

Diploma Options

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# Overview

Welcome to the Virginia Diploma Options Online presentation, created by the Virginia Department of Education. It is intended to provide an overview of available diplomas for high school students in Virginia.

## Navigation

For easier navigation, you may choose which diploma or topic you wish to explore further. To do so, click on the topic or diploma of interest from the [table of contents](#_Table_of_Contents) or follow the links at the end of each topic.

## This Presentation will provide

This presentation will provide an overview of diploma options in Virginia and an explanation of each diploma.

## Important Terms

Before we begin, there are several words or terms that are used when individuals talk about diplomas. Two of these words are Standard Credits and Verified Credits. **Standard Credits** are awarded for successfully completing a course. **Verified Credits** are awarded when the student successfully completes a course and achieves a passing score on the associated the SOL, Standards of Learning test, or a substitute assessment approved by the Board of Education. When earned these credits go towards the student’s earning their chosen diploma. For students who have Individualized Education Programs, also known as IEPs, an important term is **FAPE** **or Free Appropriate Public Education**. FAPE refers to The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, which states, each student who has a disability and needs special education and related services will receive a free and appropriate public education. Two other important terms that should be reviewed are virtual course and Career and Technical Education or CTE credential. A **virtual course** is a class that is delivered virtually through an electronic device such as a computer. **CTE Credentials** are credentials earned, generally through testing, that verify skill mastery, educational attainment, and the authority to perform a task or operation.

## For the Student

Let’s begin. Choosing a diploma is an important decision. There are three steps that you, as the student, should consider. One, set goals, where do you see yourself after high school, in what job or careers do you picture yourself? Two, do a little research. Which diploma choice will help you in reaching those goals? Three, network! Find who can assist you with meeting your goals.

## For Parent/Guardians

Parents and/or guardians should go through these same steps for choosing a diploma. It is never too early to begin. Even the earliest decisions at the IEP table affect students later on. First, set goals. What are your hopes for your student? Next, do your research. Which diploma will assist your student in reaching those goals, and what accommodations will **hinder or assist** your student in meeting those goals? Next, begin to network by asking who can assist you and your student in meeting those goals?

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Three Diploma Options

There are three diploma options available for those who are or were first-time ninth graders during the 2013-2014 school year and beyond. Those three options are the Advanced Studies Diploma, Standard Diploma, and the Applied Studies Diploma.



## Advanced Studies Diploma

The first diploma we will discuss is the Advanced Studies Diploma. The Advanced Studies diploma requires 26 standard units of credit and 9 verified credits. For students who see themselves attending a four year college such as JMU or VA Tech this diploma would be very helpful. For students with IEPs it should be noted, after graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma, students will no longer qualify for free appropriate public education or FAPE, and will not be able to receive ongoing services through the public school system after graduation.



## Standard Diploma

The Standard Diploma requires 22 standard units of credit and 6 verified credits. Although both the Advanced Studies and Standard Diploma are designed to prepare students to be college and career ready, this diploma allows students the opportunity to attend 2-year colleges including community colleges and some 4-year colleges. Also, for students that would like to master a trade or enroll in an apprenticeship such as welding or cosmetology this is the diploma that is often requested as a minimum requirement. For students with IEPs, it should be noted that after graduating with a Standard Diploma, students will **no longer qualify for FAPE** and will not be able to receive ongoing services through the public school system.

## Additional Requirements

An additional requirement for students earning an Advanced Studies or a Standard Diploma is that they must complete one virtual course.



If you are earning a Standard Diploma you must also earn a career and technical education credential.



For questions regarding either of these requirements, consult your school counselor.



## Applied Studies Diploma

The Applied Studies Diploma is for students who have completed the requirements of their IEP and who do not meet the requirements for other diplomas. Students who earn this diploma will be eligible for ongoing services, FAPE, through the age of 21.

## Who Is My Social Capital?

In addition to discovering your future job goal and researching diplomas it is also important to seek out and network with those who can best assist you in reaching these goals. This network of people is sometimes referred to as “social capital”. Who makes up your social capital? Who can you network with to discuss and plan which diploma will assist you in getting where you would like to be in the future? Some examples of individuals who can provide knowledge and assistance in these areas are your school counselor, special education teacher, general education teacher, an employer, and parents and/or guardians. Do you have examples of other people that could assist you in this process? With the assistance of your new found network and social capital you will be better able to address what is needed to accomplish your overall goalParent/Caregiver Social Capital

For family and/or guardians forming social capital is also extremely important. There are a number of parent organizations, professionals, and agencies who can help. Some examples are the Center on Family Involvement, Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center also referred to as PEATC, the members of the IEP team or 504 committee, the Local Parent Resource Center, and the Department of Education’s Parent Ombudsman. 

## For the Latest Information

Credit requirements are often subject to change. For the latest information and changes regarding credit requirements be sure to check [www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/) for updated information and routinely visit your local school counselor.

An example of a recent change in credit requirements is beginning with students entering ninth grade for the first time in 2016-17, students must complete training in Emergency First Aid, CPR, and use of an Automated External Defribillator, AED, before graduation; some students may receive a waiver through the IEP process.



## Congratulations!

Congratulations, you have finished the basics! Click  [continue](#_Advanced_Studies_Diploma) if you would like to learn about earning the Advanced Studies Diploma. If you would like to learn about another diploma or topic, click on the topic of your choice in the [table of contents](#_Table_of_Contents).

# Advanced Studies Diploma

This presentation will cover details of the Advanced Studies Diploma.

## This Presentation Will Include

This presentation will include Information regarding:

* Standard credits
* Verified credits
* Frequently asked questions
* Available resources

## Standard Credits

 Credit requirements depend on when students begin HS for the first time, always check credit requirements for recent changes. Standard credits are awarded for successfully completing a course. Students must earn four standard credits in each of the core subject areas this includes English, Mathematics, Laboratory Sciences, and History and Social Sciences; three credits in Foreign Language which can be satisfied by taking three years of one language or two years of two languages. American Sign Language can be used as a Foreign Language credit if available at the student’s school. In addition, students must earn two credits in Health and PE, one credit in Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education. If a student was first time ninth grader during 2003-2004 to 2010-2011 students must also earn two credits from electives of the student’s choice for a total of twenty -four standard credits. If a student was a first time ninth grader in fall 2011 and beyond they must also earn one credit in Economics and Personal Finance, and three credits from electives of the student’s choice for a total of twenty-six credits.

Table 1, Standard Credit Requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma

| Subject/Discipline Area | 2003-2004 to 2010 - 2011 | Fall 2011 and Beyond |
| --- | --- | --- |
| English | 4 | 4 |
| Mathematics | 4 | 4 |
| Laboratory Science | 4 | 4 |
| History and Social Sciences | 4 | 4 |
| Health and Physical Education | 2 | 2 |
| Foreign Languages | 3 | 3 |
| Fine Arts and Career and Technical Education | 1 | 1 |
| Economics and Personal Finance  |  | 1 |
| Electives | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 24 | 26 |

## Verified Credits

A student must also earn nine verified credits. Verified credits are awarded when the student successfully completes a course and achieves a passing score on the associated SOL test or a substitute assessment approved by the Board of Education. Two verified credits must be earned in each of the core subjects: English, Mathematics, Laboratory Science, and History and Social Sciences. One verified credit must be earned through a student selected test.

 Table 2, Verified Credit Requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma

| Subject/Discipline Area | Verified Credits |
| --- | --- |
| English | 2 |
| Mathematics  | 2 |
| Laboratory Science | 2 |
| History and Social Sciences | 2 |
| Student Selected Test | 1 |
| Total | 9 |

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following are answers to frequently asked questions regarding the Advanced Studies Diploma and Verified Credits.

* **Are students who fail end-of-course tests permitted to retake the tests?**

Students may retake end-of-course tests as often as a school division's testing schedule permits. Students who score within twenty-five points of passing or have extenuating circumstances may be eligible to retake a test before the next scheduled administration.

* **What is a student selected test?**

A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, career or technical education, economics or other areas. Please contact your school counselor for more information.

* **Are there substitute tests for SOLS?**

Yes. For the complete list of tests follow the [link](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/) or visit the Virginia Department of Education’s web page at [doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov).

## Resources

There are several resources to access more information regarding the Advanced Studies Diploma.

* To learn more about credits, visit [Virginia Department of Education - course and credit requirements](http://doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/advanced_studies.shtml)
* To learn more about substitute assessments please visit the [Virginia Department of Education’s list of substitute tests](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/)
* For a list of frequently asked questions, visit the [Virginia Department of Education’s FAQ page](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/faq.shtml)

Contact your local school counselor for any questions regarding the details in earning an Advanced Studies Diploma.

## Congratulations!

Congratulations, you have finished the section on the Advanced Studies Diploma! Would you like to learn about earning a Standard Diploma? Click [continue](#_Standard_Diploma) to learn more. If you would like to learn about another diploma or topic, click on the topic of your choice from the [table of contents](#_Table_of_Contents).

# Standard Diploma

## This Presentation Will Review

This presentation will review details of the Standard Diploma. This will include information covering:

* Standard credits
* Verified credits
* Credit accommodations
* Frequently asked questions
* Available resources

## Standard Credits

To earn a Standard Diploma, students must earn twenty-two standard credits. Standard credits are awarded for successfully completing a course. Credit requirements depend on when students begin HS for the first time. Always check credit requirements for recent changes. Students must earn four standard credits in English and three credits each in Mathematics, Laboratory Sciences, and History and Social Sciences. In addition, if a student was a first time ninth grader in 2003 – 2004 to 2010-2011, a student must earn one credit in Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education and earn six credits from electives of the student’s choice for a total of twenty-two. For those students who were first time ninth graders in fall 2011 or beyond they must earn two credits in Health and PE and two credits in Foreign Language Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education. Credits earned for this requirement shall include one credit in fine or performing arts or career and technical education. For foreign language credits, American Sign Language can be used if available at the student’s school. In addition students must earn one credit in Economics and Personal Finance and four credits from electives of the student’s choice for a total of twenty-two credits.

Table 1, Standard Credit Requirements for the Standard Diploma

| Subject/Discipline Area | Fall 2003 to Spring 2011 | Fall 2011 and Beyond |
| --- | --- | --- |
| English | 4 | 4 |
| Mathematics | 3 | 3 |
| Laboratory Science | 3 | 3 |
| History and Social Sciences | 3 | 3 |
| Health and Physical Education | 2 | 2 |
| Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education | 1 |  |
| Foreign Language, Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education |  | 2 |
| Economics and Personal Finance  |  | 1 |
| Electives | 6 | 4 |
| Total | 22 | 22 |

## Verified Credits

To earn a Standard Diploma, students must also earn six verified credits. Verified credits are awarded when the student successfully completes a course and achieves a passing score on the associated SOL test or a substitute assessment approved by the Board of Education. Two verified credits must be earned in English. One verified credit must be earned in Mathematics, Laboratory Science, and History and Social Sciences. One verified credit must be earned through a student selected test.

Table 2, Verified Credit Requirements for the Standard Diploma

| Subject/Discipline Area | Verified Credits |
| --- | --- |
| English | 2 |
| Mathematics  | 2 |
| Laboratory Science | 2 |
| History and Social Sciences | 2 |
| Student Selected Test | 1 |
| Total | 9 |

## Credit Accommodations

When earning a Standard Diploma credit accommodations are available. Credit accommodations provide additional pathways for students to earn credits required to graduate with a Standard Diploma. These pathways are not new, they have merely been expanded.

## Accommodation Categories

Certain credit accommodations are available to all students. It’s helpful to group credit accommodations in categories – we’ll call them buckets. These buckets include assessments, locally awarded verified credits or LAVC, and the division of coursework.



## Assessments - All Students

ALL students may use substitute assessments in place of the EOC or end of course standard of learning, SOL assessment. These tests change from time to time, so always visit [www.doe.virginia.gov for](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/) the most current list of substitute assessments. Click on the [link](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/substitute_tests_verified_credit.pdf) for more information.

Here is an example, a student who is unable to pass the English Reading EOC SOL, may take ACT’s WorkKeys – Reading for Information test and if a student cannot pass the English Writing EOC SOL they may use ACT’s WorkKeys Business Writing test.

## Assessments - Eligible Students with IEP/504

A student with a disability, who has an IEP or 504, who is eligible for credit accommodations may also use the Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test, known as the VMAST, as a substitute test in the areas of Algebra I and Reading. The decision is made by the IEP team or 504 committee, and the rationale and decision must be documented. Written consent of the parent, guardian, or student, when appropriate, is required. You can find a form, if needed, on the Credit Accommodations page at [www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml). Click on the [link](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml) for more information.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for a credit accommodation, the IEP team or 504 committee must consider the following:

* That the student has a current IEP or 504 plan with standards based content goals.
* That the student has a disability that impedes him or her from achieving and progressing in accordance with grade level expectations, but is learning on grade level content.
* That the student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level Standards of Learning, SOL, content and to show progress.
* That, based on multiple objective measures of past performance, the student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame.
* That the student must be working towards a standard diploma.
* That the student must be working towards a standard diploma.

## Locally Awarded Verified Credits – All Students

All students may appeal to their local school board for a locally awarded verified credit or LAVC in the content areas of Science, History and Social Sciences.

## Qualifications

To qualify for LAVC students must:

* Pass the high school course
* Score within 375 and 399 on any administration of the SOL test after taking it at least twice
* Demonstrate achievement in the academic content through an appeal process which is administered at the local level



## LAVC – Students with an IEP/504

A student with a disability, who has an IEP or 504, may also be considered for a LAVC in the areas of English, Reading, and Writing, as well as mathematics.

 Remember, to be eligible for a credit accommodation, the IEP team or 504 committee must consider:

* That the student has a current IEP or 504 plan with standards based content goals.
* That the student has a disability that impedes him or her from achieving and progressing in accordance with grade level expectations, but is learning on grade level content.
* That the student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level Standards of Learning, SOL, content and to show progress.
* That, based on multiple objective measures of past performance, the student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame.
* That the student must be working for a standard diploma.

## Qualifications

To be considered for a LAVC in Mathematics and English Reading and Writing the student must:

* Pass the high school course
* Score within 375-399 on any administration of the SOL test after taking it at least twice
* Demonstrate achievement in the academic content through an appeal process which is administered at the local level



## Division of Coursework – Economics

Accommodations are available for Division of Coursework. Economics and Personal Finance, course code 6120, is required for all students to graduate with a standard diploma.

## Eligible Students

A student with a disability who is eligible for credit accommodations can replace the Economics and Personal Finance, course number 6120, with Personal Living and Finances course code 3120. The student will need to also earn three standard credits in the content area of History and Social Sciences before graduation. By doing this they have covered the objectives required for economics. Personal Living and Finances also covers the 21 workplace skills for the Commonwealth so when the student successfully completes the class they can take the Workplace Readiness Skills test to earn a CTE credential.

Remember, to be eligible for a credit accommodation, the IEP team or 504 committee must consider:

* A student must have a current IEP or 504 plan with standards based content goals.
* A student has a disability that precludes him or her from achieving and progressing commensurate with grade level expectations, but is learning on grade level content.
* A student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level Standards of Learning, SOL, content and to show progress.
* Based on multiple objective measures of past performance, student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame.
* The student must be working for a standard diploma.

## Two-part Courses

Some courses may be delivered in two parts over a longer period of time. A good example is Algebra I. For many students, providing Algebra I in two parts provides students a little longer to learn the content.

For a student without a disability, part one equals an elective credit and Part two equals a standard math credit. A student must complete the entire sequence in order to earn the math standard credit. For a student with a disability, who has an IEP or 504, and meets the requirements for a credit accommodation, Part one equals one standard math credit and Part two equals one standard math credit. It is important to note the rigor of Algebra is not altered only the length of time a student is given to master the content. In addition, students with and without disabilities might benefit from this division of coursework so there is no need to create a segregated course. A student with a disability, may move on to Geometry and take it as one class earning the third math credit or in two parts with part one earning them an elective credit and part two earning the last math credit required for the standard diploma.

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following are answers to frequently asked questions regarding the Standard Diploma and Credit Accommodations.

* **Are students who fail end-of-course tests permitted to retake the tests?**

Students may retake end of course tests needed to earn verified units of credit for graduation. Students who score between 375-399 on a test are eligible for an expedited retake and may retake a test before the next scheduled test administration.

* **What is a student selected test?**

A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, career or technical education, economics or other areas. Please contact your school counselor for more information.

* **Are there substitute tests for SOLS?**

Yes. For the complete list of tests click on the displayed link or visit [doe.virginia.gov.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov)

## Resources

There are several resources to access more information regarding the Standard Diploma.

* To learn more about Credits visit [Virginia Department of Education’s course and credit requirements.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/standard.shtml)
* To learn more about Virginia substitute assessments, visit [Virginia Department of Education’s Substitute Assessments list.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/substitute_tests_verified_credit.pdf)
* To learn more about Credit Accommodations please visit [Virginia Department of Education’s credit accommodation page.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml)
* Information on frequently asked questions can be accessed at [Virginia Department of Education’s FAQ page](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/faq.shtml).

Your local school counselor is a wonderful resource as well for any questions regarding the details in earning a Standard Diploma.

## Continue?

Would you like to learn about the Applied Studies Diploma? Click [continue](#_Applied_Studies_Diploma) to learn more. If you would like to learn about another diploma or topic, click on the topic of your choice in the [table of contents.](#_Table_of_Contents)

# Applied Studies Diploma

## This Presentation Will Review

This presentation will review details of the Applied Studies Diploma. This includes:

* Requirements
* An overview of the curriculum map
* Available resources

## Credit Requirements

To earn an Applied Studies diploma, students must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and complete their IEP requirements. There are no standard or verified credits needed for this degree.

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## VDOE Curriculum Map

The VDOE in collaboration with education professionals, parents, employers and youth has developed a curriculum map. This map is made up of domains, competencies and skills. This map helps guide teachers and informs parents and others about what the student has accomplished. Some students will earn this diploma even though they have taken classes in the general education curriculum and have earned verified credits. Other students will begin their high school education working for the applied studies diploma. The domains are English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Independent Living, and Employment. Competencies are aligned with workplace readiness skills and are identified upon the relevance and application in the workforce and community.



## To Get the Latest News

To get the latest news regarding requirements for the Applied Studies diploma visit [Virginia Department of Education’s webpage on the Applied Studies Diploma.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/other_diploma.shtml) For general information regarding the Applied Studies Diploma visit your local school counselor.

## Continue?

Would you like to learn about Assessments? Click [continue](#_Assessments) to learn more. If you would like to learn about another diploma or topic, click on the topic of your choice in the [table of contents.](#_Table_of_Contents)

# Assessments

## This Presentation will Review

This presentation will review assessments. This includes:

* General information
* Alternative and alternate assessments
* Substitute assessments
* Resources

## General Information

Here is some general information regarding Virginia assessments and verified credits. Alternative, alternate, and substitute assessments can be used in certain circumstances to earn verified credits towards diplomas. Not all assessments can be used towards verified credits. Before agreeing with your IEP team to take alternative or alternate assessments, be sure that the assessment you choose will allow you to earn verified credits if pursuing a standard or advanced studies diploma.





## Verified Credits and the VAAP

Certain assessments can be used towards verified credits. The Virginia Alternate Achievement Program or VAAP cannot be used towards verified credits. If earning an Advanced Studies Diploma or Standard Diploma is desired taking VAAPs even at earlier grades is not recommended. The VAAP evaluates the performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities on the standards. These standards have been reduced in complexity and depth and are called the aligned standards.

## Virginia Assessments

Three examples of Virginia Assessments are: the Virginia Modified Achievement Standard Test or VMAST, Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program or VSEP, and Virginia Alternative Achievement Program or VAAP.

**VMAST** is an online grade level alternate assessment, available for students with disabilities working for a Standard diploma. This assessment is available in high school for the end of course Algebra I and Reading. The VMAST is considered a credit accommodation; [revisit the part of the document discussing credit accommodations under the Standard Diploma topic for further information](#_Credit_Accommodations).

**The VSEP i**s an alternative method of assessing a student who is not able to participate in the test even with accommodations. VSEP allows students to earn verified credits towards advanced or standard diplomas. VSEPS are available for any course in which there is an end of course SOL.

**The VAAP** is for students who are considered to have significant cognitive disabilities. Students who are given these assessments do not earn verified credits towards diplomas.

 For all three of these assessments, students must be found eligible by their IEP team or 504 committee. The parent, guardian, or age of majority student (18 or over) must give written documented consent.

## Substitute Assessments

Substitute assessments are also available to all students. Students may opt to take a test on the list of substitute tests instead of the related SOL test. Students still receive verified credits if they pass the substitute tests. A list of these tests can be found at [Virginia Department of Education’s website –doe.virginia.gov.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/substitute_tests_verified_credit_2014-15.pdf)

 Students who earn a standard credit in a Career and Technical Education course and pass a Board-approved industry certification may be eligible for up to two verified credits. Please see the [link](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/career_technical/path_industry_certification/index.shtml) for the specific criteria related to earning substitute verified credits in this manner.

## Resources

There are several resources to access more information regarding Virginia assessments.

* To learn more about Alternative or Alternate assessments, visit [Virginia Department of Education’s webpage on Assessments.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/alternative_assessments/)
* To learn more Substitute Assessments, visit [Virginia Department of Education’s webpage on substitute assessments for verified credits.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/)
* For a list of Substitute Assessments visit [Virginia Department of Education’s list of substitute assessments for verified credits.](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/substitute_tests_verified_credit_2014-15.pdf)

Your local school counselor is a wonderful resource as well for any questions regarding alternative or alternate assessments or substitute assessments.



# Thank You!

Thank You for participating in this presentation. Please visit our website for additional information, professional development modules, and staff contact information.

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