Star Scholar upon graduation from high school. The public high school shall recognize the student's achievement at the graduation ceremony by placing an appropriate designation on the student's diploma, or other credential, or by providing a ribbon or cord to be worn with graduation regalia. The student shall be noted as a Tennessee Tri-Star Scholar in the school's graduation program.

29. *What are examples of recognition at a statewide competition of skills or knowledge that would allow students to graduate with state distinction?*

Examples of a statewide skills or knowledge include, but are not limited to, forensics, mock trial, and career and technical student organizations. These events must be hosted by a statewide student organization and/or qualify for national recognition by a national student organization. Please note that state distinction is for academic-based competitions, not an athletic competition.

Uniform Grading Policy 3.301

30. *What changes were made to the local grading policy requirements in 2018?*

- One-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) quality point shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received for an honors course; and
- One (1) quality point shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received in early postsecondary courses including, but not limited to, national industry certification, statewide dual credit, AP, Cambridge, IB, and dual enrollment.

31. Do the requirements for local grading systems included in [Public Chapter 920 of the Public Acts of 2018](#) begin with the 2018-19 freshman class?

Yes. Districts shall begin implementing the updated local grading requirements with the 2018-19 freshman cohort. Districts will continue phasing in implementation of these requirements with each subsequent freshman class until full implementation is reached. The previous local grading system requirements should continue to be implemented for students in high school prior to the 2018-19 school year.

32. The Uniform Grading Policy 3.301 states that student grades are eligible for additional percentage point weighting for local and statewide dual credit, capstone industry certification-aligned, Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, College Level Exam Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Is the intent only to award the additional percentage points to students who sit for the culminating exam for these courses? What if the exam is given only in the spring?

Yes. Only students who sit for the culminating exam shall receive the additional percentage point weighting. If a student completes a class in the fall, but the culminating exam is not given until the spring, additional weighting may be added to the student’s grade prior to sitting for the culminating exam. However, the district must have a policy to remove the additional weighting if the student does not participate in the culminating exam by the end of the school year in which the course was completed.

33. With regard to the additional four (4) percentage points for a dual enrollment course taken by a student at an institute of higher education (IHE), what should the district do if the IHE assigns a letter grade as the final grade but does not provide the district with the numerical grade(s)?

It is best practice for an IHE to provide the district with a student’s numerical grade(s). If this is not possible, the district may ask the IHE to add the additional percentage points before providing the letter grade to the district. Regardless, the district must have a policy in place to ensure that additional points are awarded in a consistent manner. The following chart is provided as guidance to districts regarding suggested letter grade conversions:

Letter Grade Received From IHE	Suggested Numerical Grade Conversion
A	95
B	85
C	75
D	70
F	65

34. *The Uniform Grading Policy 3.301 allows students to retake a failed course without the failing grade from the first attempt being counted in their HOPE Scholarship Eligibility GPA. However, if an IHE allows students to retake dual enrollment courses that they have not failed, are those grades to be counted in the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility GPA?*

Yes. All grades earned through retakes of a course shall be counted in the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility GPA with the exception of a failing grade from the first attempt of the course.

35. *Is it permissible under the Uniform Grading Policy 3.301 to award a student a pass/fail grade for a course?*

Yes. It is permissible for certain non-credit bearing courses to be pass/fail. However, those courses are not included in credit calculation for the HOPE Scholarship Eligibility GPA.

36. *Why does the Uniform Grading Policy 3.301 include two grading systems: the Uniform Grading System (in section 1) and the locally approved grading system (in section 3)?*

The Uniform Grading System was established to ensure consistency for all students across the state as they apply for statewide scholarships and financial aid processed by the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC). This is commonly referred to as the "Hope Scholarship Eligibility GPA." The Uniform Grading System ensures that GPA calculations are fair for all students when used to qualify for statewide scholarships and financial aid.

The locally approved grading system allows districts the flexibility to establish their own local grading system for all other purposes, such as calculating local class rank or to determine student recognitions such as valedictorian. Local school systems have the option to use the Uniform Grading System for all purposes; they do not have to adopt a separate locally approved grading system.

37. *What happens if after the inclusion of additional percentage points a student's end grade in an advanced course is over 100 percentage points? Can the student receive above 100 percentage points under the Uniform Grading System?*

No. Grades above 100 cannot be awarded under the Uniform Grading System.

Example: Student X is enrolled in AP U.S. History and sits for the AP exam. After adding additional percentage points to the student's grade throughout the year, the end grade in that course calculates to 102. Regardless, the student's final grade in the course will still be reported as 100, and the student will receive an A. Because GPA calculation under the Uniform Grading System is on a 4.0 scale, a student cannot receive a grade higher than an A, and all As count for the same number of grade points when calculating the student's GPA.

See section 4(a) of the Uniform Grading Policy for additional information on GPA calculation under the Uniform Grading System and the number of grade points assigned to each letter grade.

38. *Why do some advanced courses receive more weighting than others under the Uniform Grading Policy?*

Differentiation between advanced course offerings was determined by the scope of a course's acceptance for postsecondary credit. By definition, early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs, such as

dual credit, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement courses) count for postsecondary credit/hours, while honors classes do not. Given this, the State Board and the Department of Education recognized the heightened value of an EPSO over an honors class and has reflected that in the point distribution for the Uniform Grading System.

Additional differentiation was determined by the scope of each type of EPSO's acceptance for postsecondary credit, creating differentiation in a student's ability to articulate an EPSO for credit at a postsecondary institution. For example, Advanced Placement, Cambridge, and International Baccalaureate courses are recognized at both public and private postsecondary institutions across the country, while most dual enrollment and dual credit opportunities would be accepted by Tennessee postsecondary institutions only. Therefore, Advanced Placement, Cambridge, and International Baccalaureate courses are awarded the highest amount of additional percentage points.

39. Does the Uniform Grading Policy 3.301 apply to students earning a special education diploma?

No. The Uniform Grading Policy specifically relates to the regular education diploma, HOPE scholarship, and traditional college admission. Therefore, it does not apply to the special education diplomas. When determining the grading policy for the alternate academic diploma courses, the district should refer to their local grading policy for guidance and determine a single, district-wide plan for grading in these courses.