



## Early Graduation Guidance Information for Students, Parents, Schools and Districts

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Early Graduation is a deliberate pathway for students in grades 9-11 who wish to move on when ready, receive a diploma from the district and be eligible for acceptance into Kentucky public universities and non-profit independent colleges and universities. The pathway provides a financial scholarship, known as the Early Graduation Certificate, to support this action. Students participating in the pathway must meet the requirements set forth by [704 KAR 3:305](#) including those listed below.

- Students must notify the school principal within the first 30 days of the school year in which they intend to graduate.
- Students must enter the Early Graduation pathway prior to October 1 of the year in which they intend to graduate early.
- Students must graduate in three years or less. Students exceeding three years do not qualify for the incentives identified with Early Graduation.
- Students must take and achieve ACT benchmarks as designated by the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE).
- Students must take and score proficient on all required End-of-Course Assessments (EOCs). *To meet this requirement, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) will provide EOCs for those students participating in the Early Graduation pathway during the 2020-2021 school year.*

The following topics should be discussed and considered by students, parents and school personnel prior to declaring an intent to participate in the Early Graduation pathway:

- All children are unique, so as you think about Early Graduation; there are many factors which could affect the student's and/or parent's decision to pursue this pathway.
- Social/emotional maturity
- Future goals and aspirations
- Student's desire to take multiple Advanced Placement (AP) or dual credit courses in high school
- Financial readiness to support college tuition
- Student's ability to complete the requirements for Early Graduation within three years or less
- Participation in local events traditionally determined by grade classification (i.e. prom attendance, valedictorian, Governor's Scholar programs, etc.)

## General Questions:

### **1. What are the minimum requirements for early graduation?**

Currently, all early graduation students minimally must meet benchmarks on the college readiness exam, currently ACT (English 18), Mathematics (19), Reading (20) and achieve proficiency on four EOC exams (Algebra II, Biology, English II and U.S. History). EOC exams will continue to be offered for early graduates in the 2020-2021 school year. KDE is currently working on a transition plan for future early graduates. It is important to remember 704 KAR 3:305 also states that a student who has indicated an intent to graduate early may participate in the student's state administration of the college readiness exam prior to the junior year, if needed.

### **1. Must early graduate students meet all minimum high school graduation requirements?**

No. After passing ACT benchmarks and EOC exams the student may graduate early.

### **2. Could a student who doesn't pass an ACT benchmark use his or her qualifying Kentucky Online Testing (KYOTE) benchmark instead and still qualify for the Early Graduation Scholarship?**

No. 704 KAR 3:305 requires the use of a college readiness exam (i.e. ACT). KYOTE is a college placement exam. The law states that early graduation students shall, "... meet the college readiness exam benchmarks established by the Council on Postsecondary Education in 13 KAR 2:020 for placement in credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation." Therefore, the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) does not recognize KYOTE scores and only uses ACT benchmarks as qualifying college readiness exam benchmarks.

### **3. Will summative exams replace EOC exams for early graduates?**

Not at this time.

### **4. When did the Early Graduation regulation go into effect?**

The regulation took effect in the 2014-2015 academic year.

### **5. Does my district offer Early Graduation?**

Yes, Early Graduation is an accelerated pathway identified by Kentucky law and the opportunity is available to all Kentucky students in all districts.

### **6. What considerations should be made for middle school students?**

Middle school students may accumulate high school credits. For instance, some students may elect to take Algebra I for high school credit. Students should consult their local school district to determine what high school credits are available at the middle school level.

### **7. Who must sign the Letter of Intent?**

The Letter of Intent requires student, parent/guardian, principal and superintendent signatures to be considered valid. It is recommended that Early Graduation participants and families have an initial meeting with counselors to determine eligibility. After starting the program, students, parents and counselors will meet regularly to assess progress. Full use of the individual learning plan (ILP) is also required by the regulation.

**8. Do I get a diploma when I participate in Early Graduation?**

Yes, you are entitled to a high school diploma issued by your local board of education.

**9. I am a high school senior. Can I receive an Early Graduation Certificate?**

No, only students in grades 9, 10 or 11 qualify for the Early Graduation pathway.

**10. I attend the Kentucky School for the Blind or the Kentucky School for the Deaf. Can I participate in Early Graduation?**

Yes, Early Graduation is an opportunity available to all Kentucky public school students.

**11. What if I complete Early Graduation and leave in December of my junior year?**

The Early Graduation Certificate funds may not be available until the fall of the year you graduate. You should contact the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) to see how graduating in December would affect your Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) earnings.

**12. What if I intend to graduate early and move to another school in the district before I finish?**

You should make sure that your new school receives and enters the Letter of Intent into Infinite Campus. Prior to moving schools, conversations should take place notifying the school of your Early Graduation placement as well as arranging for an accelerated pathway in your new school.

**13. I am moving out of state before graduating early. Will this transfer to another state?**

No, Early Graduation is a pathway for Kentucky students. It is not applicable in other states.

**14. What if I complete Early Graduation, receive my diploma and then change my mind? Can I return to high school?**

Once you receive a high school diploma, your district is no longer obligated to provide any additional educational services. However, if a school district agrees, you could forgo having the diploma issued at the end of the three years and return for classes during the fourth year. However, by doing so you forfeit the Early Graduation scholarship. You would then be eligible for graduation and a diploma at any time during your fourth year, but again would not be entitled to a scholarship.

**15. What is the Early Graduation Certificate? When do I get the scholarship?**

The term “Early Graduation Certificate” means the financial scholarship attached to the Early Graduation pathway for students who sign a Letter of Intent and successfully complete the proficiency criteria to graduate early. The “Early Graduation Certificate” or scholarship is awarded by KHEAA. Questions about funding should be directed to KHEAA at (800) 928-8926.

**16. Am I eligible for other scholarships when I complete Early Graduation?**

You may be eligible for other scholarships as you are eligible for all scholarships, grants and awards available to any incoming freshman. Contact the postsecondary institution you plan to attend when intent is declared to determine scholarship deadlines.

**17. Do I fill out a FAFSA the year my student graduates or wait a year?**

You should complete the FAFSA as early as possible the year before your student plans to

attend college in order to take advantage of any scholarships or institution funding.