

The board recognizes the importance of setting rigorous graduation requirements to help ensure that students are receiving an education that will prepare them to be career and college ready and productive members of society.

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

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

The principal shall ensure that students and parents are aware of all graduation requirements. Guidance program staff shall assist students in selecting their high school courses to ensure that students are taking all of the required units and selecting electives consistent with their post-graduation plans. For students who have transferred to the school system during high school or who, for other reasons, have completed course work outside of the school system, the principal shall determine what course work will be applied as credit toward graduation. The principal shall consider the requirements of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (G.S. 115C-407.5) and the requirements of subsection C.3 of this policy in determining the graduation requirements for children of military families.

A. COURSE UNITS REQUIRED

Beginning with students entering the ninth grade for the first time in the 2009-2010 school year, all students must fulfill the course unit requirements of the Future-Ready Core Course of Study, unless they are approved for the Future-Ready Occupational Course of Study. Course unit requirements for the Future-Ready Core Course of Study differ depending on the year a student enters ninth grade for the first time, as set out in the tables below. In accordance with policy 3101, Dual Enrollment, and State Board of Education requirements, students may earn high school credit for college courses completed. In addition, students may earn credit for certain high school courses in the Future-Ready Core Course of Study completed while in middle school, as authorized by the State Board of Education. Students also have the opportunity to meet course unit requirements without completing the regular period of classroom instruction by demonstrating mastery of the course material in accordance with policy 3420, Student Promotion and Accountability, and State Board of Education requirements.

All awards of high school course credit must be consistent with State Board of Education requirements. Any inconsistency between board policy and State Board graduation requirements will be resolved by following the State Board requirements. While the board endeavors to keep its policy up to date with current State Board of Education graduation requirements, students should verify current requirements with their guidance counselors when planning course schedules or making other decisions based on

graduation requirements.

1. Future-Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time in 2012-2013 and Thereafter

Courses Required*	State Requirements	Local Requirements
English	4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (Math I, II, and III and a fourth math course aligned with the student’s post-high school plans.)** (A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. Exempt students will be required to pass Math I and II and two other application-based math courses.)***	
Science	3 (a physical science course, Biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	4 (including American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics; American History Parts I and II; and World History)****	
Health/P.E.	1	
Electives	6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Language; 4 must be from one of the following: Career and Technical Education, J.R.O.T.C., Arts Education, or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary course. A four-course concentration is recommended.)*****	
Total Credits	22	

* Certain International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses will satisfy specific graduation requirements. See SBE policy GCS-L-008.

** Students entering ninth grade for the first time prior to the 2014-15 school year have alternate math course options. See SBE policy GCS-N-004.

*** Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a fourth math course with Math III as a prerequisite.

**** American History: Founding Principles, Civics and Economics must follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) in its entirety and may not be satisfied by an AP/IB course, dual enrollment, or any other course that does not fully address the NCSCOS.

***** Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete two years of a second language.

Cherokee County School System requires an additional six (6) hours of electives, thus totaling 28 credits required for graduation.

2. Future-Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required for Students Entering Ninth Grade for the First Time in 2009-2010, 2010-2011, or 2011-2012

Courses Required	State Requirements	Local Requirements
English	4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (either Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans OR Integrated Math I, II, and III and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans) (A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. Exempt students will be required to pass either (1) Algebra I and either Algebra II or Geometry or (2) Integrated Math I and II. Exempt students also must pass either Alternative Math I and II or two other application-based math courses.)*	
Science	3 (a physical science course, Biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	3 (Civics & Economics, U.S. History, and World History)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Electives	6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education, or World Language; 4 must be from one of the following: Career and Technical Education, J.R.O.T.C., Arts Education, or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary course. A four-course concentration is recommended.)**	
Total Credits	21	

* Students seeking to complete minimum course requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematics courses, including a fourth math course with Algebra II or Integrated Math III as a prerequisite.

** Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete two years of a second language.

Cherokee County School System requires an additional six (6) hours of electives, thus totaling 28 credits required for graduation.

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

Courses Required	State Requirements	Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	3 (including Introduction to Math , Math I, and Financial Management)	
Science	2 (including Applied Science and Biology)	
Social Studies	2 (including American History I and II)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (Vocational Education electives)	
Occupational Preparation	6 (including Occupational Preparation I, II, III, and IV, which require 150 hours of school-based training, 225 hours of community-based training, and 225 hours of paid employment*)	
Electives	0	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of IEP objectives • Career Portfolio 	
Total Credits	22	

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

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

High school students must take all end-of-course (EOC) tests, NC Final Exams, and Career and Technical Education State Assessments (CTE Post-Assessments) required by the State Board of Education and pursuant to policy 3410, Testing and Assessment Program.

C. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The board adopts the following policies with regard to graduation.

1. Honor Graduates

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

2. Students with Disabilities

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

3. Children of Military Families

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, the

board adopts the following policy provisions for students to whom the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children applies.

a. Waiver Requirements

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

b. Testing Requirements for Graduation

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

c. Transfers During Senior Year

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

4. Early Graduation

Graduation prior to that of one's class may be permitted on the basis of criteria approved by the board upon recommendation by the superintendent. Students must complete the Early Graduation form contained herein.

5. Graduation Certificates

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

6. All students must accumulate at least 28 units of credit to graduate from any of the high schools in Cherokee County except for students graduating from

alternative programs at Mountain Youth School or Tri-County Early College High School.

a. Mountain Youth School Requirements for Graduation:

Students who enter the Mountain Youth School will be treated as transfer students. The total number of graduation requirements will be state requirements only. Flexibility in contact hours will be allowed through the MYS School Improvement Plan. The goal of MYS is to transition students back into the regular school as soon as possible or to move them into the work force or higher education.

b. Tri-County Early College High School Requirements for Graduation:

Students who enter Tri-County Early College High School will meet the state requirements for graduation in addition to the requirements for an Associate's Degree from Tri-County Community College. All students will follow the University Prep default curriculum. Students will participate in an accelerated track of study that will blend some high school and college classes for which the student will receive dual credit. Flexibility in contact hours for some courses will be allowed through the Tri-County Early College High School Improvement Plan and approved waivers from the NC Department of Public Instruction and the NC Department of Community Colleges.

7. Diploma Endorsements

Students have the opportunity to earn one or more of the following diploma endorsements identifying a particular area of focused study: (1) Career Endorsement, (2) College Endorsement (two options), (3) North Carolina Academic Scholars Endorsement, and/or (4) a Global Languages Endorsement. No endorsement is required to receive a diploma.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -81, -174.11, -276, -288, -407.5; State Board of Education Policies GCS-C-003, GCS-L-007, GCS-M-001, GCS-N-004, -010

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

Adopted: July 15, 1999
Amended: January 14, 2010
Amended: October 11, 2012
Amended: August 14, 2014
Amended: December 11, 2014
Amended: August 10, 2015
Amended: January 14, 2016

Student Request for Early Graduation

I, _____, hereby declare my intent to graduate early.
(Student’s Full Name)

I understand that graduation prior to my class may be permitted based on completion of state and local requirements and with the approval of the Superintendent.

Initial: _____

I understand that based on my current transcript, GPA requirement for online classes and completion of both state and local graduation requirements can be met for early graduation if the current course plan is successfully completed.

Initial: _____

I understand should I desire to participate in graduation exercises I must receive a recommendation from the superintendent, notify the school administration and counselors of my intent during or before the summer of my Junior Year, and order appropriate graduation materials. It will be my responsibility to leave the school adequate contact information for communication of items pertaining to graduation exercises.

Initial: _____

I understand that to be eligible for Valedictorian, Salutatorian or Career and Technical Education (CTE) Honors I must complete four full consecutive semesters with my graduating class, at my high school, by the time of graduation.

Initial: _____

Signature of student: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent(s)/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Administrator: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Counselor: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent’s Endorsement: Approved: _____ Disapproved: _____

Superintendent of Schools: _____ Date: _____