



Rigorous Course of Study Waiver

What is a rigorous course of study waiver?

The rigorous course of study waiver is an opportunity for students to be waived from specific academic standards required for graduation ([Minn. Stat. § 120B.021, subd. 1\(a\)](#)) through a district-developed request process from a student's parent or guardian to the school district or charter school. The goal is to adhere to the statutory requirement for the student's comprehensive education in all of the academic content standards while also providing reasonable flexibility so that students have the opportunity to participate in International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), College in the Schools (CIS)/Concurrent Enrollment, Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), career and technical education and other rigorous learning opportunities within or outside of the school curriculum.

What is required for a high school diploma in Minnesota and how does the rigorous course waiver pertain to it?

In order to graduate with a diploma from a Minnesota public high school, students must do all of the following:

- Satisfactorily complete all **state academic standards** or local academic standards where state standards do not apply;
- Satisfactorily complete the **state credit requirements** under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.024.

[MDE Graduation Requirements webpage](#)

The rigorous course waiver pertains only to the state academic standards requirements, it does not replace the credit. Also, these are the minimum requirements set by the state. There may be additional local requirements; please contact your local school district or charter school for this information.

How does a student receive a rigorous course of study waiver?

In order for the waiver to be granted, the following steps must be taken:

- The student's parent or guardian must apply to the district or charter school board with evidence that the student meets or exceeds specific academic standard(s). Examples of evidence could include a course syllabi, assessments, or other evidence of learning.

- The school district or charter school board must review the evidence and determine that the student does in fact meet or exceed the academic standards required for graduation. The student’s cumulative folder should then have written documentation of the board’s approval.
- If the school board, or the charter school’s board of directors determines that the standards in a course meet or exceed specific academic standards (i.e., Advanced Placement, IB, PSEO) the district may invite parents to waive the standards. A letter must to be signed and dated by the student’s parents or guardians and placed in the student’s cumulative folder stating the following:

“I have reviewed the academic standards that will be waived if my child satisfactorily completes (fill in name of rigorous course or learning opportunity outside of the curriculum) and hereby provide my consent for the waiver to be considered by the school board.”

If all corresponding standards in a course are met, and the evidence is signed and dated by the student’s parents or guardians and is placed in the student’s cumulative folder, the district can waive the course requirement. This statute does not waive the credit requirements for students.

What are examples of the waiver usage?

The waiver conditions apply when the rigorous course and the academic standards correspond, such as when they represent the same discipline (for example, U.S. History standards waived for AP American History). The following chart identifies *some* of the more common rigorous courses/subjects that clearly equal or exceed the rigor of the corresponding state academic standards.

Rigorous Course	Corresponding State Standards for which waivers are recommended if the student satisfactorily meets the other two conditions listed in the law
AP American History	U.S. History and Historical Skills
AP European History (1450-present)	World History and Historical Skills
AP American Government	Government and Citizenship
AP Chemistry or AP Physics	Chemistry or Physics
IB Biology	Biology
IB Environmental Systems	Earth and Space Science
PSEO Economics	Economics
PSEO Biology	Biology
PSEO American History	U.S. History
Concurrent Enrollment (CIS) Macroeconomics	Economics

Decisions to be made by local school boards

Many rigorous course waiver requests involve student study that falls outside the specific course titles listed in the chart. For example, particular courses and learning opportunities associated with career and technical education (CTE) may meet the requirements of the rigorous course waiver. It is the responsibility of the local school board to determine if other rigorous courses of study, or learning opportunities outside the curriculum of the school or district, or approved preparatory programs for employment or postsecondary education, are each equally or more rigorous than the corresponding state or local academic standard required for students, and whether or not a student who takes the rigorous study should be precluded from taking the required academic standards. The local school board retains responsibility for adherence to the law when determining whether particular rigorous educational experiences qualify for a waiver from required academic standards.

For more information

Questions about academic standards, AP/IB, Career and Technical Education, PSEO and concurrent enrollment can be directed to the following staff at the Minnesota Department of Education:

- Academic Standards and Rigorous Course Use
[Doug Paulson](#)
- Career and Technical Education, AP/IB/PSEO and Concurrent Enrollment
[Paula Palmer](#)