



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

Graduation Requirement Changes FAQ

Executive Order 2020-31 and ISBE’s corresponding Emergency Rules suspended certain statutory graduation requirement minimums to allow local districts to modify or reduce their local graduation requirements such that students scheduled to graduate in 2020, who through no fault of their own, were unable to complete certain graduation requirements due to the suspension of in-person instruction. ISBE strongly encourages districts to provide flexibility and understanding to students in the class of 2020, to approach graduation decisions through an equity lens, and to consider the challenges and losses this class suffered as a result of the public health emergency. This document provides answers to commonly asked questions related to the emergency graduation requirement modifications.

1. What statutory graduation requirements were modified through Executive Order 2020-31 and Emergency Rules?

| Regular Graduation Requirement | Emergency Modification for Class of 2020 |
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| All graduates must complete 4 years of language arts, 3 years of mathematics (including algebra I and geometry), 2 years of science, 2 years of social studies (1 must be U.S. history and government) and 1 year of either music/art/foreign language or vocational education | Minimum year requirement for language arts is 3.5 years, mathematics is 2.5 years, science is 1.5 years, social studies is 1.5 years and music/art/foreign language/vocational education is 0.5 years |
| All students must participate in physical education each year and graduates must complete at least 1 semester of health | 12 th -grade students are exempted from physical education participation and health requirements |
| All graduates must complete at least 9 weeks of consumer education | 12 th -grade students are exempted from consumer education requirement |
| All graduates must participate in the state’s final accountability assessment (currently the SAT) | 12 th -grade students are exempted from the requirement to participate in the state’s |

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| | final accountability assessment (currently the SAT) |
| All graduates must pass an examination covering American patriotism, government, the U.S. and Illinois Constitutions and American flag etiquette | 12 th -grade students are exempted from the government and Constitution test requirement |
| To receive an 8 th -grade diploma, students must pass an examination covering American patriotism, government, the U.S. and Illinois Constitutions and American flag etiquette and must also give evidence of a comprehensive knowledge of the history of the United States | 8 th -grade students are exempted from the Constitution and U.S. history assessment requirements |
| School boards may adopt a policy providing for a course substitution of a vocational and technical course for a high school or graduation requirement | 12 th -grade students who were taking a vocational or technical course as a substitution for a graduation requirement shall not be denied credit for these courses due to the student's inability to complete the course substitutions as a result of suspension of in-person instruction |
| School boards may award credit for the study of a foreign language in an ethnic school if students successfully complete a foreign language proficiency exam | 12 th -grade students can receive credit for foreign language study completed in an ethnic school without successfully passing a foreign language proficiency exam |
| Additional high school graduation requirements may be adopted by local boards of education | Local boards of education may reduce other local graduation requirements that could not be met due to the suspension of in-person instruction |

2. Do local graduation requirements still apply to the class of 2020?

Executive Order 2020-31 addresses the statutory minimum state graduation requirements, not local requirements that exceed the state-identified minimums. Local boards of education may amend policies to reduce any local graduation requirements adopted in addition to the minimum requirements specified in School Code Section 27-22 that were not possible to complete during the 2019-20 school year due to the suspension of in-person instruction and/or the stay-at-home order.

3. What options are available to schools for graduation ceremonies and celebrations?

The Governor's extended stay-at-home order prohibits group gatherings at this time. There may be a time when large events can be held, but it is not known when that will be safe. Districts should find other ways to honor eighth-grade students and seniors through virtual ceremonies and celebrations.

4. What should schools do about transcripts?

Schools should make final transcripts available to graduates and their selected colleges and postsecondary programs through digital means, if possible, and in paper format, when necessary. If modified grading criteria were used due to the suspension of in-person instruction, the details should be noted clearly on the transcript.

5. Is the requirement to take the SAT for graduation waived for students in 12th grade who did not test last year and were planning to test this spring? Must districts request an exemption from ISBE for these students?

Twelfth-grade students who did not take the SAT are eligible to graduate without doing so due to the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation. ISBE's Assessment Department will provide additional details regarding documentation requirements.

6. Are finals still required? Should thresholds for passing be adjusted?

Decisions about final exams and how to score exams, if given, are local decisions. [ISBE's Remote Learning Recommendations](#) state that students should not be required to master and should not be penalized for failure to master new content during remote learning. Please note that dual credit courses may be an exception to this and should follow [this guidance](#).

7. How will modified graduation requirements impact students who are college-bound?

Each institution of higher education sets its graduation requirements and policies locally. High schools should encourage seniors to contact the college or university they plan to attend to determine if any flexibility is being offered, and districts should carefully consider possible implications of their grading decisions for college-bound students. The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) are encouraging support and accommodations for students during these unprecedented circumstances and are requiring that a pass counts for transfer credit. This [IBHE/ICCB joint guidance](#) provides specific information about AP and IB course transferability.

8. Will the Constitution test still be required (for eighth- and 12th-grade) graduation?

Executive Order 2020-31 exempts students from the Constitution test requirements during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation. Students currently in grades 8 and 12 during the

2019-20 school year who did not yet pass a Constitution test are now eligible to graduate in the spring of 2020 without doing so. ISBE will explore legislative action to address the issue for students in other grades in future years.

9. Can students who receive an Incomplete be promoted/graduate?

Specific grading and promotion policies are local decisions. ISBE encourages educators to make every possible effort to engage and support students scheduled to graduate/receive promotion this spring so that they may do so.

10. Is there guidance about GPA and class rank calculations?

Policies related to GPA and class rank are local decisions. ISBE encourages districts to carefully consider how modifications to grading systems due to the suspension of in-person instruction will factor into GPA calculation and class rank decisions.

11. Are service learning requirements waived?

Service learning requirements are local requirements. Local boards of education may modify service learning requirements to enable students who are unable to complete them due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

12. Can we plan to deliver summer school remotely?

At this time, the 60-clock hour requirement for summer school is not waived, but it is also not yet safe to plan for in-person instruction. ISBE will explore additional action to address this issue if it is not safe to hold summer school in-person.

13. How should grading be handled for classes/terms beginning during the suspension of in-person instruction?

Grading decisions are local, but recommendations provided in the [Remote Learning Recommendations](#) may apply to courses that were in progress as well as those that did not yet commence when in-person instruction was suspended. In general, grades determined during remote learning should not negatively impact a student's academic standing, and grading should be a tool to improve learning rather than a mechanism for ensuring compliance. Students should be able to earn the same amount of credit for courses that are completed remotely as they would through in-person instruction.