

POLICY SERVICES ADVISORY

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Policy Advisory Discussion

In 2024, the New Mexico Legislature passed, and the Governor signed HB 171 which changes the requirements for a student to graduate and receive a New Mexico diploma beginning with the class that starts Ninth grade in the 2025-2026 school year. The new legislation directed the Public Education Department (PED) to enact rules to implement graduation requirements by December 31, 2024. PED accordingly amended its existing regulation which addresses graduation requirements with the amendments taking effect January 28, 2025.¹

The new law retains the minimum requirement that students pass 24 units (two semesters or an academic year) in order to graduate but alters a number of the specific minimum course requirements. The highlights of the new law are as follows:

- **Career Technical Education and Work-Based Learning:** Department-approved, work-based learning and career technical education qualifying in the core content areas of English, mathematics, and science.
- **Requires the Development of Graduate Profiles.** A graduate profile is defined as a document that a school district uses to specify the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal competencies that students should have when they graduate. The graduate profile is specific to each community and articulates the core academic competencies and subjects that are key to graduates, post-high school success, and required units should align with the graduate profile.
- **Local School Board Choice of Two Units:** Two (2) units set by each local school board or governing body that meet department academic content and performance standards.

¹ The new law amends NMSA 22-13-1.1, which addresses graduation requirements, and repeals NMSA 22-13-1.2 which had required “demonstrations of competency” (i.e., essentially, end of course exams) in math, reading and language arts, writing, social studies, and science) to earn a diploma of excellence.

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- **Algebra 2:** Removes Algebra 2 as a requirement, although it must be offered as a mathematics course.
- **Credits Prior to High School:** Units in Health, Algebra 1, and Geometry prior to enrolling in high school shall satisfy unit requirements to earn a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence.
- **Honors/AP, Dual Credit, Distance Learning:** Removal of the required Advanced Placement, honors, dual credit, or distance learning units, although a student’s opportunity to take these courses shall not be affected.
- **Student Choice Two-Unit Elective Pathway:** Requirement that electives include a two-unit pathway concentration of the student's choice in a language other than English, including American sign language; fine arts; health; military career preparation; a career technical education program; or community learning, a capstone course, or work-based learning; provided that financial literacy and computer science shall be offered as electives.
- **Removes the Requirement for Demonstrations of Competency:** Removes the requirement of demonstrations of competency in five core subject areas (i.e., mathematics, reading and language arts, writing, social studies, and science). Although high school students must

still participate in the state's required Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) assessments, the *additional* requirement of demonstrating competency in the five core subject areas is no longer necessary. Individual school districts may continue to require demonstrations of competency but it is not required by law.

The new law does not change the graduation requirements for students currently in high school and the prohibition on changing graduation requirements for a student once that student begins ninth grade remains in effect. Individual districts retain the authority to require more units to graduate than are required by law.

The amendments to existing law require changes to two NMSBA Policy Service policies—I-4700 IIE and I-7350 IKF—as further described below.

Policy Advisory 261 – IIE – School Schedules and Course Loads.

This policy is amended solely to include the requirement that interim next-step plans for students align with the district’s graduate profile.

Policy Advisory 262 – IKF – Graduation Requirements.

For clarity purposes, this policy only addresses the graduation requirements for students entering ninth grade in the 2025-2026 school year and after. It does not address the requirements for your existing students. As a result, districts should make sure to maintain in files the graduation requirements in existence when all current students entered ninth grade.

The NMSBA Graduation Requirements policy only requires the minimum 24 units required by law and, with the exception of the two local units addressed below, the number of such units and their descriptions as stated in the policy match the minimum requirements of the statute.

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IMPORTANT NOTE: As stated in the Discussion, above, the new law provides that two of the 24 required units be determined by the local school board. Provided those two units meet PED academic content and performance standards, it is entirely within the discretion of each local board to determine the two local units that it will impose as graduation requirements. For purposes of creating a default policy, Policy Service has added those two units to the required number of Electives. Consequently, though the law require 5.5 units of Electives the policy states that 7.5 units of Electives are required. In considering the adoption of this policy, local boards should determine how to allocate the two discretionary units and—if they do not apply them to Electives—state how they want them allocated and modify their policies accordingly.

Links to the statute and regulation, as amended, are provided below.

22-13-1.1 NMSA (1978):

<https://nmonesource.com/nmos/nmsa/en/item/4368/index.do#!fragment/zoupio-Toc193369882/BQCwhgziBcwMYgK4DsDWszlQewE4BUBTADwBdoAvbRABwEtsBaAfX2zgEYBOAZh4DYuADiEAmAJQAaZNIKEIARUSFcAT2gByDZliEwuBEpXqtOvQZABIPKQBC6gEoBRADJ OAagEEAcgGEnkqRgAEbQpOzi4kA>

6.29.1.11 NMAC

<https://nmonesource.com/nmos/nmac/en/item/18063/index.do#!fragment/zoupio-Toc188979921/BQCwhgziBcwMYgK4DsDWszlQewE4BUBTADwBdoAvbRABwEtsBaAfX2zgEYAOlgTgHZevAEwcAlABpk2UoQgBFRIVwBPaAHJ1EiITC4Ei5Ws3bd+kAGU8pAEJqASgFEAMo4BqAQQByAYUcTSMAAjaFJ2MTEgA>

If you have any questions, or requests call Policy Services at (505) 469-0193 or e-mail Dan Castille, Policy Services Director at rdcpolicyservices@outlook.com.

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Advisory 261

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STUDENT SCHEDULES AND COURSE LOADS

The Board requires that each student at the end of grades eight (8) through eleven (11) develop an interim next-step plan that sets forth the coursework for the grades remaining until high school completion or transition following high school. The ~~Board~~ Superintendent shall ensure each student ~~has the opportunity to develop~~ a plan based upon reports of college and workplace readiness assessments and other factors and be reasonably informed about:

- Curricular and course options, including:
 - honors or advanced placement courses, international baccalaureate courses, dual-credit courses, distance learning courses, career clusters or remediation programs that college and workplace readiness assessments indicate to be appropriate;
- Opportunities available that lead to different post-high-school options; and
- Alternative opportunities available if the student does not finish a planned curriculum.

~~The~~ Each year's plan shall be aligned to the graduate profile of the school district, shall be completed on a New Mexico Public Education Department-approved template and comply with department regulations, shall explain any differences from previous interim next-step plans, shall be filed with the principal of the student's high school and shall be signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student. An individualized education program (IEP) filed with the principal that meets the applicable transition and procedural requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act for qualified students shall satisfy the next-step requirements for that student.

It shall be the responsibility of the principal, with the cooperation of assigned counselors, to assist students in the scheduling of coursework. All students in the high school are required to enroll in four (4) classes unless excused by the school administrator.

Dual Credit

Dual credit programs allow high school students to enroll in college courses prior to graduation and receive high school and college credit simultaneously for elective courses approved by the school or core courses verified as meeting Public Education Department standards and benchmarks when these courses are aligned to meet postsecondary requirements also. To offer dual credit in academic and career technical courses the District must execute a dual credit agreement with a qualified postsecondary institution. Such agreement must address the components found in 6.30.7.8 NMAC and be signed by both entities.

Adopted: date of manual adoption

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LEGAL REF.: 22-13-1.1 NMSA (1978)
6.29.1.11 NMAC
6.30.7.8 NMAC

CROSS REF.: IKF - Graduation Requirements

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Advisory 262

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GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Regular Education

For Students Entering Ninth grade ~~class of 2009-2010~~ in the 2025-2026 school Year and thereafter.

A minimum of twenty-four (24) units of credit aligned to the state academic content and performance standards as listed below are required for graduation ~~for those beginning with students entering the ninth (9th) grade class of 2009-2010 in the 2025-2026 school year.~~ A student may receive a high school diploma of excellence after having demonstrated accomplishment of the standards ~~or a portfolio of standards-based indicators in mathematics, reading and language arts, writing, social studies, and science adopted by the Secretary of Public Education.~~ A student may also receive the Seal of Bilingual-Biliteracy on the diploma of excellence and have it noted on the school transcript by studying and attaining proficiency in a language other than English. ~~If a student exits from the school system at the end of grade twelve (12) without having satisfied the above requirements, the student shall receive an appropriate state certificate indicating the number of credits earned and the grade completed. If within five (5) years after a student exits from the school system, the student satisfies the requirements listed, the student may receive a high school diploma of excellence.~~ Graduation requirements shall not be changed for a student entering the ninth (9th) grade from the requirements specified in law at the time the student enrolled in the ninth (9th) grade. The word "department" as used in this policy means the New Mexico Public Education Department.

Graduation requirements may be met as follows:

- By successful completion of subject area course requirements.
- ~~By mastery of the standards or a portfolio of standards-based indicators adopted by the Secretary of Public Education in accordance with 6.19.7 NMAC and other competency requirements for the subject as determined by the Board.~~
- By earning credits through correspondence courses that meet graduation requirements and/or by passing appropriate courses at the college or university level if the courses are determined to meet standards and criteria established by the Board.

Graduation requirements are:

~~For students entering as ninth (9th) graders in 2009-2010 at least one (1) unit of the following twenty-four (24) units must be earned in an advanced placement or honors program, a dual-credit course or distance learning course.~~ Beginning with students entering the ninth (9th) grade in the 2025-2026 school year, successful completion of a minimum of twenty-four (24) units aligned to the state academic content and performance standards shall be required for graduation and the award of a diploma of excellence. These units shall be as follows:

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(1) Four (4) units in English, which shall include a three (3)-unit sequence; provided that department-approved work-based learning, career technical education or English language development courses that meet state English or English language development academic content and performance standards may qualify as required English units;

(2) Four (4) units in mathematics, two (2) of which shall include a sequence of algebra 1 and geometry or another integrated pathway of mathematics equivalent to algebra 1 and geometry; provided that financial literacy courses or department-approved work-based learning or career technical education courses that meet state mathematics academic content and performance standards may qualify as required mathematics units; and provided further that algebra 2 shall be offered as a mathematics course;

(3) Three (3) units in science, two (2) of which shall have a laboratory component; provided that department-approved work-based learning or career technical education courses that meet state science academic content and performance standards may qualify as required science units;

(4) Four (4) units in social science, which shall include United States history and geography, which course content contains New Mexico history; government and economics and personal financial literacy, which course content contains civics; and world history and geography;

(5) One (1) unit in physical education, as determined by the School District, which may include a physical education program that meets state academic content and performance standards or participation in marching band, dance programs, junior reserve officers' training corps or interscholastic sports sanctioned by the New Mexico activities association or any other co-curricular physical activity;

(6) One-half (.5) unit in health education; provided that this one-half (.5) unit may be earned in either middle or high school, and further provided that the health education courses include the standards set forth in NMSA 22-1-13; and

(7) Seven and one-half (7.5) elective units that meet department academic content and performance standards and that shall include a two (2)-unit pathway concentration of the student's choice in a language other than English, including American sign language; fine arts; health; military career preparation; a career technical education program; or community or service learning, a capstone course or work-based learning; provided that financial literacy, computer science, student service learning, career technical education courses and a sequence of languages other than English shall be offered as electives; and provided further that media literacy and pre-apprenticeship programs may be offered as electives.

English (grammar, nonfiction writing — and literature emphasis)	4.0 units***
Math (one [1] equal to algebra II or higher — unless parents sign off and a financial literacy — course may meet one of the required units)	4.0 units* ***
Science (two [2] with a laboratory component)	3.0 units* ***
United States History and Geography, — World History and Geography, and — Government and Economics and one- — half (1/2) unit of New Mexico History	3.5 units
Physical Education or marching band or Jr. ROTC or NMAA sanctioned interscholastic sports	1.0 unit
Career cluster course, workplace readiness — or language.....	1.0 unit
Electives including student service learning	7.5 units**
Total	<u>24.0 units</u>

~~*For students entering the ninth (9th) grade in the 2017-2018 school year and after, a course in computer science may satisfy either a unit of mathematics or science, but not both, if taken after competency is determined in the subject for which the unit is applied.~~

~~**For students entering the eighth (8th) grade in the 2012-2013 school year and after, a course in health education is required prior to graduation.~~

~~***A department approved work based training or career and technical education course that meets state academic content and performance standards in English, mathematics, or science shall qualify as one (1) of the requirements needed for graduation in each of these areas.~~

A single course credit may fulfill the requirements for only one (1) graduation category. Units earned in health, algebra 1, and geometry prior to enrolling in high school shall satisfy unit requirements to earn a New Mexico diploma of excellence.

The Superintendent shall develop a graduate profile that 1) is specific to the community; 2) articulates the core academic competencies and subjects that are key to graduates' post- high school success; and 3) to which required units are aligned. "Graduate profile" means a document that a school district uses to specify the cognitive, personal and interpersonal competencies that students should have when they graduate. The Board of Education shall have final authority to approve the District's graduate profile.

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A student shall ~~develop and file an updated~~ complete a final next-step plan during the senior year and prior to graduation that conforms with the requirements for a student curriculum plan pursuant to 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978. The plan shall be aligned to the graduate profile of the School District, shall be completed on a department-approved template and comply with department regulations ~~explain any differences from previous interim next-step plans~~, shall be filed with the principal of the student's high school and shall be signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian and the student's guidance counselor or other school official charged with coursework planning for the student. An individualized education program (IEP) filed with the principal that meets the applicable transition and procedural requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act for qualified students shall satisfy the next-step requirements for that student.

Final examinations shall be administered to all students in all classes offered for credit.

Parents are to be notified in writing not later than the conclusion of the third (3rd) nine (9)-weeks grading period of their student's senior year if the student is at risk of not meeting all graduation requirements. Progress reports are to be provided to parents and students at each grading period.

A high school student required to transfer to an out-of-state school by the transfer of the student's parents, who are members of the New Mexico National Guard or the armed forces of the United States, may request that a diploma be issued by the New Mexico high school of transfer. The student must meet the guidelines and comply with the requirements of the New Mexico Statutes Annotated regarding military dependent transfers and their courses and grades must meet or exceed New Mexico's requirements for graduation as determined by the School District.

Special Education

Listed above, under "Regular Education," are the requirements that must be completed before a student may receive a high school diploma or diploma of excellence. Completion of graduation requirements for special education students who do not meet the required units of credit shall be determined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the special education course of study, ~~and~~ the individualized education program of the student, and applicable law.

Students Entering High School Before the 2025-2026 School Year

For students who entered high school prior to the 2025-2026 school year, graduation requirements remain the same as they existed by law and District policy at the time those students entered ninth (9th) grade.

Adopted: date of manual adoption

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LEGAL REF.: 22-1-9 NMSA (1978)
22-1-9.1 NMSA (1978)
22-13-1.1 NMSA (1978)
22-13-1.4 NMSA (1978)
~~6.19.7 NMAC~~
6.29.1.9 NMAC

CROSS REF.: IGD - Curriculum Adoption
IGE - Curriculum Guides and Course Outlines
IHA - Basic Instructional Program
IIE - Student Schedules and Course Loads
IKA - Grading/Assessment Systems
JFABC - Admission of Transfer Students
JG - Assignment of Students to Classes