

The board recognizes the importance of setting rigorous graduation requirements in order to help ensure that students are receiving an education that will prepare them to be productive members of society.

In order to graduate from high school, students will be required to meet the following requirements:

1. successful completion of all accountability standards for high school set out by the State Board of Education in policy GCS-N-003, Student Accountability Standards, that are applicable for the year in which the student entered ninth grade for the first time and/or the student's course of study;
2. successful completion of 28 course credits, and 23 for students in the Occupational Course of Study in the chosen course of study and all other course requirements mandated by the State Board of Education; and
3. successful completion of all additional courses and other requirements mandated by the local board of education.

The principal shall ensure that students and parents are aware of all graduation requirements.

Guidance program staff shall assist students in selecting their high school courses to ensure that students are taking all of the required units and selecting electives consistent with their post-graduate plans. For students who have transferred to the school system during high school or who, for other reasons, have completed course work outside of the school system, the principal shall determine what course work will be applied as credit for graduation. The principal shall consider the requirements of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children (G.S. 115C-407.5) and the requirements of section D.3 of this policy in determining the graduation requirements for children of military families.

A. COURSE UNITS REQUIRED

All students must meet the following course requirements for the specific course of study chosen by the student. All courses required by the state shall be approved by the principal or designee. Beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the 2009-10 school year, students must fulfill the requirements of the Future Ready Core Course of Study, unless they are approved for the Occupational Course of Study. Students entering the ninth grade before the 2009-10 school year must fulfill the requirements of the Career Prep, College Tech Prep, College/University Prep or Occupational Course of Study.

1. Future Ready Core Course of Study Credits Required

Courses Required	State Requirements (Must be approved by the principal/designee)	Additional Local Requirements

English	4 sequential (English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (either 4 (either Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post-high school plans OR Integrated Math I, II, and III and a fourth math course aligned with the student's post high school plans) (A principal may exempt a student from this math sequence. The student will be required to pass either (1) Algebra I and either Algebra II or Geometry or (2) Integrated Math I and II. The student must also pass either alternative Math I and II or two other application-based math courses.)*)	A math course in the final year is strongly recommended.
Science	3 (a physical science course, Biology, and earth/environmental science.)	
Social Studies	3 (Civics & Economics, U.S. History and World History)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Electives	6 (2 electives must be any combination of Career and Technical Education, Arts Education or Second Language; 4 must be from one of the following: Career and Technical Education, R.O.T.C., Arts Education or any other subject area or cross-disciplinary courses. A four-course concentration is recommended.)**	7
Total Credits	21	7
Total Credits for Graduation from Cherokee County Schools = 28		

*Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete four mathematic courses, including a fourth math course with Algebra II as a prerequisite.

** Students seeking to complete minimum application requirements for UNC universities must complete two years of a second language.

2. Career Prep Course of Study Credits Required

Courses Required	State Requirements (Must be approved by the principal/designee)	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	3 (including Algebra I)	1 A math course in the final year is strongly recommended.
Science	3 (including a physical science course, biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	3 (including Civics & Economics, U.S. History and World History)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (courses appropriate for career pathway including a second level (advanced) course, or courses for an arts education pathway or for R.O.T.C. * **)	
Foreign Language	0	
Electives	2 (arts recommended but not required)	7
Other Requirements		
Total Credits	20	8
Total Credits for Graduation from Cherokee County Schools = 28		

*** Four R.O.T.C. Credits may be used.

3. College Tech Prep Course of Study Credits Required

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Courses Required	State Requirement (Must be approved by the principal/designee)	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	3****(including either Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II; Algebra I and Technical Math I & II; or Integrated Mathematics I, II, III)	1 A math course in the final year is strongly recommended.
Science	3 (including a physical science course, biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	3 (including Civics & Economics, U.S. History and world history)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (courses appropriate for career pathway including a second level (advanced) course)	
Foreign Language	0 ****	
Electives	2 (arts recommended but not required)	7
Other Requirements		
Total Credits	20	8
Total Credits for Graduation from Cherokee County Schools = 28		

**** A student pursuing this course of study may meet the requirements of a College/University Prep Course of Study by completing 2 credits in the same foreign language and one additional unit of math for which Algebra II is a prerequisite.

4. College/University Prep Course of Study Credits Required

Courses Required	State Requirements (Must be approved by the principal/designee)	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 (including English I, II, III, and IV)	
Mathematics	4 (including either Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II and a higher course for which Algebra II is a prerequisite; or Integrated Mathematics I, II, III and one course beyond Integrated Math III)	A math course in the final year is strongly recommended.
Science	3 (including a physical science, biology, and earth/environmental science)	
Social Studies	3 (including Civics & Economics, U.S. History and world history)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Foreign Language	2 (in the same language)	
Electives	3 (arts recommended but not required)	8
Other Requirements		
Total	20	8
Total Credits for Graduation from Cherokee County Schools = 28		

5. Occupational Course of Study Credits Required (only available for certain students with disabilities who have an IEP)

Courses Required	State Requirements (Must be approved by the principal/designee)	Additional Local Requirements
English	4 (including Occupational English I, II, III, and IV)	
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Mathematics	4 (including Occupational Mathematics I, II, III)	A math course in the final year is strongly recommended.
Science	2 (including Life Skills Science I, II)	
Social Studies	2 (including government/U.S. History and self-advocacy/problem solving)	
Health/P.E.	1	
Career/Technical	4 (vocational education electives)	
Foreign Language	0	
Occupational Preparation	6 (including Occupational Preparation I, II, III and IV, which requires 300 hours of school-based training, 240 hours of community-based training and 360 hours of paid employment)	
Electives	0	0
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of IEP objectives • Career Portfolio required 	
Total	23	-
Total Credits for Graduation from Cherokee County Schools = 23		

B. HIGH SCHOOL EXIT STANDARDS

1. Students, who (1) entered the ninth grade in the 2006-07 through 2008-09 school years and follow the Career Prep Course of Study, College Tech Prep Course of Study or College/University Prep Course of Study; or (2) enter ninth grade in the 2009-10 year or beyond and follow the Future Ready Core Course of Study, must score at Level III or above on all of the following end-of-course (EOC) tests: Algebra I; Biology; English I; Civics and Economics; and U.S. History. Students who do not score at Level III or above on the first administration of EOC tests must be retested in accordance with State Board policy. The superintendent shall develop procedures, utilizing Student Portfolios and in accordance with State Board policy, for reviewing promotion requests for students who do not score at Level III or above on the retest.

The EOC test results will count as 25 percent of a student's final grade in each high school course for which an EOC test is available.

2. A student following the Occupational Course of Study, regardless of the year he or she entered ninth grade, must complete rigorous exit standards as outlined in State Board Policy GCS-N-004.

C. ADDITIONAL LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

1. In order to graduate from any high school in Cherokee County each student must demonstrate proficiency in writing by receiving a score of Level III or better on the 10th grade writing test.

Students who do not pass the 10th grade writing test will be given a locally constructed and scored writing test during the 1st semester of their junior year. Students who continue to be non-proficient will keep a writing portfolio until the end of their senior year or until they pass a locally

constructed and scored writing test. At each high school, portfolios will be maintained by the head of the English Department or his/her designee.

The portfolios of the 2nd semester seniors who have not passed a retest will be evaluated by the head of the English department and two other teachers chosen by the principal of the school. After review by this group, any student judged to be non-proficient in writing will not be eligible for graduation.

2. Students must satisfactorily complete a graduation project. The superintendent or the superintendent's designee will develop, monitor and score the graduation projects, using state adopted rubrics. The superintendent or his/her designee may incorporate any graduation project requirements that are already in place in the district. In addition, requirements of the graduation project will include:

- a review process;
- an eight to ten page research paper written on an approved topic of the student's choice;
- a product related to the paper that requires significant hours of work;
- a portfolio that reflects the Senior Project process;
- a presentation to a panel of community and faculty members; and literature, service-based learning or work-based learning experiences as defined by state models.

The superintendent or the superintendent's designee will give special consideration to transfer students arriving in the second semester of the senior year.

D. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The board adopts the following policies to address special circumstances regarding graduation:

1. Honor Graduates

Honor graduates may be designated by the principals on the basis of criteria established by the superintendent. Students who complete the requirements of the North Carolina Academic Scholars Program will receive recognition including a seal affixed to his/her diploma. Recognition of honor graduates may be included in graduation programs.

2. Students with Disabilities

Accountability standards and graduation requirements must be applied to students with disabilities to the extent required by state and federal law and State Board policy.

3. Children of Military Families

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, the board adopts the following policy provisions for students covered by the Interstate

Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

a. Waiver Requirements

Specific course work required for graduation will be waived if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another school system. If a waiver is not granted, school administrators shall provide the student with reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the superintendent or designee shall provide the student with an alternative means of acquiring the required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

b. Testing Requirements for Graduation

The superintendent shall accept the following in lieu of tests required for graduation in North Carolina: (1) exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state; (2) national norm-referenced achievement tests; or (3) alternative testing, in lieu of any tests required for graduation in North Carolina. If these alternatives are not feasible for a student transferring in his or her senior year, subsection c below will apply.

c. Transfers During Senior Year

If a child of a military family transferring at the beginning of or during his or her senior year is ineligible to graduate from the school system after all alternatives listed above have been considered and the student meets the graduation requirements at his or her sending school, then school officials from the school system and the sending school system shall collaborate to ensure that the student will receive a diploma from the sending board of education.

4. Early Graduation

Graduation prior to that of one's class may be permitted based on completion of State and Local requirements and with recommendation by the superintendent. Students graduating early may be considered for honor student status, including Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Vocational Honor Student.

5. Graduation Certificate

A graduation certificate will be awarded to students enrolled in programs for exceptional children if the students have successfully completed course units by general subject area and their individualized education program requirements.

6. All students must accumulate at least 28 units of credit to graduate from any of the high schools in Cherokee County except for students graduating from alternative programs at Mountain Youth School or Tri-County Early College High School.

a. Mountain Youth School Requirements for Graduation:

Students who enter the Mountain Youth School will be treated as transfer students. The total number of graduation requirements will be state requirements only. Flexibility in contact hours will be allowed through the MYS School Improvement Plan. The goal of MYS is to transition students back into the regular school as soon as possible or to move them into the work force or higher education.

b. Tri-County Early College High School Requirements for Graduation:

Students who enter Tri-County Early College High School will meet the state requirements for graduation in addition to the requirements for an Associate's Degree from Tri-County Community College. All students will follow the University Prep default curriculum. Students will participate in an accelerated track of study that will blend some high school and college classes for which the student will receive dual credit. Flexibility in contact hours for some courses will be allowed through the Tri-County Early College High School Improvement Plan and approved waivers from the NC Department of Public Instruction and the NC Department of Community Colleges.

7. WITHDRAWAL FROM HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

Students may not withdraw from a high school course after the tenth (10th) day of enrollment in the class unless the withdrawal is approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee. Approval will be granted only when the Superintendent or his/her designee determines that extenuating circumstances exist. All high schools will inform students of this policy. Students who fail to follow this policy will receive a final grade of 60 [*or the grade earned in the class whichever is lower*] for the dropped course. This grade will appear on the student's transcript and will be included in the calculation of the student's grade point average.

Prior to admission, all aspects of the Early College High School program shall be explained to parent/guardians. Early withdrawal will result in parent/student reimbursement to Tri-County Community College for tuition and fees for courses taken.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -81, -276, -288; 16 NCAC 6D .0103

Cross References: Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program (policy 3000); Academic Policy for Honor Students 3450

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