

Massachusetts Competency Determination Graduation Policy for High School Students in Military Families

With the enactment of [Chapter 108 of the Acts of 2012](#), An Act Relative to Veterans' Access, Livelihood, Opportunity, and Resources, also known as the VALOR Act, Massachusetts joined the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. In accordance with the VALOR Act, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) is committed to facilitating the on-time graduation of high school students in military families by providing alternatives to allow these students to earn a high school Competency Determination (CD) in English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering. The relevant section of the VALOR Act is below.

If a high school student in a military family **moves from another state** and enrolls in a Massachusetts high school in grade 11 or later, the district may, in lieu of having the student participate in MCAS retests, submit to the Department **alternative evidence** or information that demonstrates that the student has met the Massachusetts CD graduation standard in each required content area—English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.¹

Eligibility

This policy applies to students in military families who are the children of the following:

1. Active duty members of the uniformed services. "Active duty" refers to full-time duty status in the active uniformed service of the United States, including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders. "Uniformed services" means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, including the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Public Health Services;
2. Members or veterans of the uniformed services who are severely injured and medically discharged or retired for a period of one year after medical discharge or retirement;
3. Members of the uniformed services who died on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty for a period of one year after death.

This policy does *not* apply to students who are the children of the following:

1. Inactive members of the National Guard and Reserves;
2. Members of the uniformed services who are now retired (except as defined above);
3. Veterans of the uniformed services (except defined above); or
4. Other United States Department of Defense personnel or other civilian and contracted employee not defined as on active duty.

Submitting Alternative Evidence for the Competency Determination (CD)

The submission of alternative evidence that demonstrates that the student has met the Massachusetts CD graduation standard must consist of **either** of the following:

- a. a portfolio of the student's work samples submitted by the district showing that the student has achieved the level of performance required for graduation (guidelines available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals/filing/portfolio/); OR

¹ Note that a student who enrolls during or prior to grade 10 must participate in spring ELA, Mathematics, and Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS tests, for school and district accountability purposes. Principals should advise students in grade 11 that they are eligible and may wish to participate in spring MCAS tests to qualify for the Adams Scholarship or the Koplik Certificate of Mastery with Distinction Award (see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/highschool.html>).

- b. evidence including the following, if available: a transcript of courses and grades from the current and previous school(s), records of standardized test scores (e.g., high school exit exam from another state², SAT subject test, AP exam), other relevant information (e.g., academic awards, college acceptance). Before submitting a request, the district must make every reasonable effort to obtain the student's official education records from the school in the sending (i.e., previous) state, and use that information to determine whether sufficient information exists for submission.

Submissions must be accompanied by a completed **Request to Submit Alternative Evidence for a High School Student in a Military Family to Earn a Competency Determination** (attached).

Mail the attached form and alternative evidence to: Student Assessment Services, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148 by the first Friday of each month in order to be reviewed that month. Requests will be reviewed during the second week of each month from September through June. Results will be reported to schools and districts within ten (10) school days of the decision.

Please contact the Student Assessment office at mcas@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3625 with any questions.

Section 6, of Chapter 108 of the Acts of 2012 provides as follows:

(a) To facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, local education agency administrative officials shall waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another local education agency or shall provide reasonable justification for denial. Should a waiver not be granted to a student who would otherwise qualify to graduate from the sending school, the local education agency shall provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

(b) To facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, receiving states may accept exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state or national norm-referenced achievement tests or alternative testing, in lieu of testing requirements for graduation in the receiving state; require the student to take scheduled exit test in the receiving state, if the student is able to take the tests prior to the end of grade 12; or accept evidence or information from the sending or receiving district that demonstrates that the student has met the receiving state's graduation standard, either through a transcript of courses taken and grades received from the sending and or receiving district; a portfolio of work samples for the student that addresses the required high school standards; standardized norm-referenced test results in the subject required by the receiving state for graduation; or other relevant information.

(c) To facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, should a military student transferring at the beginning or during grade 12 be ineligible to graduate from the receiving local education agency after all alternatives in subsection (b) have been considered, the sending and receiving local education agencies shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending local education agency if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending local education agency. In the event that either the transferring or receiving state is not a member of this compact, the member state shall use best efforts to facilitate the on-time graduation of the student under subsections (a) and (b).

² The Department does not accept passing scores from another state's exit or end-of-course exams **as the sole criterion** for meeting the Massachusetts graduation standard, in lieu of participating in MCAS tests. However, a student's passing score may be submitted along with **other evidence** to demonstrate that the student has met the graduation standard.

Request to Submit Alternative Evidence for a High School Student in a Military Family to Earn a Competency Determination

Part I: General Information

Name of District, Educational Collaborative, Approved Private Special Education School, or SEIS program:

District Name: _____ District Code: # _____

If the student attends an out-of-district school or program, please provide the name and code of the student's home district to which results will also be sent:

Name of School: _____ School Code: # _____

Superintendent or Executive Director:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Principal:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Faculty Contact: (Person to be contacted with questions about this request)

Name: _____

Position: _____

Telephone Number and Extension: _____

Email Address: _____

Part II: Student Information

State-Assigned Student Identification Number (SASID): _____

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

MI: _____

Year of student's anticipated graduating class: _____

Date of transfer into current school: _____

Part III: Content Area

Content area (check one):

English Language Arts **or** Mathematics **or** Science and Technology/Engineering

For Science and Technology/Engineering, please indicate the discipline:

Biology Chemistry Introductory Physics Technology/Engineering

Examples of alternative evidence (check all submitted):

Portfolio of student work samples

High school transcript(s)

High school test scores in the content area

Scores from an exit exam from another state

Proof of college acceptance or academic awards

Other supporting documentation (specify): _____

Part IV: Superintendent's Verification

I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that all statements made in this request are true, complete, and correct.

Signature of Superintendent or Executive Director (or Designee): _____

Date: _____