

Virginia Board of Education

EMERGENCY GUIDELINES Locally-Awarded Verified Credits

Pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-253.13:4
Revised January 28, 2021

Context

On March 23, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam ordered that all K-12 schools close for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19. The extended school closures prevented divisions from administering spring assessments, including those required to earn a verified credit required for graduation. Additionally, many school divisions have employed remote and hybrid instructional models in the 2020-2021 school year in order to maintain the health and safety of students and staff amid ongoing pandemic conditions. While new instruction has resumed for the 2020-2021 school year and many statutory and regulatory requirements remain in place for 2020-2021, students are still adapting to new and evolving instructional modalities.

Recognizing that the extended school closures and ongoing effects of COVID-19 have impacted students seeking to earn a verified credit in the spring and summer of 2020 as well as the 2020-2021 school year, the Board of Education has put forth the below emergency guidelines on locally-awarded verified credits for high school credit-bearing courses for students meeting certain conditions.

The below is based on the Board's authority to promulgate requirements for graduation per § [22.1-253.13:4](#) in the *Code of Virginia* as well as its *Regulations Establishing Standards for the Accreditation of Public Schools*, or Standards of Accreditation. To allow for implementation, the Superintendent of Public Instruction has also issued waivers of budgetary and regulatory language per authority in [Executive Order 51](#) and [Chapter 1289](#) of the 2020 Acts of Assembly that accompany these *Emergency Guidelines*. A list of all available waivers can be found on the Virginia Department of Education website [here](#).

The Standards of Accreditation and [Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards For Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia](#), as revised by the Board of Education in May 2019, remains in effect for the purpose of awarding locally-awarded verified credits for students enrolled in high school credit-bearing courses, excluding the exceptional cases enumerated below.

Locally-Awarded Verified Credits

[8VAC20-131-110](#)(B) of the Standards of Accreditation states:

B. A "verified unit of credit" or "verified credit" is a credit awarded for a course in which a student earns a standard unit of credit, and meets one of the following:

1. Achieves a passing score on a corresponding end-of-course SOL test. In accordance with the provisions of the Standards of Quality, students may earn a standard and verified unit of credit for any elective course in which the core academic SOL course content has been integrated and the student passes the related end-of-course SOL test. Such course and test combinations must be approved by the board.

Upon waiver of the 140-clock-hour requirement according to board guidelines, qualified students who have received a standard unit of credit shall be permitted to sit for the relevant SOL test to earn a verified credit without having to meet the 140-clock-hour requirement.

2. Achieves a passing score on an additional test, as defined in 8VAC20-131-5, as a part of the Virginia Assessment Program.
3. Meets the criteria for the receipt of a locally awarded verified credit when the student has not passed a corresponding SOL test.
 - a. Students who enter the ninth grade for the first time prior to the 2018-2019 school year and do not pass SOL tests in English, mathematics, science or history and social science may receive locally awarded verified credits from the local school board in accordance with criteria established in guidelines adopted by the board. Credit accommodations for students with disabilities may be used to confer locally awarded verified credits as provided in 8VAC20-131-50 B 3.
 - b. Students who enter the ninth grade for the first time in the 2018-2019 school year or thereafter and do not pass SOL tests in English, mathematics, laboratory science, or history and social science may receive locally awarded verified credits from the local school board in accordance with criteria established in guidelines adopted by the board. No more than one locally awarded verified credit may be used to satisfy graduation requirements, except as provided in 8VAC20-131-51 B 3 for students with disabilities seeking a standard diploma.
4. 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. Such students shall not also be required to take the corresponding SOL test in English (writing).

Students are still able to earn a verified credit by passing the corresponding end-of-course test or another substitute test approved by the Virginia Board of Education. Students may also use a performance assessment to earn a verified credit in writing. The spring 2020 testing window was extended for students who wished to earn a verified credit by taking the associated SOL end-of-course assessment.

Board of Education’s Guidance on the Award of Locally-Awarded Verified Credits Under Certain Conditions Related to COVID-19

The locally-awarded verified credit process (LAVC) has been revised to provide divisions with the flexibility to offer certain students who have been affected by the extended school closures and ongoing effects of COVID-19 additional support in earning a verified credit. This flexibility applies only to (1) students impacted by the 2019-2020 extended school closure; and (2) student impacted by ongoing pandemic conditions in the 2020-2021 school year.

PLEASE NOTE: Student eligibility and the locally-awarded verified credit process vary between categories.

Students Impacted by the 2019-2020 Extended School Closure

The following students may be considered for eligibility to use the revised LAVC process:

- Students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who were enrolled in a high-school credit bearing course that was eligible for a verified credit in the spring or summer of 2020.
- Students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who earned a standard credit prior to the spring 2020 semester, seeking ONE verified credit, and who meet the following conditions:
 - previously failed the corresponding Standards of Learning (SOL) end-of-course test needed for verified credit with any scaled score;

- were scheduled to take the SOL end-of-course test in the spring 2020 test administration; and
- in spring or summer 2020 were provided with targeted and sustained remediation or enrolled in a course intended to prepare them for taking the previously failed SOL end-of-course test.

To be eligible to earn a LAVC in reading, writing, mathematics, science, or history/social science under this guidance, a student meeting one of the above conditions must:

1. Pass the corresponding high school course; **AND**
2. Demonstrate mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives of the entire course through a locally-determined verification process.

For students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who were enrolled in a high-school credit bearing course that was eligible for a verified credit in the spring or summer of 2020, there is no requirement that a student must have also taken the associated SOL assessment in order to be eligible for a locally-awarded verified credit under the emergency guidelines. For students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who earned a standard credit prior to the spring 2020 semester, there is no requirement that the student must have taken the associated SOL assessment for a second time or earned a score within the 375 - 399 range on the first assessment.

Locally-Awarded Verified Credit Process for Students Impacted by the 2019-2020 Extended School Closure

The Board still requires local school boards to adopt policies to govern procedures used to confer locally-awarded verified credit under these emergency guidelines. The verification process shall include:

- The appointment by the local school board of a local review panel comprised of at least three educators. Different panels may be appointed for individual schools or groups of schools, at the local school board's discretion.
- The local review panel will review information that provides evidence of the student's mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives. The panel shall have discretion in determining the information to be considered and may include, but not be limited to: results of classroom assignments, division-wide exams, course grades, and additional academic assignments (e.g., papers, projects, essays, or written questions) as deemed appropriate.
 - Per these emergency guidelines, local review panels are able to consider whether a locally-awarded verified credit may be awarded to all students in a particular course, rather than on a student-by-student basis, based on:
 - their successful completion of a locally-developed or nationally-normed summative assessment; OR
 - the student's grade in the course. If schools choose to award a LAVC in this limited instance based solely on a student's grades in the course, then the local review panel may review the teacher's course expectations and award verified credit to all students in the course with passing grades;
 - School divisions choosing to award a LAVC based solely on samples of student work or portfolios must review those samples on a student-by-student basis.
- Based on the evidence reviewed, the local review panel may award the verified credit, deny the verified credit, suggest participation in a remedial program and retesting, or make additional academic assignments as deemed appropriate prior to determining whether to award the verified credit.

Students Impacted by Ongoing Pandemic Conditions in the 2020-2021 School Year

A student who is enrolled in a course that is eligible for a verified credit in the fall of 2020 or spring of 2021 has two options for accessing and earning a LAVC depending on the subject area.

PLEASE NOTE: The eligibility criteria and LAVC process is different for each of the two options.

OPTION ONE: Students Impacted by Ongoing Pandemic Conditions During the Fall of 2020 or Spring or Summer of 2021 Semester and Seeking a Verified Credit in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, History/Social Science or Science

The following students may be considered for eligibility to use the revised LAVC process:

- Students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who were enrolled in a high-school credit bearing course that was eligible for a verified credit in the fall of 2020 or spring or summer of 2021.
- Students graduating in the fall of 2020 or spring or summer of 2021 **ONLY** who earned a standard credit prior to the spring 2020 semester, seeking **TWO** verified credits, and who meet the following conditions:
 - have not passed the corresponding SOL end-of-course test needed for verified credit;
 - were provided with targeted and sustained remediation or enrolled in a course intended to prepare them for taking the SOL end-of-course test prior to attempting it.

To be eligible to earn a LAVC in reading, writing, mathematics, history/social science or science under this guidance, a student meeting one of the above eligibility categories must:

1. Pass the corresponding high school course; **AND**
2. Attempt the associated SOL assessment and receive a score within the 350 – 399 range. For courses taken prior to spring 2020, the test attempt may have occurred immediately following the eligible course; **AND**
3. Demonstrate mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives of the entire course through a locally-determined verification process.

For students meeting one of the eligible criteria listed under Option One, there is no requirement that the student must have taken the associated SOL assessment for a **second** time. However, a student may test a second time to reach a score in the modified 350-399 range and become eligible for the below locally-awarded verified credit process.

Locally-Awarded Verified Credit Process for Students Impacted by Ongoing Pandemic Conditions During the Fall of 2020 or Spring or Summer of 2021 Semester and Seeking a Verified Credit in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, History/Social Science or Science

The Board still requires local school boards to adopt policies to govern procedures used to confer locally-awarded verified credit under these emergency guidelines. The verification process shall include:

- The appointment by the local school board of a local review panel comprised of at least three educators. Different panels may be appointed for individual schools or groups of schools, at the local school board's discretion.
- The local review panel will review information that provides evidence of the student's mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives. The panel shall have discretion in determining the information to be considered and may include, but not be limited to: results of classroom assignments, division-wide exams, course grades, and additional academic assignments (e.g., papers, projects, essays, or written questions) as deemed appropriate.
 - Per these emergency guidelines, local review panels are able to consider whether a locally-awarded verified credit may be awarded to all students in a particular course, rather than on a student-by-student basis, based on:

- their successful completion of a locally-developed or nationally-normed summative assessment; OR
- the student's grade in the course. If schools choose to award a LAVC in this limited instance based solely on a student's grades in the course, then the local review panel may review the teacher's course expectations and award verified credit to all students in the course with passing grades;
 - o School divisions choosing to award a LAVC based solely on samples of student work or portfolios must review those samples on a student-by-student basis.
- Based on the evidence reviewed, the local review panel may award the verified credit, deny the verified credit, suggest participation in a remedial program and retesting, or make additional academic assignments as deemed appropriate prior to determining whether to award the verified credit.

OPTION TWO: Students Impacted by Ongoing Pandemic Conditions during the Fall of 2020 or Spring or Summer of 2021 Semester and Seeking a Verified Credit in History and Social Science

The following students may be considered for eligibility to use the revised locally-awarded verified credit process:

- Students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who were enrolled in a high-school credit bearing course in history/social science that was eligible for a verified credit in the fall of 2020 or spring or summer of 2021.

To be eligible to earn a locally-awarded verified credit in history/social science under this guidance, a student meeting the above must:

1. Pass the corresponding high school course; **AND**
2. Demonstrate mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives of the entire course through a locally-determined verification process that must consist of an evaluation of a collection of evidence, including the student's responses to performance assessment tasks.

For students graduating in 2020-2021 or beyond who were enrolled in a high-school credit bearing history/social science course that was eligible for a verified credit in the fall of 2020 or spring or summer of 2021, there is no requirement that the student must have taken the associated SOL assessment.

Locally-Awarded Verified Credit Process for Students Impacted by Ongoing Pandemic Conditions during the Fall 2020 or Spring or Summer 2021 Semester and Seeking a Verified Credit in History and Social Science

The Board still requires local school boards to adopt policies to govern procedures used to confer locally-awarded verified credit under these emergency guidelines. The verification process shall include:

- The appointment by the local school board of a local review panel comprised of at least three educators. Different panels may be appointed for individual schools or groups of schools, at the local school board's discretion.
 - The local review panel will review information that provides evidence of the student's mastery of the standards, competencies, and objectives. The evidence reviewed must include the student's responses to performance tasks scored with the state developed rubric. The panel shall have discretion in determining if additional information should be considered which may include, but not be limited to: results of classroom assignments, division-wide exams, course grades, and additional academic assignments (e.g., papers, projects, essays, or written questions) as deemed appropriate.
 - Based on the evidence reviewed, the local review panel may award the verified credit, deny the verified credit, suggest participation in a remedial program and retesting, or make additional academic assignments as deemed appropriate prior to determining whether to award the verified credit.
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Impact on Cap of Locally-Awarded Verified Credits

The Superintendent of Public Instruction exercised authority granted in Executive Order Fifty-One (2020) to ensure that any LAVC awarded to a student per these emergency guidelines will not count towards the cap on LAVCs, as provided in 8VAC20-131-110 and the *Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*.

LAVCs earned in accordance with the emergency guidelines can be applied to both standard and advanced diplomas, including those students under the graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-50.

Additional Considerations

Students eligible for a special permission credit accommodation should continue to use the IEP/504 process.

For those local school boards that have an existing policy on the administration of LAVCs, the school board may suspend their policy for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year if a disclaimer is added to the written policy. The disclaimer should note that the above emergency guidelines continue to apply to any high school credit-bearing course eligible for verified credit in which the enrolled student meets one or more of the above eligibility categories. This disclaimer should remain as part of the local school board policy for the duration of its impact on any affected student's graduation.