



# Statewide Graduation Standards

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## Commitment to Equity & Excellence

- We believe that in order to remain a **national leader in public education**, it is essential for Massachusetts to establish new statewide graduation standards that uphold **high expectations** for all students and all school districts across the Commonwealth.
- Maintaining a consistent standard for earning a high school diploma across all public high schools helps to ensure **equity and excellence**.
- Since the elimination of the MCAS exams as a graduation requirement, Massachusetts has been left with **no consistent, reliable measure** of students' readiness to excel after graduation.
- M.A.S.S. supports the adoption of a **manageable set of new graduation requirements**, including assessments that measure student mastery and hold educators, schools, and districts accountable for student achievement and growth.
- We wholeheartedly endorse the Graduation Council's aspirational, holistic **Vision of a Massachusetts Graduate**, including the six major competencies needed for success in college, career, and civic life.



## Thoughtful Approach to Design & Implementation

- Superintendents are concerned about the **pace and timeline** for designing and adopting new graduation requirements. Changes of this magnitude require more time for collaboration with stakeholder groups. The implementation of any new graduation requirements should be intentionally phased over an appropriate number of years.
- M.A.S.S. has serious concerns about the **number and breadth** of graduation requirements recommended by the Graduation Council. The requirements students must complete in order to earn a diploma should not be onerous for the students themselves, or for families, educators, and administrators.
- Any new statewide graduation requirements must give schools the **flexibility** they need to meet existing time on learning requirements while providing a full range of courses, experiences, and opportunities to meet students' needs and interests.
- We encourage state officials to consider the proposed components not as a rigid checklist of requirements but rather as a **menu of options** that may offer multiple ways for students to demonstrate readiness to graduate.
- Similarly, any new graduation requirements must include considerations to ensure the success of **students with disabilities, English learners, and students who arrive in the United States** during their high school years.
- The **costs** associated with new graduation requirements are a significant concern for district leaders, who are already facing serious fiscal challenges. We ask the Graduation Council to develop cost estimates for their proposals. Any expenses associated with new requirements should be fully covered by the State, in order to avoid becoming an unfunded mandate.

# Evaluation of Proposed Statewide Graduation Requirements

M.A.S.S. offers the following initial responses to the Graduation Council's proposed components. While we await more detailed plans, we will continue to investigate options and participate in conversations about how to develop a set of requirements that best meet the needs of students, families, educators, employers, and communities.

Graduation Council Proposal	M.A.S.S. Response / Proposal
 <p><b>Rigorous Program of Study</b></p>	<p>It is important for the state to maintain a consistent standard for the skills and knowledge students should acquire in order to earn a high school diploma. We recommend redefining and updating MassCore to give schools and districts flexibility in developing a rigorous program of study that meets the needs, interests, and goals of their students.</p> <p>Position: <b>Support, with adjustments and flexibility</b></p>
 <p><b>End-of-Course Assessments</b></p>	<p>Our members have expressed significant concerns about state-administered end-of-course (EOC) assessments, particularly because they may limit schools' flexibility in designing a program of study. Instead, we propose a limited number of year-end assessments that are not tied to particular courses but rather measure students' mastery of a set of "power standards" that represent the most important content in any given subject matter.</p> <p>Position: <b>Explore Alternatives, including "power standards" assessment</b></p>
 <p><b>Capstone or Portfolio</b></p>	<p>Portfolios and capstone projects provide students valuable opportunities to demonstrate mastery and deeper learning in subjects of interest, and we support the state developing models that districts can customize locally. We encourage school districts to include this component as a local requirement, but we do not believe it should be included as a state requirement.</p> <p>Position: <b>Leave to Local Discretion, with state guidance</b></p>
 <p><b>Individual Career &amp; Academic Plan</b></p>	<p>MyCAP and similar frameworks help students design a course of study aligned with their personal and career goals. We fully support the use of these tools but have concerns about the capacity of school staff to develop and monitor the plans for every student.</p> <p>Position: <b>Leave to Local Discretion, with state guidance</b></p>
 <p><b>Applications for Student Aid</b></p>	<p>Requiring every high school student to complete the FAFSA or MAFFSA presents a significant staffing challenge and administrative responsibility for school districts. We have concerns about mandating these applications, given the growing reluctance among many families to disclose personal information to government agencies. We encourage the higher education community to embed this important step into the college application process.</p> <p>Position: <b>Omit from Graduation Requirements</b></p>
 <p><b>Financial Literacy</b></p>	<p>We applaud the Council's recommendation for students to learn how to manage their finances wisely, and we support the inclusion of some financial literacy instruction in high school. We encourage state officials to develop multiple ways for schools to offer this content, including semester- or year-long courses, as well as shorter learning modules.</p> <p>Position: <b>Support, with adjustments and flexibility</b></p>
 <p><b>Seals of Distinction</b></p>	<p>We fully support state Seals of Distinction and other endorsements, including certifications in career and technical education (CTE) fields, as additional ways for students to demonstrate mastery of particular subjects and skills beyond those required for a diploma.</p> <p>Position: <b>Support, as options for eligible students</b></p>