



Guidance

Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.15 AWARDING UNITS OF CREDIT AND ACCEPTANCE OF TRANSFER CREDIT AND/OR GRADES.

(Minor **updates** were made on January 5, 2018, that included changes to assessment terminology (EOCT to EOC and "Exceeds" to "Distinguished"); updated links; added a note regarding math course titles (or the GSE Mathematics equivalent/s); added information for accessing the High School Mathematics Decision Rubric, i.e., ("included in the most current Mathematics Graduation Guidance document" – page 7); removed the appendix for actual education law text.)

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MAJOR REFERENCES: SBOE RULE 160-5-1-.15 AWARDING UNITS OF CREDIT AND ACCEPTANCE OF TRANSFER CREDIT AND/OR GRADES. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.43; 20-2-159.4	

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Part 1: Definitions.

1(a) Accredited School - an elementary, middle or secondary school accredited by or holding provisional status from the Georgia Accrediting Commission, the Georgia Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Christian Schools International, the Southern Association of Independent Schools and/or one of the accrediting agencies that is a member of the Georgia Private School Accreditation Council, and/or one of the following regional accrediting agencies and their successors:

1. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA)
2. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA)
4. Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC)
5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)
6. Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
7. The Alabama Independent School Association

The term does not include entities that are accredited as home study programs or non-traditional educational centers.

1(b) End of Course Tests (EOCT) tests - Assessments administered at the completion of core high school courses specified by the State Board of Education, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-281(f), to measure student achievement in the four content areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

1(c) Home Study Program – an educational choice option conducted in Georgia in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690(c) or conducted in another state in accordance with the laws applicable to that state.

1(d) Non-traditional Educational Center – educational institutions that support home study programs or other independent learning initiatives. This term does not include alternative/non-traditional education programs operated by local boards of education.

1(e) Private School – an educational choice option conducted in Georgia in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690(b) or conducted in another state in accordance with the laws applicable to that state.

1(f) Subject Area Competency - a unit of high school credit awarded to students based on subject area competency as demonstrated by a pre-defined score on state-adopted or

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approved assessment instruments, instead of or in combination with the completion of courses through traditional classroom instructional minutes as described in section (2)(f) of this rule.

- 1(g) Unit of Credit** – evidence of course completion as demonstrated by a final course grade of 70 or higher on a numerical scale; or competency-based course credit as demonstrated by a pre-defined score on state-adopted or approved assessment instruments.
- 1(h) Validation** – the process of verifying credits earned at another educational institution.

Part 2: Requirements and Guidelines for Implementation.

2(a): Rule Applicability.

1. Local boards of education shall apply the requirements of this rule to all students regardless of the date in which they first entered ninth grade. In other words, the definition of a Unit of Credit and methods of earning credit as described in this rule will take precedence over the definition of a “Unit” as indicated in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.48 *High School Graduation Requirements for Students Enrolling in the Ninth Grade for the First Time in the 2008-09 School Year and Subsequent Years* and other rules detailing high school graduation requirements.
2. SBOE rule 160-4-2-.48 and other rules detailing high school graduation requirements requires high schools to offer a minimum of 150 clock hours of instruction, 135 hours of instruction in an approved block schedule, or a minimum of 120 clock hours of instruction for summer school prior to awarding a unit of credit. While school districts must continue to offer that minimum amount of clock hour instruction, this rule clarifies that this “seat time” requirement does not apply to individual students. Accordingly, the local board of education may award units of credit upon the student’s demonstration of subject area competency through completion of a course without regard to the amount of time the student spent in the course. Local boards of education may develop local policies consistent with this rule regarding the awarding of credit.

2(b): Awarding Units of Credit for Courses Taken in Georgia Public Schools.

1. Local boards of education shall award units of credit only for courses that include concepts and skills based on the state-adopted high school curriculum for grades 9-12. Local boards of education may award units of credit for high school courses offered in the middle grades if the state-adopted high school (grades 9-12) curriculum is used for

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instruction and taught by a secondary certified (high school) teacher. For example, if provided for by local policy, a student may receive high school credit for CCGPS Coordinate Algebra taught in the eighth grade by a certified high school mathematics teacher.

2(c): Awarding Units of Credit for Taking Dual Enrollment Courses.

1. Local boards of education shall award units of credit to students for high school courses taken through postsecondary institutions as described in the State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.34 Dual Enrollment.

2(d): Awarding Units of Credit for Courses of Career, Technical and Agricultural Education Study with Embedded Academic Core Standards.

1. Local boards of education shall award course credit for the Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) course and course credit for the associated academic core course to students who successfully complete a course or course sequence in CTAE study that includes all standards from an academic core subject as adopted by the State Board of Education embedded in the CTAE course.
2. A CTAE course with embedded academic core standards must include all academic core standards of the associated academic core subject.
3. A student shall not earn more than three units of credit for academic core courses by completing CTAE courses that include embedded standards from an academic core subject.
4. Local boards of education shall administer the appropriate End of Course ~~Test~~ (EOC~~T~~) test to a student taking a CTAE course with embedded academic core courses of an area for which an EOC~~T~~ test has been adopted unless the student has already passed such EOC~~T~~ test.
5. CTAE courses that include embedded standards from an academic core subject area will be identified in State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.20 *List of State-Funded K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses for Students Entering Ninth Grade in 2008 and Subsequent Years*.
6. Local school districts are encouraged to submit CTAE courses with embedded academic core standards to be approved by the State Board of Education through the state course

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submission process using the following link to Course Nomination Form DE 0287 - Local School System Course Request Form for Rule 160-4-2-.20 for the list of state-funded K-8 subjects and 9-12 courses as found on the following GaDOE website.

<http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/Course-Submission-Form-and-Process.doc>

2(e): Awarding Units of Credit for Mathematics Courses for Students Receiving Special Education Services Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

1. Local boards of education shall award units of credit for mathematics courses that will satisfy the mathematics course requirements in State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.48 to a student receiving special education services under IDEA if the student meets **all** of the following:
 - i. Prior to the student entering the ninth grade, the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team identified that the student had a disability that affected mathematics achievement;
 - ii. The student successfully earns course credit for Mathematics I and Mathematics II or GPS Algebra and GPS Geometry or CCGPS Coordinate Algebra and CCGPS Analytic Geometry; and (or the GSE Mathematics equivalent/s)
 - iii. The student successfully earns course credit for at least two other state-approved mathematics courses, which may include, but not be limited to, Mathematics Support courses.

2. The IEP Team for students who receive Mathematics course in this manner shall document that:
 - i. The student's disability has precluded the student from achieving grade-level proficiency, as demonstrated by the student's pattern of performance on the state-mandated test in the area of Mathematics;
 - ii. The student's progress to date in response to appropriate instruction, including special education and related services designed to address the student's individual needs, is such that, even if significant growth occurs, the IEP team is reasonably certain that the student will not successfully master the standards in Mathematics III, GPS Advanced Algebra, or CCGPS Advanced Algebra as traditionally

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- delivered in a single year course. The IEP team should first consider enrolling these students in a single advanced mathematics course with instruction delivered over two years prior to other considerations. The determination of the student's progress has been based on multiple measurements that are valid for the content area of mathematics and that have been collected over a period of time; and
- iii. The student has access to instruction in the state-adopted curriculum and will be required to successfully complete Mathematics I and Mathematics II or GPS Algebra and GPS Geometry or CCGPS Coordinate Algebra and CCGPS Analytic Geometry (or the GSE Mathematics equivalent/s) in addition to participating and earning credit in two additional state-approved mathematics courses. As stated above, the IEP team should first consider enrolling these students in a single advanced mathematics course with instruction delivered over two years prior to other considerations. The student's IEP includes goals that are related to mathematics, support access to the content standards, and are designed to promote the student's progress in the content area state-adopted curriculum.
3. Local boards of education shall inform parents and students that students who do not complete Mathematics III, GPS Advanced Algebra, or CCGPS Advanced Algebra (or the GSE Mathematics equivalent/s) may not meet the mathematics admission requirements for entry into a University System of Georgia institution or other post-secondary institution without additional coursework.
4. **High School Mathematics Decision Rubric:** Local school districts shall use the High School Mathematics Decision Rubric included in the most current Mathematics Graduation Guidance document to determine which students are eligible for flexibility regarding mathematics requirements for high school graduation as described in the section above. The decision rubric shall be included in the student's IEP.

2(f): Subject Area Competency to Receive Course Credit.

1. Local boards of education may award units of credit to students in two ways. First, a student may earn course credit by earning a final course grade of 70 or higher as required by State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.13 *Statewide Passing Score*. As discussed above, this may be achieved without regard to the number of clock hours of instruction received by the student. Second, a student may earn course credit by achieving a pre-defined performance level on the state designated End of Course ~~Test~~-(EOCT) tests as described below. This method of earning course credit is referred to hereinafter as "testing-out."

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2. Beginning in school year 2013-2014, local boards of education shall award course credit to students who reach the performance level of Distinguished on an EOC~~F~~ prior to taking the course. For example, a student may attempt the Biology EOC~~F~~ prior to taking the course. If the student reaches the performance level of Distinguished, the local board of education shall award the student the Biology course credit.
3. A student may test-out of any course that has an associated EOC~~F~~ test.
4. As provided by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4, a student may only earn up to three credits by testing-out.
5. Students must meet the following requirements for earning course credit through testing-out:
 - i. Not currently or previously enrolled in the course;
 - ii. Have earned a grade of B or better in a content area course that is the same content area of the course for which the student is attempting the EOC~~F~~ test;
 - iii. Received a teacher recommendation from a teacher in the same content area of the course for which the student is attempting the EOC~~F~~ test; and
 - iv. Received parent/guardian permission if the student is less than 18 years of age.
6. When allowing students to attempt to earn course credit through testing out, local boards of education shall:
 - i. Allow eligible students only one opportunity per course to demonstrate subject area competency;
 - ii. Utilize the appropriate state-approved testing window for administering the EOC~~F~~ test and coding for the EOC~~F~~ testing-out option as described in the assessment coding procedures;
 - iii. Require students who do not reach the performance level of Distinguished when attempting to test-out to enroll in and complete the associated course and retake the EOC~~F~~ test even if the students make a passing grade on the EOC~~F~~ test during the testing-out attempt, if the course is required for graduation; and
 - iv. Count units of credit earned under this testing-out option toward fulfillment of students' requirements for a subject area course, toward fulfillment requirement as to course sequences, and towards meeting graduation requirements.
7. Local boards of education shall not allow students who are currently enrolled, or who have previously been enrolled, in a higher-level course to attempt to earn credit by

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testing-out. For example, a student taking AP Physics may not earn credit for Physical Science by testing-out.

8. As required in the O.C.G.A. §20-2-159.4, the local board of education shall report the course credit of students who test-out of a course in the same way as the local board of education reports course credit earned through completing courses.
9. Local boards of education may develop policies relating to utilizing grade equivalent scores in the calculation of the student's Grade Point Average (GPA).
10. Local boards of education may develop policies related to obtaining parental consent for student attempting to test-out of courses.
11. As provided in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4, neither local boards of education nor charter schools shall set policies that prohibit students from utilizing testing-out to earn course credit.
12. Local boards of education may, but are not required to, provide any type of tutorials, resources, or materials to students who attempt the testing-out option.
13. The Georgia Department of Education shall be responsible for the cost of administering an EOC ~~F~~ test for the purpose of testing-out only for those students who reach the performance level of Distinguished. The Georgia Department of Education's testing contractor for the EOC ~~F~~ test will invoice local school systems for the cost of administering an EOC ~~F~~ test for the purpose of testing-out for students who do not reach the performance level of Distinguished. Local boards of education may develop policies related to the collection of these costs from parents or students, provided that such policies require school or school district personnel to inform the parent or student of potential cost prior to the EOC ~~F~~ test administration.

2(g): Accepting Transfer Credit and Grades.

1. Local boards of education shall accept student course credit earned in an accredited school. The school shall have been accredited or holding provisional status at the time the credit was earned.
2. Local boards of education shall not substitute courses and exempt students from the required secondary minimum core curriculum unless the student transferred from an accredited secondary school or the courses presented for credit are consistent with Georgia's state-adopted curriculum for grades 9-12 and any applicable local policy.

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3. Each local board of education shall adopt a policy for validating credit for courses taken at non-accredited schools, home study programs, and non-traditional educational centers. The policy shall include the following:
 - i. Definitions consistent with this rule;
 - ii. Procedures for determining whether transfer courses meet the state-adopted curriculum;
 - iii. Procedures for placing transfer students in elementary and middle grades at the appropriate level and for granting units of credit for high school students;
 - iv. Procedures for administering EOC~~F~~ test in accordance with the Georgia Department of Education's assessment guidelines and these guidelines; and
 - v. At least one of the following:
 - I. A probationary placement based on the student's records in prior school(s), home study programs or non-traditional educational centers and satisfactory performance of the student in a school under the authority of the local board of education for one or more grading periods; or
 - II. Student performance on assessments administered by the local board of education. These assessments may be standardized or locally developed and should focus on group placement, subject area and grade level.

2(h): End of Course Test Administration to Transfer Students.

1. Local boards of education shall administer the EOC~~F~~ test to students enrolled in a Georgia public school while also enrolled in a private school, home study program, or non-traditional educational center for which they receive graduation credit for one of the required EOC~~F~~ test courses. These students must take the EOC~~F~~ test regardless of the private school, home study program, or non-traditional educational center's accreditation status.
 - i. As an example, a student is enrolled in a public high school and attends an accredited private school in the evenings taking an American Literature Course. This student is required to take the American Literature EOC~~F~~ test before receiving credit from the public school for that course because the student was enrolled in both institutions at the same time.
2. Local boards of education shall not require students who enroll from accredited schools to take and pass the EOC~~F~~ test to receive credit for an EOC~~F~~ test course unless the

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student was concurrently enrolled in a Georgia public school while taking the course at an accredited private school.

- i. As an example, a student attended a private school and received credit for Biology. The private school the student attended was accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA). This student shall be given course credit for Biology as the private school was accredited by an entity listed in this rule at the time the student earned the credit.
3. Local boards of education shall require students who enroll from non-accredited private schools, home study programs, or other non-traditional educational centers to take and pass the EOCT test with a minimum of 70 grade conversion score to receive credit for the course. A student enrolling from a non-accredited school will receive one test administration opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in order to earn credit for a course that requires the EOCT test. If the student does not pass the EOCT test on that administration, the local board of education shall not grant credit for that course. If the course is required to be eligible to receive a high school diploma, the student shall enroll in the course and take the EOCT test at the completion of the course.
 - i. As an example, a student attended a home study program that is accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC) and received credit for American History. This student shall not be given credit for American History unless the student passes the American History EOCT test with a minimum grade conversion score of 70 and meets all other requirements of the local board of education's policy regarding validating credit. This is because the definition of "accredited school" expressly excludes entities that are accredited as home study programs or nontraditional educational centers.

2(i): Military Dependents.

1. Local boards of education shall utilize O.C.G.A. § 20-17-2 to award course credit for students who are dependents of military personnel as defined by that code section to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their families.