



Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

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# **Undergraduate Admissions Standards for the Massachusetts State University System and the University of Massachusetts**

## **Reference Guide 2019**

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Note: This Reference Guide is reviewed each year and updated to reflect all policy changes.

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## Introduction

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The purpose of this Reference Guide is to provide detailed information about the **minimum standards for undergraduate admission** to Massachusetts' state universities and University of Massachusetts (UMass) campuses (UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, UMass Dartmouth, and UMass Lowell). Revised standards were adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education in 2012, and specific subject area requirements apply to students enrolling at state universities and UMass campuses starting in the fall of 2016 and the fall of 2017.

This guide presents the following types of information:

- A summary of undergraduate admissions requirements for first-year, transfer and other types of applicants to the state universities and UMass campuses (pages 2 - 7); and
- An explanation of exceptions and allowances (pages 8 - 10);

In addition, the Appendix presents the following types of information:

- Definitions of the different types of academic courses that meet the minimum undergraduate admissions standards (pages 12 - 13);
- The calculation of the weighted GPA by undergraduate admissions office, one component of the admissions requirements (pages 14 - 18);
- Contact information for the undergraduate admissions offices at our state universities and UMass campuses (pages 19 - 20);
- Information about financial aid resources (page 20); and
- Frequently Asked Questions (pages 21-30).

If you have any questions or need additional information, please submit your inquiries by e-mail using the [General Email Form](#) for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

# Minimum Undergraduate Admissions Requirements for State Universities and UMass Campuses

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The minimum undergraduate admissions standards for the state universities and UMass campuses were established for several primary reasons: first, to emphasize the importance of successfully completing a rigorous academic course of study in high school (example [MassCore](#), a recommended program of study that includes specific numbers and types of courses across academic subjects); second, to ensure that students are well prepared to begin college courses and their path to degree; and third, to increase consistency of undergraduate admissions across the state universities and UMass campuses.

Again, these standards are minimum requirements. Eligibility for undergraduate 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.](#)

Note: These 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.](#)

## **First-year Applicants**

The admissions standards for first-year applicants at Massachusetts' public four-year institutions have three primary components:

1. Successful completion of required academic courses in specific subjects; and
2. A minimum average and weighted grade point average (GPA) earned in high school level academic courses; and
3. The submission of SAT or ACT scores.<sup>1</sup>

## **Academic Course Requirements**

All first-year applicants are required to complete successfully the following courses in each academic subject over their four years of high school. Applicants are required to have completed 17 courses. This reflects the required completion of four courses of mathematics in high school including mathematics in the senior year, effective Fall 2016. As of Fall 2017, an additional lab science is also required.

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: A number of institutions are participating in a test optional pilot. For more information, please see page four of this document.

The table below provides detailed information about the course requirements for each academic subject.

**Table 1: Academic Course Requirements for first-year students**

Subject	Requirements for first-year students		
	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017 and beyond
<b>English</b>	4 courses		
<b>Mathematics</b>	3 courses (Algebra I & II and Geometry or Trigonometry or comparable coursework)	4 courses (Algebra I & II and Geometry or Trigonometry, or comparable coursework) including mathematics during the final year of high school*	
<b>Sciences</b>	3 courses (from Natural Science and/or Physical Science and/or Technology/Engineering, including 2 courses with laboratory work).		3 courses (from Natural Science and/or Physical Science and/or Technology/Engineering), including 3 courses with laboratory work*
<b>Social Sciences</b>	2 courses (including 1 course in U.S. History)		
<b>Foreign Languages</b>	2 courses (in a single language) <i>Note: American Sign Language (ASL) is a foreign language.</i>		
<b>Electives</b>	2 courses (from the above subjects or from the Arts & Humanities or Computer Sciences)		

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

*\*Computer science courses may substitute a required math or science course if the course qualifies for an approved substitution as determined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Please see the next page for more information.*

### Technology and Engineering:

Technology and Engineering course(s) should be identified and high school transcripts should clearly indicate that the course(s) are mathematics or science courses.

### Computer Science:

As of June 2018, MassCore policy allows for the substitution of a sufficiently rigorous computer science course for a required math or science course. Admissions officers should therefore accept the courses allowed for this substitution. Note, however, that such a substitution must have been recognized as such by the student's district, and approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as appropriate for substitution.<sup>2</sup>

### Minimum GPA Requirement

The minimum average GPA for first-year applicants, weighted for accelerated (Honors, Dual Enrollment, and Advanced Placement) courses, is 3.0 for both the state universities and the UMass campuses. Detailed information about calculating the weighted GPA is available in the Appendix, pages 14-18. Calculating the weighted GPA is a process conducted by admissions offices and does not reflect policies and practices in place in high schools.

This GPA is based on all 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).

### SAT/ACT Score Requirements for Applicants

**Note: For Fall 2016, 2017, and 2018, a number of Massachusetts State Universities and UMass campuses are participating in a test optional pilot. At present, Bridgewater State University, Fitchburg State University, Framingham State University, Mass Art, Salem State University, UMass Boston, UMass Dartmouth, UMass Lowell, and Worcester State University allow SAT test optional.**

***Please note that some programs at these institutions may require SAT submission. For further information, [please contact the admissions office at these institutions.](#)***

If an institution is not participating in the test optional pilot, all first-year applicants (including international) who meet the minimum average weighted GPA of 3.0 and are within three years of their high school graduation must submit their SAT or ACT scores.

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<sup>2</sup> For further detail, please refer to Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Higher Education materials at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2018/2018-06/item5.html> and <http://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/BHE/BHE%2018-10%20Computer%20Science%20Resolution.pdf>.

Note that this course substitution may be approved if said course is aligned with the Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards, and must include rigorous mathematical or scientific concepts. Any district asserting course qualification for this substitution must have been granted such a determination and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

International first-year students may be exempt if it is not possible to take these tests due to extreme hardship. For first-year applicants (including international) who do not meet the minimum weighted 3.0 GPA requirement, they must earn the following SAT or ACT scores in order to be eligible for admission.

**NOTE: AN APPLICANT WITH A HIGH SCHOOL MINIMUM WEIGHTED GPA BELOW 2.0 MAY NOT BE ADMITTED TO A STATE UNIVERSITY OR UMASS UNDERGRADUATE CAMPUS.**

**SAT Score Sliding Scale Tables for University of Massachusetts**

**Table 2: SAT Test Administration After March 2016**

Required SAT or ACT scores for first-year applicants to UMass

Campuses Weighted Average GPA	Combined SAT Score (Evidenced Based Reading & Writing and Mathematics)	ACT Score
2.51 - 2.99	1030	20
2.41 - 2.50	1070	21
2.31 - 2.40	1110	22
2.21 - 2.30	1140	23
2.11 - 2.20	1180	24
2.00 - 2.10	1220	25

**SAT Total Score Sliding Scale Table for State Universities**

**Table 3: SAT Administration After March 2016**

Required SAT or ACT Scores for first-year applicants to State Universities

Campuses Weighted Average GPA	Combined SAT Score (Evidenced Based Reading & Writing and Mathematics)	ACT Score
2.51 - 2.99	990	19
2.41 - 2.50	1030	20
2.31 - 2.40	1070	21
2.21 - 2.30	1110	22
2.11 - 2.20	1140	23
2.00 - 2.10	1180	24

For scores prior to March 2016, please click [here](#).

## **Transfer Applicants**

Undergraduate applicants who are interested in transferring to a state university or UMass campus must meet **one** of the following criteria:

1. Applicants must have earned between 12 and 23 transferable college credits and a minimum 2.5 college GPA; or
2. Applicants must have earned up to 23 transferable college credits and a minimum 2.0 college GPA, and must also submit a high school transcript that meets the admission standards for first-year applicants; or
3. Applicants must have earned 24 or more transferable credits and a minimum 2.0 college GPA

The college GPA must be calculated based on grades received in credit-bearing courses; grades received in developmental or remedial courses cannot be included in the calculation of the GPA. Transferable college credits are those that will be accepted by the institution to which the student is applying; they do not need to be transferrable to a specific degree program at the institution.

*MassTransfer* is a statewide policy regarding the transfer of credits among MA community colleges, state universities, and UMass campuses. This policy has two primary purposes: first, to provide community college students who complete associate's degrees and enroll in *MassTransfer* programs with full transfer of credit, guaranteed admission, and a tuition discount for enrollment at state universities or undergraduate UMass campuses; and second, to provide any student who completes the *MassTransfer* Gen Ed Foundation with the benefit of satisfying the general education, course distribution, or core requirements at any other public institution of higher education (the receiving institution can require no more than six additional credits).

Additional information about the *MassTransfer* policy is available at the following DHE website: [www.mass.edu/masstransfer](http://www.mass.edu/masstransfer).

**Note: Unless enrolled in a specific “early college program,” students with Dual Enrollment course credit must meet first-year admissions requirements.**

## **Non-Traditional Applicants**

Non-traditional applicants include the following:

1. Students applying for admission **more than three years after graduating from high school**;
2. Students who completed the General Education Development (GED) or the High School Equivalency Testing Program (HiSET); and
3. Students who have dropped out of high school but have completed the GED or HiSET.

Non-traditional students must demonstrate their ability to complete successfully college courses and degrees based on both high school and/or college performance.

Students who have completed the GED or HiSET and are applying for admission **within three years of the graduation** of their high school class must meet the same standards as the students who are applying for admission within three years of graduation from high school. Non-traditional applicants should contact admissions offices at the institutions to which they are applying to request additional information about specific requirements.

## **Exceptions and Allowances For Specific Groups of Students**

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### **Applicants who are English Language Learners**

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 their high school career. Students who were English language learners during high school must complete all required high school level academic courses with two exceptions:

1. They may substitute up to two academic electives based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for the two required foreign language courses; and
2. They may substitute up to two years of English as a Second Language courses for English courses.

### **Applicants with Learning or Other Disabilities**

Applicants with professionally diagnosed and documented learning disabilities (documentation must include diagnostic test results) are exempt from taking standardized tests for admission to any public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth. However, these applicants must complete all required academic courses and earn a minimum average GPA of 3.0 or present other evidence of the potential for academic success.

Note: an applicant with learning or other disabilities may substitute two academic electives based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for the two required foreign language courses if they have submitted to the high school the results of an evaluation, completed within the past three years, that indicates a specific diagnosis of a learning disability that affects the ability to learn a foreign language.

### **Applicants Enrolled in Career/Vocational Technical High School Programs**

Applicants enrolled in career/vocational technical high school programs must complete the required number of college preparatory courses, distributed in the same manner and with the same minimum grade point averages required of other high school graduates, with the following exceptions:

1. Two vocational and technical courses may be used to fulfill the two required electives.

2. Applicants who do not complete the two required foreign language courses must complete an additional academic elective course based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and also satisfy one of the following options:
- Complete at least one full academic year of study of foreign language or
  - Complete a fourth full academic year of study of science, or technology/engineering, which need not be a laboratory course; or
  - Complete one full academic year of study of computer science.

### **Homeschooled Applicants**

Homeschooled students are subject to the same admissions standards as other students; as such, they must meet both academic course and GPA requirements. If these students do not meet these requirements, and they do not meet requirements for other types of students, they may be admitted under the special admissions category (please refer to page 10) at the discretion of the admissions office at the state university or UMass campus.

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

Additional information about homeschooling in Massachusetts is available at the following websites:

- <http://www.mhla.org/supt/FAQforsupt.htm>
- <http://www.mhla.org/information/resourcesarticles/guidetohomeschoolinginma.pdf>

### **Applicants Who Are Graduates of High Schools Outside of The U.S.**

Admissions officers may use the appropriate means to determine whether the transcript of a student who graduated from a high school outside of the U.S. is comparable to the required transcript. Applicants from these high schools may substitute the same number of high school level academic courses or their equivalent for the required courses per subject area.

A weighted high school GPA must be calculated for these students. If an applicant is from a high school outside of the U.S., they must submit required SAT or ACT scores unless it is not possible to take these tests due to extreme circumstances.

## Consideration of Applicants Who Do Not Meet Admissions Standards Even With Allowances

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### **Special Admissions Applicants**

Applicants not eligible for undergraduate admission based on the standards for first-year, transfer, or non-traditional students may be admitted based upon the demonstration of **their potential for academic success** at a state university or 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 school counselors; employers; and mentors).

*Note: Special admissions students are limited to 10 percent of new enrollees at the state university or UMass campus.*

# **APPENDIX**

## **Definitions of Different Courses that meet the Minimum Admissions Standards**

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### **High School Level Academic Courses**

These courses are designed to prepare students to continue their academic education at two- and four-year colleges. They require well-developed reading, writing, verbal, conceptual, mathematical, and study abilities, as well as substantial outside preparation.

### **Advanced Placement and Honors Courses**

These courses include highly challenging material that is presented at an accelerated and more intensive pace, and require advanced reading, writing, verbal, conceptual, mathematical, and study abilities.

Advanced Placement (AP) courses meet standards for content and rigor that are established by The College Board, and they will be weighted differently by admissions office in order to calculate the weighted high school GPA.

Note: International Baccalaureate (IB) courses may also be weighted differently in order to calculate the average high school GPA.

### **Dual Enrollment Courses**

The Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership (CDEP) offers high school students the opportunity to enroll in courses at a local college while they are still enrolled in high school. Credits for the college courses can apply to both the high school and college transcript. As an additional incentive to students to tackle more challenging coursework, grades received in dual enrollment courses will receive additional weight in the calculation of applicants' weighted GPAs. The additional weight will be the same as that given for grades earned in Advanced Placement courses. Unless enrolled in a specific "early college program," students with Dual Enrollment course credit must follow first-year admissions requirements.

### **Courses Taken Before (9-12) High School Years**

Courses taken for high school credit in middle school should be equivalent to the high school course and address the same high school grade level academic standards addressed in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Grades and credit(s) for the course must be included on the student's high school transcript and designated as high school level credit and may count towards the 17 academic course requirements.

## **Computer Science Courses**

Computer Science courses may be credited as electives or can be considered either a mathematics or a science course by the high school based on the inclusion of rigorous mathematical or science concepts and topics.

In order to be accepted as meeting the mathematics or science course requirement, a computer science course must be:

1. Significantly aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks;
2. Offered for mathematics or science credit after review by the district as meeting district guidelines for mathematics or science courses; and
3. Equivalent to a full year of learning.

If a high school designates a course as a comparable mathematics course or designates a science course as a science laboratory course, college admissions officers must accept that the course meets the above requirements.

Districts allowing for this substitution may do so only if the course offered has been approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as meeting this standard. See page four of this document for more information.

## **Technology/Engineering Courses**

In order to be accepted as meeting the science course requirement, a technology/engineering course must be:

1. Significantly aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks;
2. Offered for science credit after review by the district as meeting district guidelines for science courses; and
3. Equivalent to a full year of learning.

If a high school designates a course as a comparable mathematics course or designates a science course as a science laboratory course, college admissions officers must accept that the course meets the above requirements. Technology and Engineering courses should be identified and high school transcripts should clearly indicate that the course(s) are mathematics or science courses.

## Calculation of Weighted GPA

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The minimum admissions standards for first-year students require that students earn the following average GPAs.

State Universities	UMass Undergraduate Campuses
3.0	3.0

Grade point averages are to be calculated based upon grades earned in all high school level academic courses. Grades earned in Honors, Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses should be given extra weight.

**Each state university or UMass campus to which a student applies will calculate the GPA for purposes of applying the admissions standards.**

In order to calculate a weighted GPA, individuals must convert each final grade earned in high school level academic courses to a 4-point grading scale (where A = 4.0; B = 3.0; C = 2.0; D = 1.0 and F = 0.0). A chart is provided with these materials so that letter or numeric grades may be converted. Further, the level of each course must be identified (for example, Honors or Advanced Placement). Full-year Honors level and Advanced Placement courses will receive an extra .5 and 1.0 points on the 4-point scale, respectively. A dual enrollment course will receive an extra 1.0 point on the 4-point scale.

An online tool for calculating the weighted GPA is available on our [website](#).

**All applicants will have a “weighted high school GPA” calculated by the admissions office during the admissions process.** Schools with uncommon grading schemes may be asked to provide a conversion to letter grades or other supporting material.

### *Calculating the weighted GPA*

Use the following steps to complete the weighted GPA calculation:

- Step 1. Convert each final grade to its equivalent on the 4.0 scale.
- Step 2. Weight grades by adding .5 to each converted grade earned in an Honors level course, and 1.0 to each converted grade earned in Advanced Placement or Dual Enrollment course.
- Step 3. Multiply each converted grade or, if applicable, each weighted grade by the course credits earned. (Where a full-year course equals one unit; a semester course equals .5 units; a quarter course equals .25 units; etc.)
- Step 4. Total the products from Step 3.
- Step 5. Divide total from Step 4 by total number of course credits attempted.
- Step 6. Quotient is the student's weighted GPA.

Note: students may not have completed all required high school level academic courses prior to applying to college. GPAs should be based upon all completed academic courses for which students are able to report *final* grades.

Please see pages 3-4 for the required academic courses.

**NOTE: The weighted GPA should be based on final grades earned in all high school level academic courses. Grades earned in courses that are not high school level academic courses may not be used to calculate the weighted GPA.**

## Sample Calculation

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I
Courses (if applicable)	Final Grade in Academic Course	Step 1: Convert Grade to equivalent on 4.0 scale	Step 2: Weight Grade if AP, DE, or Honors	Step 3: Enter course credits earned	Step 4: Multiply Column B or C (if applicable) by Column D	Step 5: Calculate the Total for Column F	Step 6: Calculate the Total for Column E	Step 7: Divide Column G by Column H
<b>ENGLISH</b>								
1. College English 9	B-	2.7		1	2.7	53.5	19.4	2.76 = Weighted GPA
2. Honors English 10	C	2.0	2.5	1	2.5			
3. Honors English 11	D-	.7	1.2	1	1.2			
4. Honors English 12	C	2.0	2.5	1	2.5			
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>								
1. Algebra 1	B+	3.3		1	3.3			
2. Geometry	B-	2.7		1	2.7			
3. Algebra II	B-	2.7		1	2.7			
4. Math XXX	B+	3.3		1	3.3			
<b>SCIENCES</b>								
1. Earth Science	B-	2.7		1	2.7			
2. Biology	C	2.0		1.2	2.4			
3. Chemistry	C	2.0		1.2	2.4			
<b>SOCIAL SCIENCES</b>								
1. Ancient Cultures 1	B+	3.3		.5	1.65			
2. Contemporary Issues	B	3.0		.5	1.5			
3. AP U.S. History	C	2.0	3.0	1	3.0			
4. Psychology	B-	2.7		.5	1.35			
5. World Cultures	B	3.0		.5	1.5			
<b>FOREIGN LANGUAGE</b>								
1. Spanish I	B+	3.3		1	3.3			
2. Spanish II	A-	3.7		1	3.7			
3. Spanish III	B+	3.3		1	3.3			
<b>ELECTIVES</b>								
1. Intro. to Computers	B+	3.3		1	3.3			
2. Fine Arts	C	2.0		.5	1.0			
3. Theater	B	3.0		.5	1.5			
<b>TOTAL</b>				19.4	53.5			

## Conversion to 4.0 Scale

Letter Grading	
Letter Grade	4.0 Scale
A+	4.3
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
D-	0.7
F	0.0

Numeric Grade	4.0 Scale Minimum Passing Level *		
	60	65	70
100	4.3	4.3	4.3
99	4.3	4.3	4.2
98	4.2	4.2	4.1
97	4.2	4.2	4.0
96	4.1	4.1	4.0
95	4.1	4.0	3.9
94	4.0	4.0	3.7
93	4.0	3.9	3.7
92	3.9	3.8	3.5
91	3.8	3.7	3.4
90	3.7	3.6	3.3
89	3.6	3.4	3.2
88	3.5	3.3	3.0
87	3.4	3.2	2.9
86	3.3	3.1	2.8
85	3.2	3.0	2.7
84	3.1	2.9	2.5
83	3.0	2.8	2.3
82	2.9	2.7	2.2
81	2.8	2.6	2.1
80	2.7	2.4	2.0
79	2.6	2.3	1.9
78	2.5	2.2	1.7
77	2.4	2.1	1.6
76	2.3	2.0	1.4
75	2.2	1.9	1.3
74	2.1	1.8	1.2
73	2.0	1.7	1.0
72	1.9	1.6	0.9
71	1.8	1.4	0.8
70	1.7	1.3	0.7
69	1.6	1.2	0.0
68	1.5	1.1	
67	1.4	0.9	
66	1.3	0.8	
65	1.2	0.7	
64	1.1	0.0	
63	1.0		
62	0.9		
61	0.8		
60	0.7		
59	0.0		

## **GPA Calculation Based on Seven Semesters of High School Coursework**

The new admissions policy stipulates that the minimum required GPA should be based upon seven semesters of coursework; however, most students apply for undergraduate study to a UMass campus or a state university before final grades for their seventh semester are available. Therefore, it is permissible to base the GPA calculation on academic coursework completed at the time that the application is submitted. Further, it will not be necessary to recalculate the GPA upon receipt of the applicant's final transcript.

**\* Schools may develop a conversion from numeric to letter grades and print this conversion on the transcript for use in GPA calculation.**

## Admissions Offices for State Universities and UMass Campuses

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The undergraduate admissions standards for the state universities and UMass establish minimum levels; each campus may adopt higher standards. Further, the standards do not apply to the state's community colleges, which admit students based on open enrollment policies. For additional information about the admissions policies of particular institutions, please contact the admissions offices for the specific institution(s).

### **State Universities**

#### [Bridgewater State University](#)

508.531.1237

#### [Fitchburg State University](#)

978.665.3144

#### [Framingham State University](#)

508.626.4500

#### [Massachusetts College of Art and Design](#)

617.879.7222

#### [Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts](#)

413.662.5410

#### [Massachusetts Maritime Academy](#)

800.544.3411

#### [Salem State University](#)

978.542.6200

#### [Westfield State University](#)

413.572.5218

#### [Worcester State University](#)

508.929.8040

## **UMass Campuses**

[UMass Amherst](#)

413.545.0222

[UMass Boston](#)

617.287.6100

[UMass Dartmouth](#)

508.999.8605

[UMass Lowell](#)

978.934.3931

UMass Medical School /Worcester does not offer undergraduate admission

## **Financial Aid Information**

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For additional information about financial aid – including scholarship, grants, tuition waivers, and loans – you can contact the financial aid offices at the institutions to which you would like to apply and also visit the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance website ([www.mass.edu/osfa](http://www.mass.edu/osfa)).

In addition, you can also access detailed information about federal loans at the following U.S. Department of Education websites: [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov) and [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov).

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Undergraduate Admission Requirements and High School GPA**

#### **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 (example [MassCore](#), a recommended program of study that includes specific numbers and types of courses across academic subjects) to ensure that students are well-prepared to begin college courses and their path to degree. Further, these minimum undergraduate admissions standards increase consistency across the state universities and 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 the student is interested in applying.

#### **3. If a student meets these minimum standards, are they guaranteed admission to a state university or UMass undergraduate campus?**

No. Eligibility for admission is not an entitlement of admission for any applicant. Admissions officers consider a wide range of factors when reviewing students' applications, and the state universities and UMass campuses can establish additional admission 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. Are students required to earn a minimum high school GPA in order to be admitted to a state university or UMass campus?**

The minimum average GPA for first-year applicants, weighted for accelerated (Honors, Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment) courses, is 3.0 for both state universities and UMass campuses.

However, if an applicant does not have an average weighted GPA of 3.0, they 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 available on page 5 of this document.

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

## **5. How is the GPA weighted?**

Each state university or UMass undergraduate campus to which a student applies will calculate the weighted GPA for purposes of applying the admissions standards. High school GPA's are calculated following policies of the high school. Detailed information about calculating the weighted GPA is available in the Appendix of the DHE Reference Guide. A [GPA Calculator](#) is also available on our website.

## **6. 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).

## **7. 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.

## **8. If a high school student fails a course during the regular academic year and is not admitted to an institution, could they be eligible for admission if they successfully complete the course during summer school?**

If a student successfully completes a course during the summer after the end of their 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.

## **High School Program Considerations and Exemptions for Specific Student Groups**

### **1. 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 their high school career.

## **2. What exceptions 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:

- Students may substitute up to two academic electives based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks<sup>3</sup> for the two required foreign language courses.
- Students may also substitute up to two years of English as a Second Language courses for English courses.

## **3. 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 in the updated DHE Admissions Reference Guide. In addition, if a student cannot meet a particular requirement, they could still be admitted to a state university or UMass campus within the special admissions category of an institution. Special admissions students are limited to 10% of new enrollees at the state university or UMass campus.

## **4. 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 they do 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 academic elective course based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and also satisfy 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 full academic year of study of science technology/engineering, which need not be a laboratory course.
3. A full academic year of study in computer science.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks refers to core academic areas/courses of ELA, Math, History/Social Science, and Science/Technology Engineering.

**5. Does Massachusetts have specific requirements regarding the education of students who are homeschooled, and can these students meet the admissions standards?**

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

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

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

Students who are homeschooled 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 this document, the student does not qualify for specific exceptions or allowances. The student could be admitted to a state university or UMass campus under the special admissions category; special admissions students are limited to 10% of new enrollees at the state university or UMass campus.

**6. 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 undergraduate admission based on the standards for first-year, transfer, or non-traditional students may be admitted based upon the demonstration of their potential for academic success at a state university or 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 school counselors; employers; and mentors).

NOTE: Special admissions students are limited to 10% of new enrollees at the state university or UMass campus.

## High School Curriculum

- 1. 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 the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (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. Therefore, ESE will not issue additional guidelines or requirements.

DHE, ESE and districts will provide the following undergraduate admissions guidance. DHE and 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 for undergraduate admissions 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.

- 2. 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 high school course requirement. These courses also carry an additional weight of 1.0 in the GPA calculation. Please see page 15 for more information on GPA calculation.

### **3. What is the required length of a high school academic course?**

A high school 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 campuses are required to complete successfully the specific number of courses/years for each academic discipline. Detailed information about high school course to unit conversion is available on page 15 of this document.

### **4. 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 undergraduate 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.

### **5. 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 undergraduate admissions standards are adopted by the Board of Higher Education or the Board of Elementary and Secondary 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>.

## **Specific Clarification Related to Math and Science High School Course of Study**

Mathematics Requirement: 4 course/years (Algebra I & II and Geometry or Trigonometry, or comparable coursework) including mathematics during the final year of high school

The new mathematics requirement, effective in Fall 2016, has two goals:

1. To ensure solid mathematical preparation in Algebra including successful completion of Algebra II, and
2. To ensure expanding and deeper knowledge of mathematics skills and application completion of increasingly complex mathematics courses, expanding knowledge and use, each year in high school.

A student must have completed Algebra II and complete the remaining courses to meet the mathematics' course requirement including mathematics in the final year. High school students have several options to address these requirements. This is needed due to the locally determined course of study in each Massachusetts high school. Given differences among high schools with regard to course structures and schedules, the total number of years of mathematics completed by the student, not the duration of the courses, will be considered in admissions.

### **1. 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. First-year applicants are required to complete four mathematics courses/years, including Algebra I and II and Geometry or Trigonometry (or comparable coursework), and including a mathematics course during the final year of high school.

### **2. 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 and identified as mathematics courses on the student's high school transcript will count toward the requirement.

### **3. What is meant by "comparable" coursework?**

Comparable courses are defined as coursework that is equal to or beyond the content defined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Due to the locally determined course of study in each Massachusetts high school, "comparable" coursework will vary but should be a mathematics course that expands and deepens mathematical skills and application, and provides increasing complexity of mathematical knowledge and concepts.

Courses should be offered by the mathematics department. If a "mathematics based course," is offered outside of the mathematics department the high school transcript should indicate that the high school considers this a "comparable mathematics course" which can be used to meet the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's mathematics admissions requirement.

**4. 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 they meet the four-year mathematics requirement?**

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

**5. 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 four mathematics 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 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 no other available mathematics courses for the student to complete. If a student falls into this category and is unable to enroll in a math course in their senior year, the student/high school should address this early in the admissions process.

**6. 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?**

In Massachusetts, 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 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. 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 and ensure it is labeled accordingly on the student's transcript.

### **7. Are computer science or programming courses considered “mathematics” or “science” courses?**

As of June 2018, MassCore policy allows for the substitute on of a sufficiently rigorous computer science course for a required math or science course. Admissions officers should therefore accept the courses allowed for this substitution. Note, however, that such a substitution must have been recognized as such by the student's district, and approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as appropriate for substitution.

For further detail, please refer to Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Higher Education materials at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2018/2018-06/item5.html> and <http://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/BHE/BHE%2018-10%20Computer%20Science%20Resolution.pdf>.

Note that this course substitution may be approved if said course is aligned with the Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards, and must include rigorous mathematical or scientific concepts. Any district asserting course qualification for this substitution must have been granted such a determination and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## **Questions regarding the test optional pilot**

### **1. How long will the test optional pilot last?**

The Department of Higher Education intends to form a working group to study and evaluate the policy implications of the test optional pilot upon graduation of the first pilot class. We expect that data will be available beginning in AY2020-2021. We will begin the process of forming a working group at that time.

### **2. Does the test optional pilot end because of the change in the Common Assessment Policy?**

The change in the Common Assessment Policy provides institutions with the ability to use GPA to place students directly into college-level English and mathematics courses. The test optional pilot is part of our minimum admissions standards exemption policy where an institution of higher education may admit up to 10% of new enrollees as a special admit. The test optional pilot will not be ending because of the change in the Common Assessment Policy, as it does not affect our minimum admission standards.