



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Higher Education

ADMISSIONS STANDARDS FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS UNDERGRADUATE CAMPUSES

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPDATED June 2015

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to additional frequently asked questions about the minimum admissions standards for our state universities and four undergraduate University of Massachusetts (UMass) campuses. This updated document provides responses to new questions that have been asked by students, parents, and family members; college admissions officers; high school principals, teachers, and guidance counselors; and others.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) has also published an updated guidance document about the admissions standards, which is available at the following website: <http://www.mass.edu/forstufam/admissions/admissionsstandards.asp>. This document includes detailed information about the subject-matter, GPA, and other standards that have been adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE).

If you have other questions or require additional assistance, please contact Winnie Hagan (whagan@bhe.mass.edu) at DHE or Nyal Fuentes (nfuentes@doe.mass.edu) at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE).

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the rationale behind establishing the minimum admissions standards?

These admissions standards were established to emphasize the importance of successfully completing a rigorous academic course of study in high school (such as [MassCore](#), a recommended program of studies that includes specific numbers and types of courses across academic subjects), to ensure that students are well prepared to complete college courses and their degrees, and increase consistency across the state universities and undergraduate UMass campuses.

2. Do these minimum admissions standards apply to all state university and undergraduate UMass campuses? What about community colleges?

Yes – these standards apply to all state universities and UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, UMass Dartmouth, and UMass Lowell.

The standards do not apply to the community colleges, which implement open admissions and enrollment policies. For additional information about admissions policies at the community colleges, please contact the admissions office at the institution(s) to which you are interested in applying.

3. If a student meets these minimum standards, is he or she guaranteed admission to a state university or UMass undergraduate campus?

No. Eligibility for admission is not an entitlement of admission for any applicant; as such, meeting the **minimum** standards does not guarantee admission, since admissions officers consider a wide range of factors when reviewing students' applications, and the state universities and UMass campuses can establish additional requirements. For information about any additional requirements, please contact the admissions office at the institution(s) to which the student is interested in applying.

4. Given the variety and large number of mathematics, science, social science and other subject-matter courses that are offered at high schools across Massachusetts, will ESE issue specific guidelines or requirements regarding the alignment of these courses to the admissions standards?

School district and high school administrators in Massachusetts have the flexibility to offer courses that are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks at a minimum; these courses can also address additional issues and topics that are not included in the Frameworks. In addition, high school students in Massachusetts are not required by the Commonwealth to complete specific academic courses in order to graduate. Course requirements for graduation are set at the local level. As such, ESE will not issue additional guidelines or requirements, but ESE staff members will continue to respond to questions about the admissions standards.

District and high school administrators and educators should review the admissions requirements, especially the subject-matter requirements, to ensure that the content and sequence of high school courses will enable students interested in applying to state universities and UMass to meet all requirements. In addition, these administrators and educators should review course titles and descriptions to ensure that college admissions officers will clearly understand how specific courses meet the admissions standards.

Lastly, high school transcripts should clearly indicate which courses are designated as mathematics, science, or comparable courses so that admissions officers can easily determine if the student has met all academic course requirements.

Note: Comparable courses are defined as coursework that is equal to or beyond the content defined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

5. Are students required to earn a minimum high school GPA in order to be admitted to a state university or UMass undergraduate campus?

The minimum average GPA for freshman applicants, weighted for accelerated (Honors and Advanced Placement) courses, is 3.0 for both the state universities and the UMass undergraduate campuses.

However, if an applicant does not have an average weighted GPA of 3.0, s/he must earn specific SAT or ACT scores in order to be considered for admission. Detailed information about the sliding scale for SAT and ACT scores is presented in the DHE guidance document, available at:

<http://www.mass.edu/forstufam/admissions/admissionsstandards.asp>, on pages 4 and 5.

Note: no applicant with a high school GPA below 2.0 will be admitted to a state university or UMass undergraduate campus.

6. How should the GPA be weighted?

Detailed information about calculating the weighted GPA is presented in the Appendix of the DHE guidance document on pages 13 - 18.

7. Does the minimum required GPA have to be based on grades earned in all high school courses, or just in the required academic courses?

The average and weighted GPA must be calculated based on all high school level academic courses completed and grades received for courses in which the student is currently enrolled (for example, mathematics courses in which the student is enrolled during the senior year of high school).

8. What if a student wants to apply for early admission to a state university or UMass campus?

Early admission applicants should submit grades earned during their first six semesters of high school. Grades earned during remaining semesters should be

forwarded to the state university or UMass campus as soon as they become available, but the weighted GPA does not need to be recalculated.

- 9. If a high school student fails a course during the regular academic year and is not admitted to an institution, could s/he be eligible for admission if s/he successfully completes the course during summer school?**

If a student successfully completes a course during the summer after the end of his/her senior year and after most colleges have made final admissions decisions, admissions officers may choose to reconsider the student's admissibility if the failing grade was the sole reason for denying admission to the institution. The average and weighted GPA may be recalculated to reflect the additional course.

- 10. What is the required length of an academic course?**

An academic course is equivalent to one full year of study. In many high schools, two- or three-semester courses may be equivalent to a full year course, or one full year of study may be completed over the course of one semester. Applicants to the state universities and UMass undergraduate campuses are required to successfully complete the specific number of courses for each academic discipline. Detailed information about the course requirements is presented in the DHE guidance document on page 3.

- 11. Are applicants required to earn a specific class rank in order to be admitted to a state university or UMass undergraduate campus?**

Class rank is not included in the minimum admissions standards for admission. However, state universities and UMass campuses could consider class rank when reviewing the candidate's application; for information about any additional requirements, please contact the admissions office at the institution(s) to which the student is interested in applying.

QUESTIONS ABOUT MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE COURSES

- 12. Does a pre-Algebra course count toward the requirement that students must successfully complete four mathematics courses?**

No. Pre-Algebra is not considered to be a high school mathematics course. Freshman applicants are required to complete four mathematics courses, including Algebra I and II and Geometry or Trigonometry (or comparable coursework), as well as a mathematics course during the final year of high school.

13. **If Algebra I is offered as a two-year as opposed to one-year course, and a student successfully completes this course by the end of the sophomore year and then completes Geometry or Trigonometry, Algebra II, and another mathematics course during the senior year, will s/he meet the four-year mathematics requirement?**

Yes. If Algebra I or II and Geometry or Trigonometry are offered as two-year courses by the high school, and the student successfully completes all required mathematics courses by the senior year, s/he will meet the requirement. Given differences among high schools with regard to course structures and schedules, the total number of courses completed by the student, not the duration of the courses, will be considered by admissions officials.

14. **Will all levels of mathematics courses count toward the four-year requirement?**

No. Only mathematics courses that are designed as high school level or higher will count toward the requirement.

15. **What types of science courses meet the requirement that students must complete three science courses (drawn from Natural Science and/or Physical Science and/or Technology and Engineering), including three courses with laboratory work? In addition, how should these courses be labeled on high school transcripts?**

As noted on page 1, district and high school administrators have the flexibility to offer courses that are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks but also include additional topics. As such, high schools can offer a wide range of science courses and science lab courses in the Natural and Physical Sciences as well as Technology and Engineering, and decisions about which courses are designated as science or science lab courses are made by district and school administrators.

Admissions officers should contact high school guidance counselors and other individuals to request additional information about specific courses as necessary.

Massachusetts does not have a common transcript or common course titles and descriptions, so courses will be labeled differently on students' transcripts. Per the guidance on page 1, district and high school administrators and educators should review course titles and descriptions to ensure that college admissions officers will clearly understand how specific courses are aligned with the requirement for science courses.

16. Are computer science or programming courses considered “mathematics” or “science” courses?

Computer science courses may be credited as electives or as a mathematics or a science course based on the inclusion of rigorous mathematical or scientific concepts and topics. If the courses are considered mathematics or science courses by the high school, then they should be accepted by college admissions officers. However, high school administrators and educators could be required to present additional information justifying the application of the courses toward the mathematics or science requirement.

17. What exceptions, if any, are made for students who are unable to take mathematics in the senior year?

Generally, students admitted to four-year institution of public higher education in Massachusetts are required to pass mathematics four courses (including Algebra I and II and Geometry or Trigonometry, or comparable coursework) including during the final year of high school. In limited cases, where a student has taken and passed four years of high school-level mathematics based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks including coursework beyond Algebra II (for example, pre-calculus, calculus, AP Calculus/Statistics, trigonometry) by the end of their junior year due to the organizational structure of a high school (e.g. block scheduling), that student may be considered to have met the minimum requirements for admission if there are not other available mathematics courses for the student to complete.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC GROUPS OF STUDENTS

18. Who is considered an English Language Learner?

An English language learner or limited English proficient student is defined as a student who does not speak English (or whose native language is not English) and is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English, or a student who was identified as an English language learner or limited English proficient student at any point during his or her high school career.

19. What exceptions, if any, are made for students who are English language learners?

Students who are English language learners must complete the required number of academic courses, but with two exceptions: first, these students may substitute up to two electives for the two required foreign language courses; and second, they may also substitute up to two years of English as a Second Language courses for English courses.

20. Does Massachusetts have specific requirements regarding the education of students who are home schooled, and can these students meet the admissions standards?

Students can be home schooled in accordance with education plans that are approved by the superintendent of the school district in which the student resides.

Additional information about home schooling in our state is available at the following websites:

- <http://www.mhla.org/supt/FAQforsupt.htm>; and
- <http://www.mhla.org/information/resources/articles/guidetohomeschoolinginma.pdf>.

Students who are home schooled are subject to the same admissions requirements as other students. As such, a weighted high school GPA must be calculated. However, if a student's high school transcript does not meet the curricular and GPA requirements identified in the updated DHE guidance document, and the student does not qualify for specific exceptions or allowances, s/he could be admitted to a state university or UMass campus under the special admissions category – which permits the institution of higher education to admit students (up to 10% of incoming students) with special circumstances.

21. If students with disabilities cannot meet specific components of the admissions requirements, can they still be admitted to a state university or UMass campus?

These students must complete the required academic courses and meet the GPA requirement, but detailed information about specific provisions for students with disabilities is available on page 7 of the updated DHE guidance document. In addition, if a student cannot meet a particular requirement, s/he could still be admitted to a state university or UMass campus within the special admissions category of an institution.

22. If a student is enrolled in a career/vocational technical high school program at which two years of foreign language courses are offered, will any exceptions be made if s/he does not meet the two-course requirement?

Students enrolled in career/vocational technical high school program who do not meet the foreign language requirement – the completion of two courses in the same language – must complete an additional elective course and also meet one of the additional requirements: 1) the completion of the equivalent of at least one full academic year of study or its equivalent of a foreign language; 2) a fourth full

academic year of study of science technology/engineering, which need not be a laboratory course or 3)a full academic year of study in computer science.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REVISED SATs

23. Which scores will be used?

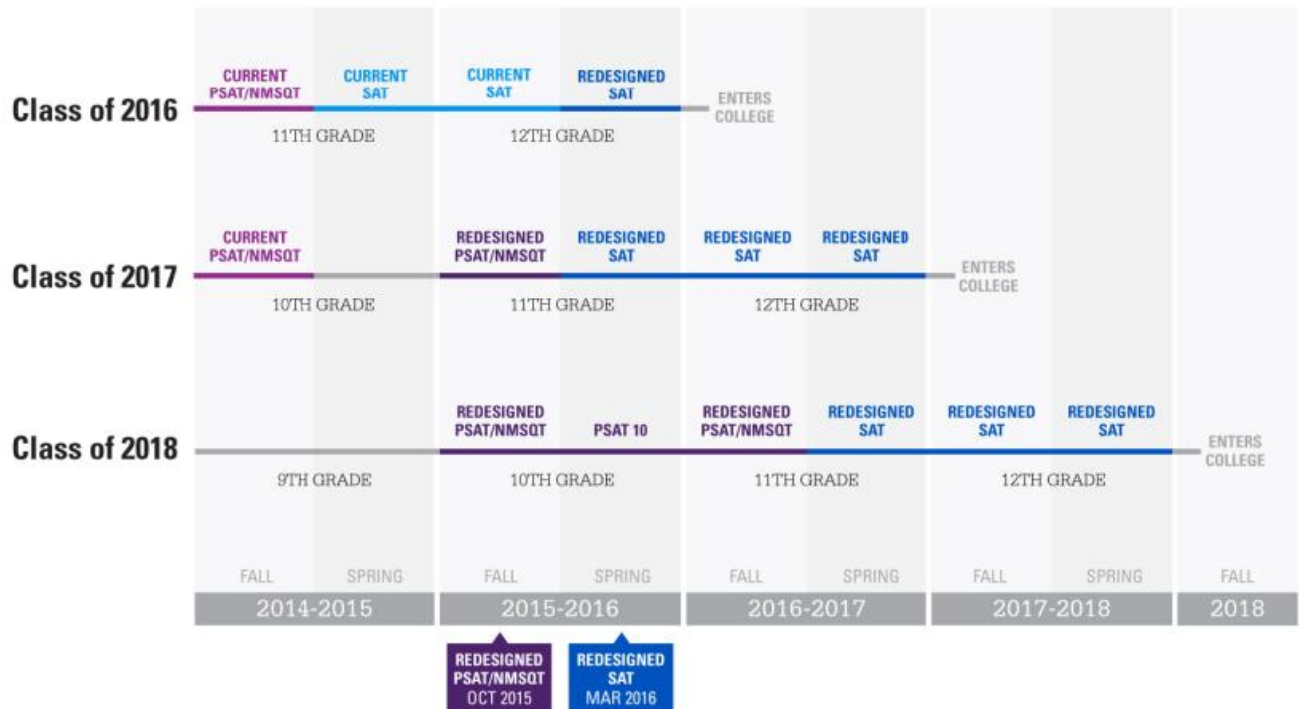
The Massachusetts State University System and the University of Massachusetts will accept current and redesigned SAT scores for admission. Applicants may submit scores from either the current SAT or the redesigned SAT (offered beginning March 2016).

24. What score will be required for admission, scholarship, or other program using cut scores?

The Department of Higher Education will release required scores on the current SAT and their corresponding scores on the redesigned SAT, as based on official concordance tables. Concordance tables will be available from the College Board after the first administration of the redesigned SAT in Spring 2016.

During the transition time when students are submitting both current and redesigned SAT scores, the DHE will work with the College Board to conduct research on students' academic performance related to their redesigned SAT scores in order to develop future policy based upon our findings.

25. What is the schedule for the redesigned SAT launch?



2014-2015

- **Fall**
 - Class of 2016 – Current PSAT/NMSQT® (11th Grade)
 - Class of 2017 – Current PSAT/NMSQT (10th Grade)
 - Class of 2018 – N/A (9th Grade)
- **Spring**
 - Class of 2016 – Current SAT(11th Grade)
 - Class of 2017 – N/A (10th Grade)
 - Class of 2018 – N/A (9th Grade)

2015-2016

- **Fall – *Redesigned PSAT/NMSQT October 2015***
 - Class of 2016 – Current SAT (12th Grade)
 - Class of 2017 – Redesigned PSAT/NMSQT (11th Grade)
 - Class of 2018 – Redesigned PSAT/NMSQT (10th Grade)
- **Spring – *Redesigned SAT March 2016***
 - Class of 2016 – Redesigned SAT (12th Grade)
 - Class of 2017 – Redesigned SAT (11th Grade)
 - Class of 2018 – PSAT™ 10 (10th Grade)

2016-2017

- **Fall**
 - Class of 2016 – Enters College
 - Class of 2017 – Redesigned SAT (12th Grade)
 - Class of 2018 – Redesigned PSAT/NMSQT (11th Grade)
- **Spring**
 - Class of 2017 – Redesigned SAT (12th Grade)
 - Class of 2018 – Redesigned SAT (11th Grade)

2017-2018

- **Fall**
 - Class of 2017 – Enters College
 - Class of 2018 – Redesigned SAT (12th Grade)
- **Spring**
 - Class of 2018 – Redesigned SAT (12th Grade)

2018

- **Fall**
 - Class of 2018 – Enters College

For more information, please visit: <https://www.collegeboard.org/delivering-opportunity/sat/redesign>.

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

- 26. How should college courses taken through a dual enrollment program be considered with regard to meeting the academic course and GPA requirements?**

Courses completed through dual enrollment programs may be used to meet the academic course requirement. Grades received in dual enrollment courses will receive additional weight – the same as the weight granted for Advanced Placement courses – in the calculation of the applicant’s weighted high school GPA.

- 27. If a student transfers into a Massachusetts high school and is unable to meet the academic course requirement, could that student apply to a state university or UMass campus as a special admissions candidate?**

Applicants not eligible for admission based on the standards for freshman, transfer, or non-traditional students may be admitted based upon the demonstration of their potential for academic success at a state university or undergraduate UMass campus. Appropriate indicators of success include steadily improving high school grades and academic achievement, a high class rank, special talents, and/or strong recommendations from appropriate individuals who have direct knowledge of the student’s ability to succeed in college (such as teachers, principals, and guidance counselors; employers; and mentors).

NOTE: Special admissions students are limited to ten percent of new enrollees at the state university or UMass campus.

- 28. How will additional information or any updates about the minimum admissions standards be shared with students, parents and family members, educators, and others?**

If new policies that have impact on the minimum admissions standards are adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education or the Board of Higher Education, DHE and ESE will partner with high school teachers, guidance counselors, principals, admissions officers, and others who work with students to ensure that updated information is disseminated to all stakeholders in a timely manner. In addition, updated information will be posted on the DHE admissions standards website at:

<http://www.mass.edu/forstufam/admissions/admissionsstandards.asp>.