

Emergency Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing for the 2020-2021 School Year

November 19, 2020

Standards of Accreditation

The Standards of Accreditation at 8VAC20-131-110 **B5B4** permit local school divisions to award a verified credit in writing to a student who “meets the criteria for the receipt of a verified credit in English (writing) by demonstrating mastery of the content of the associated course on an authentic performance assessment, that complies with guidelines adopted by the board.”

Purpose of the ***Emergency Guidelines***

In response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Emergency Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing for 2020-2021* provide guidance to and additional flexibility for school divisions who/that choose to award verified credits in writing using local authentic performance assessments. The *Emergency Guidelines* are specific to student writing collected during the 2020-2021 school year for inclusion in a student's collection of evidence (also “body of evidence”) used to verify a credit in writing. The flexibility generally applies to one writing sample collected during the 2020-2021 school year. As an exception to this provision, school divisions that were unable to collect a writing sample during the spring 2020 semester due to the emergency school closures may collect no more than two writing samples during the 2020-2021 school year under the flexibility extended by these *Emergency Guidelines*.

Definition of Authentic Performance Assessments

Performance assessments generally require students to perform a task or create a product that is scored using a rubric. Authentic performance assessments often include tasks that mirror those that might occur in a “real-life” situation.

Implementation Schedule for the 2017 English Standards of Learning

New English Standards of Learning (SOL) were adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in 2017. The 2018-2019 school year **represents/represented** a transition year in which content common to the 2010 and 2017 English SOL **will be/was** taught. The 2019-2020 school year **will be/was** the first year of full implementation of the 2017 English SOL.

Local Authentic Performance Assessment Requirements for Students Enrolled in Grade 11 English or Beyond in the 2018-2019 School Year

Students who complete grade 11 English in the 2018-2019 school year or who have previously completed instruction in the Grades 9-11 English SOL have been instructed under the 2010 English SOL. Local performance assessments used to verify credits in writing for these students

must measure the SOL included in the [2010 End-of-Course Writing Test Blueprint](#) and must include a persuasive writing sample. School divisions will score such writing samples using readers trained and qualified through the rubric and accompanying materials available in the [Understand Scoring](#) application.

The student writing samples and the results of any other assessment used by the school division to determine student proficiency in the writing skills included in the 2010 English SOL for grades 9-11 constitute a body of evidence. School divisions will review the body of evidence against the current End-of-Course Writing [performance level descriptors](#) to determine students' level of achievement in high school writing. Performance levels for high school writing are advanced, proficient, or does not meet the standard (fails). Students who are judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should be awarded a verified credit.

Local Authentic Performance Assessment Requirements for Students Enrolled in Grade 10 English or Below in the 2018-2019 School Year

SOL Coverage

Students who ~~are~~^{were} enrolled in grade 10 English or below in the 2018-2019 school year will be instructed primarily using the 2017 English SOL. School divisions that choose to award verified credits to these students in writing using authentic performance assessments must administer assessments that cover the writing and research standards included in the English SOL for grades 9-11. A list of the applicable SOL is provided below.

Grade 9 English: SOL 9.6, 9.7, 9.8

Grade 10 English: SOL 10.6, 10.7, 10.8

Grade 11 English: SOL 11.6, 11.7, 11.8

Evaluation of Performance Tasks

Performance tasks used to award verified credits must be evaluated using the [Virginia Quality Criterion Tool for Performance-Based Assessments](#) and must include three types of writing covered by the English SOL for grades 9-11: persuasive, analytic, and argumentative. At least one of the writing samples must include a research component. School divisions are encouraged to develop writing assessments that require students to read a passage and respond to what they have read. Because the verified credit in writing covers content from the 2017 English SOL for grades 9-11, writing samples should be collected throughout the student's high school career. Examples of writing assignments that address each type of writing are available [online](#). The examples provide ideas for school divisions to use in developing tasks but would require school division staff to customize them by providing additional detail before they could be administered to students.

Completion of Writing Samples

To the greatest extent possible during the 2020-2021 school year, All writing samples collected for the purpose of verifying a credit in writing ~~must should continue to~~ be completed at school under the supervision of school personnel. ~~However, in recognition of the challenges presented by the pandemic, school divisions may collect one writing sample that has been completed independently by the student in a virtual environment while adhering to the conditions and expectations established by the local school division for the completion of local assessments that are administered virtually. As an exception to this provision, school divisions that were unable to collect a writing sample during the spring 2020 semester due to the emergency school closures may collect no more than two writing samples during the 2020-2021 school year under the flexibility extended by these Emergency Guidelines. Regardless of whether writing samples are completed at school or in a virtual environment, Writing samples they~~ must be completed independently by the student. ~~In addition, special consideration must be given to ensuring that students are provided the accommodations necessary to access the assessments.~~

Scoring Student Writing Samples

Student writing samples must be scored using the state-developed high school writing rubric by scorers who have been trained on the application of the rubric. ~~Teachers used as scorers shall not score their own students' writing samples. During the 2020-2021 school year, teachers who have been trained on the application of the rubric and who have fulfilled the training requirements will be permitted to score their own students' writing samples, limited to one sample per student. The use of a second trained scorer who is not the student's teacher is strongly recommended. A draft of the~~The high school writing scoring rubric may be found [online](#), and ~~materials to be used in training scorers on the application of the rubric will be available in the late summer or early fall of 2019.~~are available in [Understand Scoring](#). Depending on the availability of funding, the Virginia Department of Education will provide opportunities for the external verification of local scores.

Determining if a Verified Credit Should be Awarded

The student writing samples and the results of any other assessment used by the school division to determine student proficiency in the writing skills included in the English SOL for grades 9-11 constitute a body of evidence ~~(or collection of evidence)~~. School divisions will ~~convene a local panel to~~ review the ~~body~~collection of evidence against the performance level descriptors that describe the student's level of achievement in high school writing and will determine if the student's achievement is advanced, proficient, or does not meet the standard (fails). Students ~~who are writing that is~~ judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should be awarded a verified credit. ~~More information on performance level descriptors for student achievement in high school writing based on the 2017 SOL for grades 9, 10, and 11 will be available in early fall 2019. Local panels convened to determine if a student should be awarded a verified credit~~

in writing may meet virtually. Additional materials to support school divisions in evaluating collections of evidence to determine if student should receive verified credits in writing will be available in late fall 2020. School divisions should ensure that individuals reviewing students' collections of evidence in writing are familiar with these materials.

Verified Credit Plans

On an annual basis, school divisions will be asked to notify the Virginia Department of Education if they choose to use local performance assessments to verify credits in writing. School divisions that choose this option must prepare verified credit plans which that describe how the local performance assessments will meet the requirements included in these guidelines. Verified Credit Plans will be subject to periodic review by Department staff on behalf of the Board. Information gathered during the reviews will be used to provide technical assistance to school divisions and may be shared in summary form with the Board. Note that the Verified Credit Plan: End-of-Course Writing Form for the 2020-2021 School Year has been updated to reflect the additional flexibility afforded by these *Emergency Guidelines*.

Desk Reviews

Department staff will conduct annual “desk reviews” in which documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of these reviews will be to determine how local school divisions that choose to use performance assessments to verify writing credits are implementing these guidelines. The reviews will help Department staff to identify technical assistance needs and to identify best practices for sharing with other Virginia school divisions. Documents reviewed may include tasks administered to students, division-specific materials used to train teachers, and samples of student writing from the various score points of the rubric.

Use of Local Authentic Performance Assessments in State Accreditation or Federal Accountability

The results of the local authentic performance assessments will not be used to designate state accreditation or federal accountability status.