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DPS: 2012-179

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Pam Stewart

DATE: December 7, 2012

SUBJECT: Online Course Graduation Requirement

Governor Rick Scott signed House Bill 7063, Digital Learning, into law with an effective date of July 1, 2012. One of its provisions amends section [1003.428\(2\)\(c\)](#), Florida Statutes (F.S.), relating to the online graduation requirement for the 24-credit general requirements for high school graduation option, to do the following:

- Prohibit a school district from requiring a student to take an online course to meet graduation requirements outside of the school day or in addition to a student's full schedule of courses for a given semester.
- Provide exemptions for meeting the online course graduation requirement for students who have individual educational plans (IEPs) that indicate an online course would not be appropriate or for students who have been enrolled in a Florida high school for one year or less.

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This memorandum provides frequently asked questions related to the online course graduation requirement. If you have additional questions, please contact Helen Lancashire, School Counseling Consultant, at (850) 245-7840 or Helen.Lancashire@fldoe.org.

PS/hl

Attachment

cc: Assistant Superintendents
District Curriculum Contacts
Student Services Directors
Exceptional Student Education Directors
High School Principals
Guidance Counselors

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the online course requirement for graduation?

For students entering ninth grade beginning in 2011–12, at least one course required for graduation must be completed through online learning.

2. What is the definition of an online course to meet this requirement?

An online course is a formal education program involving student–teacher interaction in which a student learns mostly through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace.

3. Are students seeking diplomas other than the standard 24-credit high-school diploma required to meet the online course graduation requirement (e.g., International Baccalaureate (IB), 18-credit, special diplomas)?

No. Only students seeking the standard 24-credit high-school diploma must meet this graduation requirement.

4. How can students seeking the 24-credit standard diploma meet this requirement?

Students may meet this requirement by completing an online high school course offered by:

- Florida Virtual School (FLVS)
- A district high school (to include traditional district schools, district franchises, and virtual charter schools)
- A postsecondary school as an online dual enrollment course
- District virtual instruction programs
- District middle school (high school level course).

5. Are students required to pass the online course in order to meet the online graduation requirement?

Yes. Section 1003.428, Florida Statutes (F.S.), specifies the course must be within the 24 credits and completed through online learning.

6. The legislation states that an online course taken in grades 6–8 fulfills this requirement. Does this mean an online middle school course fulfills this requirement?

No. The course taken during middle school has to be within the 24 credits required for high school graduation.

7. Does the online course need to be taught by a qualified, Florida-certified instructor?

Yes. The teacher providing the instruction (online or face-to-face) must meet the certification requirements for instructional staff under Chapter 1012, F.S., and be certified to teach the course. Information on certification requirements for specific courses can be found in the [Course Code Directory](#).

8. If a student successfully completes half of a full credit online class, does that mean that the student has met the graduation requirement?

No. The law specifies that one course within the 24 credits must be completed through online learning. Therefore, the student must complete a course. If it is a year-long course, then the student must earn the full credit to meet the graduation requirement.

9. Can a half-credit online course meet the online course graduation requirement?

Yes. A half-credit online course may meet this requirement as long as it is within the 24 credits required for graduation.

10. Can credit-recovery online courses be used to meet the online course graduation requirement?

Yes, as long as the student earns high school credit through an online course as defined in question 2.

11. If a student takes a course with online and face-to-face components in a computer lab or classroom in a district school, will the course still meet this graduation requirement?

Yes, as long as the course meets the requirements for an online course as defined in question 2.

12. If a course were taught using an e-book in a traditional classroom, would that meet the online course graduation requirement?

No. This would not meet the requirement.

13. If the course were taught in a traditional classroom using an interactive white board and digital readers, would that meet the online course graduation requirement?

No. This would not meet the requirement.

14. What is the definition of the Online Course data element (197235) and when must the online course used to satisfy the graduation requirement be reported to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) database?

The Online Course data element (197235) is defined as an indicator of whether or not the student took this course under the conditions that met the definition of an online course as per s. 1002.321(3) and s. 1003.428(2), F.S. This data element is located at the following website: http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_1213/197235.pdf.

The codes are listed as follows:

- N – This course was not taken under conditions that met the requirements to be an online course per s. 1002.321(3) and s. 1003.428(2), F.S.
- Y – This course was taken under conditions that met the requirements of being an online course as per s. 1002.321(3) and s. 1003.428(2), F.S.

The data element entitled Online Course (197235) is to be reported during Survey 5 on the Student Course Transcript Information Record Format.

<http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/CCD/1213.asp>.

15. Are there exceptions for meeting this requirement?

Yes. Section 1003.428, F.S., provides for two exceptions. The first is for students with disabilities whose IEP indicates that an online course is inappropriate. The second exception is for students who transfer into a Florida public high school who have less than a year left in high school.

16. What is the definition of the Online Course Exempt data element (197242)?

The Online Course Exempt data element (197242) is defined as an indicator of whether the student is exempt from the requirement of taking an online course as per s. 1002.321(3) and 1003.428(2)(c), F.S. This new data element is located at the following website: http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_1213/197242.pdf.

The codes are listed as follows:

- D – This requirement does not apply to this student because the student has an individual educational plan (IEP) under s. 1003.57, F.S., which indicates that an online course would be inappropriate.
- T – This requirement does not apply to this student because the student is enrolled in a Florida high school and has less than one academic year remaining in high school.

17. How will the exceptions for meeting the online graduation requirement be reported to the FDOE database?

The data element entitled Online Course Exempt (197242) is to be reported during Survey 5 on the Student Course Transcript Information Record Format.

<http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/CCD/1213.asp>.

18. Before determining that a student’s IEP should include an exception to the requirement for participation in an online course in accordance with section 1003.428(2)(c), F.S., what information should the IEP team consider?

Because many students with disabilities will be accessing online instruction in a postsecondary setting, it is of critical importance that efforts be made to support the participation of students with disabilities pursuing a standard diploma in the online course requirement. IEP teams should follow the same guidelines for developing a quality IEP for online learning environments as they do for face-to-face learning environments. Regarding an online course, the team should consider the following questions:

- What supports, services, accessible instructional materials (AIMs), assistive technologies, and accommodations will the student need to be able to participate and progress in an online learning environment?
- Are there AIMs, assistive technologies, or accommodations that the student will need time to become proficient in using in order to be able to participate and progress in an online course?

If the IEP team decides that a student does not have sufficient time to become proficient in these tools to participate and progress in an online course for the coming school year, the IEP team should include goals, supports, services, and AIMs in the IEP for the purpose of assisting the student to become proficient in the use of the technologies needed for future participation in an online course. The IEP team will reconsider the student’s ability to participate in an online course at the next IEP review.

19. At what grades should IEP teams start to consider the services and supports needed for participation in online learning environments?

For all middle and high school grade levels, IEP teams should start considering the services, supports, technologies, and accommodations a student will need for online learning. This can be a part of the consideration of what a student will need to complete online End-of-Course (EOC) assessments and other online tests successfully.