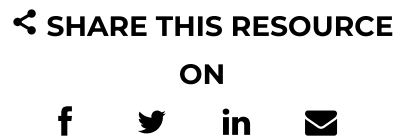




RESOURCE TITLE:

50-State Comparison: High School Graduation Requirements

This resource provides an overview of state high school graduation requirements. Nearly all states require students to complete a certain number of units per course to earn a standard diploma in the state; but courses, units and assessments outside of exit exams and diploma options vary. Education Commission of the States researched a range of policies — including state statute, state regulations, department guidelines, state standards and state board rules — to create this 50-State Comparison.



Click on the questions below for 50-State Comparisons showing how all states approach specific policies. Or choose to view a specific state's approach by going to the **individual state profiles** page.

50-State Comparisons

1. **What are the state's course requirements for high school graduation?**
2. **What are the state's non-course requirements for high school graduation?**

3. How many total course units does the state require for high school graduation?

4. What are the other diploma types offered by the state?

5. Citations

Key terms used in this resource:

Standard diploma type. A standard diploma type refers to the minimum requirements necessary to earn a diploma in a state. States may offer additional diploma types or endorsements.

Multiple options. Some states require a certain number of units among a group of course options. For example, a state may require two units from a list that includes foreign language, fine arts, performing arts, and career and technical education.

Endorsement. An endorsement is a credential added to a standard diploma that indicates additional requirements were met. Some examples of endorsements states use are for STEM or career and technical education.

Carnegie unit. A basic credit-hour measurement.

This 50-State Comparison does not include:

Exit exam requirements. Some states require students to achieve a minimum score on subject area assessment(s), in addition to completing course requirements.

Naturalization exam requirements. An increasing number of states require all students to correctly answer a certain number of questions from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Naturalization Test as a condition of high school graduation.

Competency-based alternatives to Carnegie units. These policies vary significantly, with those at one end limiting students to demonstrating competency in a foreign language to those at the other end completely eliminating references to Carnegie unit in statute or regulation.

Key Takeaways

- Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia have minimum statewide high school graduation requirements. Colorado, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania leave high school graduation


requirements up to local districts; but all three have statewide assessment or recommended graduation requirements.

- Sixteen states offer diploma options other than the standard diploma type, and six states offer multiple standard diploma options.
- Of the states that specify it, the total units required varies from 13 to 24.
- Seventeen states specify non-course requirements as a condition of graduation in state policy.

Related Resources

View state legislation from our [State Education Policy Tracking](#) resource (select High School issue and Graduation Requirements sub-issue).

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