

NM Public Education Department

Frequently Asked Questions Demonstration of Competency

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1. [Who is impacted by the new graduation policy?](#)

The new policy applies to students entering high school in the fall of 2018 as part of the graduating class of 2022 and any graduating class thereafter. The new policy does not apply to students in the classes of 2019, 2020, or 2021.

2. [What’s the difference between a Certificate of Completion and the New Mexico Diploma of Excellence?](#)

Students who meet **both** coursework **and** competency requirements will earn a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence. This includes students with IEPs using the **modified or ability option** who meet the individualized graduation indicators established by their IEP.

Students who meet the coursework requirements, but who lack all or some demonstrations of competency in the five core content areas, will earn a Certificate of Completion. Certificates will list the course credits the student has earned and the grade level completed. Students earning a Certificate of Completion who meet the requirements for demonstrating competency in the five core content areas within five years of exiting the schooling system will earn a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence.

3. [How many attempts are students required to make at the primary assessments?](#)

The primary assessment for each content area must be attempted at least once. Use of an alternative assessment or competency-based alternative is not permitted unless the student has taken the primary assessment and not received a passing score in the content area.

4. [How do courses and primary assessments align? For example, what if a student is in an advanced math course?](#)

The document, “[New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program Test Assignment Procedures for Enrolled Students](#)”, located on the PED Assessment webpage, provides a comprehensive overview of testing requirements based on a student’s grade level and coursework.

5. [Can we assume that there will not be any changes to current policy until we get to the class of 2022?](#)

New Mexico Statute 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978 states, “Once a student has entered ninth grade, the graduation requirements shall not be changed for that student from the requirements specified in the law at the time the student entered ninth grade.” The guidelines in the new rule for the class of 2022 can only be changed through rulemaking in accordance with the State Rules Act and 1.24.25 NMAC, Default Procedural Rule for Rulemaking. The [CCRB webpage](#) provides the graduation requirements for the classes of 2019-2022.

6. How do students know which alternative assessments are available to them?

The alternative assessments offered by each district or school vary. Registration for some assessments (such as the ACT and SAT) is accessible via online registration with many testing dates and locations throughout the year. For other alternative assessments, districts and schools determine what assessments are offered and any administration timelines. High school counselors and administrators can provide up-to-date lists of assessments and their testing dates. At a minimum, every high school student in New Mexico is offered the opportunity to take the **PSAT at no cost** during their tenth grade year.

Certain assessments such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) require that a student has completed specific coursework. If a school does not offer a particular AP course, students can discuss options for taking an AP course online with their high school counselor. IB assessments are only available at schools that are authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization to teach IB curriculum and programs. More information about Advanced Placement tests and courses in New Mexico is available on the **PED website**.

7. How do students get an internship?

The types of internships available to students vary by region and school. Students should discuss internship opportunities with their high school counselor or administrator. In order for an internship to count as one of the criteria used to pursue a competency-based alternative, the internship must be approved by the school, paid (either in the form of an hourly wage or stipend), taken for at least a 0.5 credit, be documented on the student’s transcript, and correlate with a course code for internships in the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS).

8. Which apprenticeships are approved for students to use?

Each district/school will determine which apprenticeships to accept. Students or schools seeking information on apprenticeships currently offered in their area, may use the Department of Workforces Solutions (DWS) as a resource. The DWS approves and adds registered apprenticeships to their website on a rolling basis. The most current list is available at **<https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Job-Seeker/Jobs-and-Careers/Apprenticeship/Current-Programs>**.

9. How can I request a change be made to the list of industry-recognized credentials and certificates in Appendix C?

Those seeking to submit a petition should email the College and Career Readiness Bureau at <mailto:grad.questions@state.nm.us>. Petitions should be supported by a rationale (e.g., XYZ certification is a rigorous assessment that is aligned with industry standards, is valued in the field among hiring managers, and assesses high levels of math that correspond with common core algebra I and geometry standards.) Decisions of whether to accept petitions for additional credentials and certificates will be made by the PED on a case-by-case basis.

10. How do students find out which types of dual credit courses are offered at their school?

Almost all high schools have at least one dual credit Master Agreement with a public college, university, or tribal college. The courses offered vary depending on what is agreed upon between the school or district and the institution of higher learning. High school counselors and/or administrators can provide students with a list of dual credit coursework specific to their school site. In some cases, coursework may be available through distance learning. Master Agreements and course listings organized by location are available on the [NMPED Dual Credit webpage](#).

11. How do students know if they are eligible to take dual credit courses?

All students who have not yet earned a NM Diploma of Excellence or high school equivalency certificate are eligible to take dual credit courses. Students must be enrolled in one-half or more of the minimum course requirements approved by the PED, or, if enrolled in a high school funded by the Bureau of Indian Education, must be receiving at least three documented contact hours per day. Students must also meet the eligibility requirements for New Mexico dual credit program participation established by the high school and the postsecondary institution. A full explanation of dual credit eligibility requirements is outlined in [6.30.7 NMAC, Dual Credit](#).

12. Who determines which dual credit courses will count as a competency-based alternative in each core content area?

Coursework will count for use as a competency-based alternative if the course is accepted as a credit in the specific core content area by the institution of higher education. Remedial courses and courses that transfer as an elective may not be used to demonstrate competency.

13. How can I learn more about the program of study options?

The [New Mexico Career Clusters Guide](#) on the PED website provides a listing of all 16 career clusters and the programs of study falling under each cluster.

14. How do students know which programs of study are available at their school?

Most schools offer at least one program of study, and the number of options being offered across the state continues to grow. High school counselors and administrators will have the most up-to-date information about which programs of study are currently available.

15. How do you complete a program of study?

Each program of study is a compilation of four courses that are taken in sequence. In order for a program of study to be used as a demonstration of competency for graduation, students must complete **three courses in sequence** in the same program of study and earn a GPA of at least 3.0. Students may take the first three courses in the four course series or the last three courses in the four course series. Both approaches would qualify as a competency-based alternative.

16. Does completion of a program of study count for all content areas?

Programs of study may not be used to demonstrate competency in content areas for which they are not approved. For example, a student who has completed a program of study in Computer Science & Cybersecurity could use the program of study as a demonstration of competency in Science and Mathematics only. The program of study would not be accepted as a demonstration of competency in Reading, Writing, or Social Studies.

17. Can students submit portfolio artifacts that are part of a group project?

So long as the student's independent work is distinguishable and distinct from the work of other students in the group, yes. Any work that is co-authored or co-created by more than one student shall not be included in the portfolio. It is within the authority of the district or school to place additional restrictions on group work, if desired.

18. Does the teacher on the local review team need to be from the content area being evaluated?

No. All three rubrics have been designed to be accessible to all review team members no matter the reviewer's level of knowledge in the particular core content area.

19. What if the school doesn't have a highly effective/exemplary teacher?

Every district or state-chartered charter school in New Mexico has at least one highly effective or exemplary teacher. Smaller schools without a highly effective or exemplary teacher on staff should work with district officials to identify potential review team members.

20. How will schools find the time to grade portfolios and the funds to compensate review team members?

So long as the minimum requirements outlined in 6.19.7 NMAC are met, each district or state-chartered charter school choosing to accept standards-based portfolios as a competency-based alternative must determine the system that works best for them. Districts and schools have the authority to establish requirements for the processes and procedures related to the submittal and grading of standards-based portfolios.

21. Do standards-based portfolio artifacts have to be completed as part of a course assignment? Can artifacts that have been created outside of the classroom be used?

So long as the minimum requirements outlined in 6.19.7 NMAC are met, districts and schools may choose to establish additional parameters or requirements for standards-based portfolios. This means districts or schools could choose to allow *or* not to allow artifacts created outside the classroom. The artifact must still meet the requirement that it is the student's own, independent work. For example, if a student independently completed a work product in an after-school tutoring program, a district/school may choose to allow it. However, if an artifact is created with the assistance of a tutor, parent, sibling, etc., it should not be accepted.

22. What if the student doesn't get a passing score on the standards-based portfolio? Can they appeal or re-submit another portfolio?

Districts and state-chartered charter schools may decide whether or not appeals for standards-based portfolios are allowed. If a district or state-chartered charter school decides to allow appeals, the parameters of the appeals process will fall under their authority.

23. What's the difference between a Certificate of Completion and the New Mexico Diploma of Excellence?

Students who meet **both** coursework and competency requirements will earn a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence and be considered high school graduates. This includes students with IEPs using the modified or ability option who meet the individualized graduation indicators established by their IEP.

Students who meet the coursework requirements, but who do not demonstrate competency in the five core content areas, will earn a Certificate of Completion but will not be considered high school graduates. Certificates of Completion will list the course credits the student has earned and the grade level completed. Students earning a Certificate of Completion who meet the requirements for demonstrating competency in the five core content areas within five years of exiting the schooling system will earn a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence.

24. How do courses and primary assessments align? For example, what if a student is in an advanced math course?

The document, "[New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program Test Assignment Procedures for Enrolled Students](#)", located on the PED Assessment webpage, provides a comprehensive overview of testing requirements based on a student's grade level and coursework.