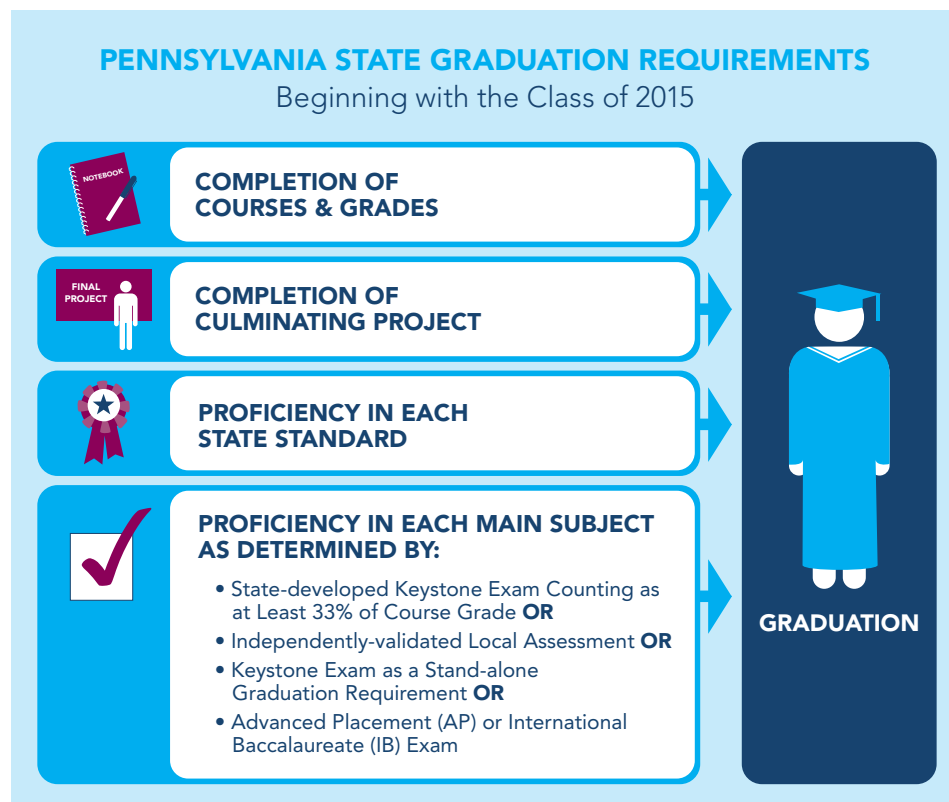


PENNSYLVANIA'S NEW STATE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

About the New Requirements

Beginning with the class of 2015, a new system of high school graduation requirements will help ensure that Pennsylvania students perform at levels equivalent to their peers nationally.



Why the Change?

Two-thirds of all new jobs created in the United States require at least some postsecondary education, according to a 2010 study by Georgetown University. That's why it's critical that we prepare all students to graduate high school with the potential to continue their studies and grow their skills. The new system of graduation requirements will help guarantee that earning a Pennsylvania diploma means students have the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. By meeting high, consistent standards, students in Pennsylvania will leave high school prepared for the next phase of life, whether that means college or the workplace. Underpinning this effort are Pennsylvania's Common Core State Standards, recently adopted to give students, parents, and teachers a clear understanding of what students need to learn.

Keystone Exams

An important component of the new graduation requirements is the introduction of the state-developed Keystone Exam as one option for meeting requirements. The end-of-course Keystone Exam will be developed in 10 core subjects: *Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, English Composition, Literature, Civics and Government, U.S. History, and World History*. These exams can replace locally-developed final exams in these courses and will serve as the state's high school-level measure for compliance under *No Child Left Behind*.

Counting as 33 percent of course grade

- If a district chooses to use a Keystone Exam as part of the course grade for purposes of meeting state graduation requirements, the score will count for at least 33 percent of the grade.
- Students may retake a Keystone Exam to raise their score; and, if a student has not achieved proficiency after two attempts, he/she can complete a project-based alternative to demonstrate his/her knowledge in the subject matter.

Stand-alone graduation requirement

- Some districts may choose to require proficiency on a Keystone Exam as a stand-alone graduation option. This approach allows the district complete discretion in how to weight the assessment for local course grades; in other words, the 33 percent weight is not required.
- Districts that require proficiency on the Keystone Exam will be deemed approved for validation requirements in that content area.

Five Year Keystone Exam Timeline (Field Test and Operational)

Course	Field Test	Available For All Schools
Algebra I, Biology, Literature	Fall 2010	Spring 2011
Algebra II, Geometry, English Composition	Spring 2011	Winter 2011-2012
U.S. History	Fall 2012	Spring 2013
Chemistry, Civics and Government, World History	Spring 2015	TBD

Local Assessments

Another option for districts is to administer their own locally-developed, independently-validated assessment.

- Local assessments must be as rigorous as the Keystone Exams, aligned with the state's academic standards, and administered to all students.
- Specific details and criteria concerning the validation process will be made available by spring 2011. The state will pay half the cost to validate a local assessment(s).

AP/IB Exams

Students eligible to take an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Exam will fulfill the new graduation requirements by obtaining a high score on either exam in a related content area.

For more information, please visit: [visit *http://www.pdesas.org/Assessment/Graduation*](http://www.pdesas.org/Assessment/Graduation) or contact us at [*ra-gradreq@state.pa.us*](mailto:ra-gradreq@state.pa.us)