

In Policy 5540, Graduation Requirements, the Board has established requirements for graduation and the granting of diplomas. In order for a course to be considered a credit course (i.e. one for which credit toward high school graduation is awarded and which qualifies as part of the instructional day), the following must occur:

- The Superintendent shall ensure that all required and elective courses have sufficient rigor, breadth, and depth to be awarded high school credit, in accordance with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- The high school principal shall award course credit toward high school graduation based upon a student's demonstration of sufficient mastery of the standards for a course as defined in the NC Standard Course of Study.
- Credit toward high school graduation may be awarded for: high school courses included in the NC Standard Course of Study, including those provided by the NC Virtual Public School; Advanced Placement courses; International Baccalaureate courses; locally developed high school courses; and public university, community college, and private college courses.
- Course instructors shall provide instruction on the complete standards for the course as outlined in the NC Standard Course of Study, the Advanced Placement syllabus, the International Baccalaureate syllabus, or the locally-developed course syllabus, as appropriate.

#### **5542.1 Public University, Community College, and Private College Courses**

5542.1.1 The following credits required for high school graduation must be taken through the high school except where indicated otherwise:

- English – 4 credits
  - English I: This credit may be earned in middle school;
  - English II: This credit shall be earned through the high school;
  - English III and English IV: These credits may be earned with appropriate college/university course sequences.
- Math – 4 credits
  - Math I, Math II, and Math III: These credits may be earned in middle school;
  - The fourth math credit may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence.

- Science – 3 credits
  - Earth/environmental science: This credit may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - Physical science: This credit may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - Biology: This credit may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence.
- Social studies – 4 credits
  - Civics and Economics: This credit may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - World History: This credit may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - American History I and American History II: These credits may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence. Students may also satisfy this graduation requirement with Advanced Placement US History *plus* one additional social studies elective of the student's choice.
- Health and Physical Education – 1 credit
  - The health and physical education credit may be earned with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - The CPR requirement may be met through instruction in the middle school, or by providing documentation of successful completion of an instructional program and/or test approved by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross. [see GS §115C-81 (e1)]
- Electives and other credits – 6 credits
  - Elective credits may be earned with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - First and second years of a World Language (required for students wishing to meet University of North Carolina (UNC) system Minimum Admission Requirements): These credits may be earned in middle school or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence;
  - Credit requirements added in the future may be earned in middle school for disciplines where such credit is currently allowed (English, math, science, social studies, and world languages), or with an appropriate college/university course or course sequence, unless explicitly prohibited in this or other State Board of Education policies.

- 5542.1.2 Students may earn dual credit for any high school course and meet graduation requirements using an appropriate college course or combination of college courses. Principals shall award dual credit according to the Career and College Promise program guidelines established by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). For courses not addressed by DPI guidance, a principal may award dual credit for a college course if an evaluation of the course content against NC Standard Course of Study requirements demonstrates that the college course offers substantial coverage of the high school course standards.
- 5542.1.3 College and university courses shall earn high school dual credit as specified below:

Semester Hours Credit	High School Credits
1-4*	1
5-8**	2
9 or more**	3

\*For college courses having an associated lab component (such as math or foreign language lab), the combination of the course and the lab count as a single course and earn one credit only.

\*\* These occur only in certain Career and Technical Education courses.

5542.1.4 Laboratory facilities must meet safety requirements and state and national guidelines for laboratory expendables and equipment to allow the same opportunities for laboratory work as the high school laboratory in the local education agency.

5542.1.5 The Superintendent may grant a waiver to allow students to take the courses listed above at the public university, community college, and private college, if these courses are not available to the student at his or her local high school. Courses taken at a community college that have a corresponding end-of-course assessment at the high school require that the assessment be taken.

**5542.2 Credit Courses Taken in Grades 6-8**

Students in grades 6-8 who pass English I and/or mathematics, science, social studies, or world language courses that are described in and aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for grades 9-12 may use the course(s) to meet high school graduation

requirements. Such course(s) shall count toward meeting graduation requirements and the number of credits required to graduate, and shall appear on the high school transcript. These courses shall not be included in the calculation of students' high school Grade Point Average (GPA). Student GPA shall be computed only with courses taken during high school.

### **5542.3 Online Courses**

An online course qualifies for course credit if it meets the following requirements:

- 5542.3.1 Any K-7 online course or 8-12 course taken for credit toward a diploma must first be approved for credit by the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS).
- 5542.3.2 Online courses offering instruction in courses included within the NC Standard Course of Study must meet the Standard Course of Study competency goals and objectives. Online courses offered for Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate credit must align with nationally validated standards for AP or IB, where available.
- 5542.3.3 Online courses offering instruction in courses not included in the Standard Course of Study curriculum must have rigor, depth and breadth comparable to courses included in the Standard Course of Study. When determining whether an online course has such rigor, depth and breadth, the NCVPS shall consider whether the course meets the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and/or International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) criteria for awarding credit or is offered for credit toward a degree by a University of North Carolina institution, an institution in the North Carolina Community College System, or a regionally accredited college.
- 5542.3.4 Where available, end-of-grade (EOG) tests, end-of-course (EOC) tests, NC Final Exams, CTE assessments, and locally developed post assessments must be used as an indicator of student mastery. The student's base school schedules and administers EOC and EOG tests. Scores for EOCs, NC Final Exams, CTE assessments, and locally developed post assessments shall count as 20% of the final grade for the course. Scores for EOGs in grades 6-8 shall count as 15% of the final grade for math, English Language Arts, and 8th grade Science.

5542.3.5 Enrollment in an online “for credit course” shall count toward satisfying local board requirements related to minimum instructional days, seat time policies, student attendance, athletic, and/or extracurricular obligations.

**5542.4** Credit may not be awarded for school bus driving, office assistance, teacher assistance, or laboratory assistance.

**5542.5 Credit Recovery and Repeating a Course for Credit**

Beginning in the 2011-12 school year, “credit recovery” and “repeating a course for credit” shall be governed by the following definitions and parameters:

5542.5.1 The term “credit recovery” will be used to refer to a block of instruction that is less than the entirety of the Standard Course of Study for that course. Credit recovery, therefore, delivers a subset of the Standard Course of Study or Blueprint of the original course in order to specifically address deficiencies in a student’s mastery of the course and target specific components of a course necessary for completion. The length of credit recovery courses shall be dictated by the skills and knowledge the student needs to recover and not be a fixed length of seat time. When credit recovery is exercised, the original record of the course being completed and failed will remain on the transcript.

5542.5.2 The term “repeating a course for credit” will be used to refer to a high school course repeated via any delivery method when the entire Standard Course of Study for that course is being taught to the student for a second time.

5542.5.3 Students “repeating a course for credit” will receive a grade and take the associated EOC assessment. Those students who have already made a Level III or IV on the associated EOC assessment may elect to either retake the EOC or use the previous passing EOC score as 20% of their final grade. If the student retakes the EOC, the higher of the two scores will be used in the calculation of the final grade.

5542.5.4 The Board shall allow a grade pass or a fail for each credit recovery course. The mark will not affect the student’s GPA.

5542.5.5 A student wishing to modify his or her GPA is to repeat a course for credit and not seek a credit recovery solution.

- 5542.5.6 The Board will not limit the number of credit recovery courses taken by a student prior to graduation.
- 5542.5.7 The EOC test associated with credit recovery should be administered no later than 30 days upon the completion of the credit recovery course.
- 5542.5.8 Beginning with students entering the ninth grade in 2015-2016, upon completion of the repeated course, the new course grade shall replace the previous grade for the course.

**5542.6 Credit by Demonstrated Mastery**

- 5542.6.1 Credit by Demonstrated Mastery is the process by which LEAs shall, based upon a body-of-evidence, award a student credit in a particular course without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for a certain amount of seat time.
- 5542.6.2 “Mastery” is defined as a student’s command of course material at a level that demonstrates a deep understanding of the content standards and application of knowledge.
- 5542.6.3 Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, to inform student placement for the 2014-15 school year, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery may be available for all students in grades 9-12.  
Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, to inform student placement for the 2015-16 school year and thereafter, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery shall be available for all students in grades 9-12 for high school courses and in grades 6-8 for high school courses offered in middle school.
- 5542.6.4 Students shall demonstrate mastery through a multi-phase assessment, consisting of (1) a standard examination, which shall be the EOC/CTE where applicable, or a final exam developed locally and (2) an artifact which requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to the content standards. LEAs may require additional requirements, such as performance tasks.
- 5542.6.5 This multi-phase assessment process builds a body-of-evidence that allows a committee to determine if the student has a deep understanding of the standards for the course or subject area, as defined by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, thereby earning credit for the course without experiencing it in the school setting.

5542.6.6 To earn Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, students must attain minimum scores for the standard examination and artifact creation as established in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Implementation Guide for Credit by Demonstrated Mastery.

5542.6.7 The following courses are excluded from Credit by Demonstrated Mastery:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) work-based learning courses (co-op, internship, apprenticeship)
- CTE courses that have a clinical setting as a requirement of the course, such as ProStart, Early Childhood Education I/II and Nursing Fundamentals
- CTE Advanced Studies courses
- English Language Learner (ELL) courses
- Healthful Living required courses
- AP/IB courses
- Occupational Course of Study (OCS) occupational preparation I, II, III, and IV courses

Cross Reference: Policy 5530, Promotion and Retention of Students; Policy 5540, Graduation Requirements

Legal Reference: State Board of Education Policy GCS-M-001

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