**Private Virtual Schools**

Private virtual schools must seek and receive approval from the school committee of that city or town, regardless of whether any students from that city or town will attend the school.

Massachusetts does not accredit private virtual schools, nor does it collect or report data on the quality or performance of private virtual schools.

If the private virtual school is not based in Massachusetts, the law would treat the student as homeschooled.

Parents/guardians should consult with their child’s public school prior to enrolling their child in a course offered by a private virtual school.

Parents/guardians are also strongly advised contact the virtual school prior to enrolling their child to determine whether the school's high school courses meet NCAA core-course criteria.

**Questions and Answers**

**Last Updated April 7, 2018**

**What are the requirements for opening a new private virtual school in Massachusetts?**

If the school will be based in a Massachusetts city or town, it must seek and receive approval from the school committee of that city or town, regardless of whether any students from that city or town will attend the school.

**Does Massachusetts accredit private virtual schools?**

No, Massachusetts does not have a process for accrediting private virtual schools, nor does the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) collect or report data on the quality or performance of private virtual schools.

**What information must private virtual schools share with local school districts?**

If the school enrolls Massachusetts students, the school must report their names, ages, and residences to the superintendent(s) of the cities and towns in which they reside within 30 days of the date of enrollment or registration. Whenever a student withdraws from a private virtual school, it must notify the superintendent within 10 days. Private virtual schools must also submit The Individual Private School Report (enrollment as of October 1) to the Department, with a copy to superintendent where the student resides, or use the Department's online tool. For more information, see the Department’s [Advisory on Approval of Massachusetts Private Schools Pursuant to Mass. Gen. Laws c. 76, §1](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/100207privateschool.html). Contact information for all Massachusetts districts is available from the Department’s [School and District Profiles](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/) website.

**What are the requirements for enrolling Massachusetts students in a private virtual school when the school is not based in Massachusetts?**

If the private virtual school is not based in Massachusetts, the law would treat the student as homeschooled. The student's parent or guardian would need to ask their district of residence to review and approve the student's educational program.

**What is a Commonwealth Virtual School (CMVS)? Is it a public school?**

Unlike a private virtual school, a Commonwealth Virtual School (CMVS) is a public school. Like a regional vocational school or a charter school, a virtual school is an autonomous, single-school district that operates independently of any existing school district. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education grants a certificate to the board of trustees of a virtual school. The school and its board then becomes a state entity, directly accountable to the Board and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Two virtual schools currently operate in Massachusetts: [Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School (GCVS)](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=39010000&orgtypecode=5) and [TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA)](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=39020000&orgtypecode=5). Both enroll students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**Can Massachusetts students take courses at a private virtual school and have them count towards his or her high school diploma?**

Parents/guardians should consult with their child’s public school prior to enrolling their child in a course offered by a private virtual school. In addition to asking whether their child will be able to earn credit(s) toward his or her high school diploma (and how much), they should ask whether their child’s grade in the course will be calculated in his or her grade point average (GPA, if the public school calculates GPAs). Parents/guardians are urged to always seek written approval from the public school before enrolling their child in courses offered by private virtual schools.

**Can children play high school sports for his/her hometown team if they are enrolled in a private virtual school?**

Most high school sports programs in the state belong to the [Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA)](http://www.miaa.net/). For a virtual school student to play for his or her hometown high school team, they must follow a waiver process established by the MIAA: (1) The student should first speak to the principal of the public high school in the community s/he resides to seek agreement from the principal to participate. (2) If the principal is in agreement with the student participating, the principal must request a waiver of MIAA Rule 52 (MIAA White Book of forms, page 14). (3) A letter of agreement must be signed by both the student's virtual school principal and high school principal in the town of residence (MIAA White Book of forms, page 15) and included with the waiver request.

**Will children be eligible to play sports at a Division I or Division II college or university upon graduation from or taking courses offered a CMVS or a private virtual school?**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), a private organization, requires all prospective student-athletes to complete appropriate course work in order to qualify for NCAA programs. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to contact the virtual school prior to enrolling their child to determine whether the school's high school courses meet NCAA core-course criteria. For more information, visit the [NCAA Eligibility Center](http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp).