

# THE GRADUATION PROGRAM 2004



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Education  
2003



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This document describes the components of the B.C. Graduation Program 2004, highlighting changes that resulted from the 2002 – 2003 review of graduation requirements. As the new graduation requirements are implemented, schools will be provided with further, more detailed information from sources such as the Ministry of Education website, additional material in a portfolio assessment guide and the *Handbook of Procedures*, which is issued each school year.

The Graduation Program will also evolve as policies and guidelines translate into practice. In addition to reading this guide, you are encouraged to check Graduation Program information on the ministry website, which is always the most up-to-date source of program requirements.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Graduation Program is a critical component of British Columbia's K – 12 education system. Student achievement is important at every grade and level. But it is in their final years of school that young people make the choices and gain the skills that most affect the rest of their lives.

With that in mind, the Ministry of Education undertook a review of the Graduation Program in 2002. The year-long review included consultations with thousands of parents, students, educators, community members and former students who had not completed high school. It also included reviews of academic literature, position papers and graduation requirements in other jurisdictions.

Through these consultations, the ministry developed a list of the Attributes of the BC Graduate, describing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies that all graduates should acquire by the end of Grade 12. This list (provided in full on pp 3 – 4) is at the heart of the 2004 Graduation Program — a program designed to further improve the quality of education for all students in British Columbia's K – 12 system.



Education is all about student achievement. But what, exactly, should students achieve by the end of Grade 12? That question was central to the consultations undertaken around the Graduation Program in 2002 – 2003, and the answers provided by parents, students, educators and a range of community members were used to compile the Attributes of the BC Graduate. This list of attributes describes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies that young people need to succeed as individuals, and as members of our society.

In some ways, these attributes have remained consistent over the years. They have also evolved to reflect our changing world, and the changing expectations of students, families, communities and employers. The Graduation Program 2004 is designed to support all students in acquiring the following attributes by the time they complete Grade 12, in the areas of intellectual, human and social, and career development.

**In their intellectual development, graduates should achieve:**

- competency in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies and science, including the ability to use these skills in problem-solving and decision-making
- the ability to use and understand information technologies
- the ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences; this includes the ability to access, synthesize and present information; it also includes knowledge of both a first and second language
- an understanding and appreciation of artistic and aesthetic expression
- the ability to think critically and solve problems, using information to develop opinions and make sound judgments and decisions
- an understanding of the importance of a lifelong commitment to continuous learning

*These Attributes of the Graduate describe the competencies we want for all British Columbia young people.*

**In their human and social development, graduates should achieve:**

- the knowledge and skills required to be socially responsible citizens who act in caring and principled ways, respecting the diversity of all people and the rights of others to hold different ideas and beliefs

- the knowledge and understanding they need to participate in democracy as Canadians and global citizens, acting in accordance with the laws, rights and responsibilities of a democracy
- the attitudes, knowledge and positive habits they need to be healthy individuals, responsible for their physical and emotional well-being
- the attitudes and competencies they need to be community contributors who take the initiative to improve their own and others' quality of life

**In their career development, graduates should achieve:**

- the confidence and competencies they need to be self-directed individuals who display initiative, set priorities, establish goals, and take responsibility for pursuing those goals in an ever-changing society
- knowledge and understanding of the range of career choices available to them, the prospects for success in those careers, and the actions required to pursue specific career paths
- experience in planning for, and working towards, career and life goals
- the skills required to work effectively and safely with others, and to succeed both as individual and collaborative workers

The Graduation Program is designed to support every graduate to acquire these attributes.

## Scope

British Columbia's Graduation Program includes Grades 10, 11 and 12. Courses numbered 10, 11 and 12 earn credits toward graduation.

## Requirements

To graduate, students must complete a minimum of 80 credits over the three-year Graduation Program:

- 48 required-course credits
- 28 or more elective credits, and
- 4 credits from Graduation Portfolio Assessment. (For more on Graduation Portfolios, see pp 11 – 12)
- A minimum of 16 credits must be earned at the Grade 12 level.

*Most ministry-developed courses are worth four credits.*

## Student Learning Plans

The 2004 Graduation Program does not require Student Learning Plan documents. Instead, students plan and prepare for their future education and career goals through their course work, and through the development of Graduation Portfolios, beginning in Grade 10.

## Graduation Requirements

In the spring of 2003, government made changes to the graduation requirements. Students who begin Grade 10 in 2004/2005 are on the 2004 program. Students who begin Grade 10 before July 1, 2004 will graduate under the 1995 program requirements. The following chart shows a comparison of the two programs.

| <b>Comparison of 1995 and 2004 Requirements</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1995 Requirements</b>  | <b>2004 Requirements</b>   |
| <b>52 credits over Grades 11 and 12</b>   | <b>80 credits over Grades 10, 11 and 12</b>  |
| 28 credits of Foundation Studies:<br>Language Arts 11 (4 credits)*<br>Language Arts 12 (4 credits)*<br>Social Studies 11 or<br>BC First Nations Studies 12 (4 credits)<br>Mathematics 11 or 12 (4 credits)*<br>Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)*<br>Fine Arts 11 (2 credits)*<br>Applied Skills 11 (2 credits)*<br>CAPP 11 (2 credits)<br>CAPP 12 (2 credits)<br><br>*one from a number of course options | 48 required credits:<br>Language Arts 10 (4 credits)<br>Language Arts 11 (4 credits)*<br>Language Arts 12 (4 credits)*<br>Social Studies 10 (4 credits)<br>Social Studies 11, Canadian Civics 11<br>or BC First Nations Studies 12 (4 credits)<br>Science 10 (4 credits)<br>Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)*<br>Mathematics 10 (4 credits)*<br>Mathematics 11 or 12 (4 credits)*<br>Physical Education 10 (4 credits)<br>Fine Arts and/or Applied Skills 10, 11, or 12 (4 credits)*<br>Planning 10 (4 credits)<br><br>*one from a number of course options  |
| Students must also complete a minimum of 24 Selected Studies credits<br>No more than eight credits from locally developed Selected Studies may count toward graduation<br>A minimum of 16 credits from ministry-authorized courses are required at the Grade 12 level<br>A single Grade 12 Language Arts exam is required for graduation  | Students must also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• earn 4 Graduation Portfolio Assessment credits, and</li> <li>• complete a minimum of 28 elective credits</li> </ul> An unlimited number of credits from board- or independent school authority-authorized or post-secondary electives may count toward graduation<br>A minimum of 16 credits from either ministry- or board/authority-authorized or post-secondary courses are required at the Grade 12 level<br>Five Graduation Program Exams in Grades 10 – 12 are required for graduation, including a Grade 12 Language Arts exam |

## Required Courses

Referred to as “Foundation Studies” in the previous Graduation Program, Required Courses cover the key academic subjects in which all students must achieve some proficiency. These include language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, planning, physical education, and applied skills or fine arts. (For a complete list of required-course credits, see Chart on p. 6.)

The range of Required Courses in Grades 10, 11 and 12 is designed to provide all graduates with a sound, broad education that meets high provincial standards and equips students with the knowledge and skills they need for the future. It is also designed to provide flexibility. For example, students may choose from a range of language arts, social studies, science, math, applied skills, and/or fine arts courses best suited to their individual needs and interests — all within the Required Courses framework.

*Students must earn these 48 required credits by taking courses, or through challenge or equivalency (see p. 15).*

### Language Arts

Communication is one of the most basic and essential skills needed in today's world. To succeed in their lives and futures, graduates must be able to do more than simply read and write. They must be able to access, synthesize and present information, and to use language to convey ideas effectively to a wide range of different audiences.

To that end:

- Language Arts 10 is required for all students.
- At the Grade 11 level, students may choose from English 11, Français langue première 11, or Communications 11, and must complete 4 credits in that course.
- At the Grade 12 level, students may choose from Communications 12, English 12, Français langue première 12, or Technical and Professional Communications 12, and must complete 4 credits in any one of these courses.

In order to graduate, students are also required to write Grade 10 and 12 Language Arts exams.

### Social Studies

This curriculum area assists students to understand the world and their place in it. Through the examination of current and past events, issues

and themes, students develop the skills and attributes they need to become responsible citizens and to participate in democracy.

- Social Studies 10 is required for all students.
- At the Grade 11 and 12 levels, students may choose from Social Studies 11, BC First Nations Studies 12 or an additional course in which students learn about Canadian government and citizenship with an applied focus (to be implemented by 2005). They must complete 4 credits in any one of these courses.

### Science

Learning about science is a fundamental part of understanding the natural world and gaining skills related to methods of observation and measurement. Scientific study also promotes the development of problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

- Science 10 is required for all students.
- To graduate, students must also complete 4 science credits at the Grade 11 or 12 levels — choosing the ministry-authorized course that best suits their interests. A current list of courses that fulfill this requirement is listed each year in the *Handbook of Procedures*.

### Mathematics

*Numeracy is the application of mathematical understanding in daily activities.*

Mathematics courses encourage students to use and develop skills in reasoning and logic, and to use numeracy skills and mathematical models to solve problems.

- A Grade 10 Mathematics course is required for all students. They may choose from among three Mathematics pathways: Applications of Mathematics 10, Essentials of Mathematics 10, or Principles of Mathematics 10.
- To graduate, students must also complete 4 mathematics credits at the Grade 11 or 12 levels, in any of the three pathways.
- Schools that do not offer all three mathematics pathways are encouraged to look for ways to expand student choice. For example, they may wish to partner with another district, or make courses available through distance electronic learning.

### Physical Education

One of the goals of the Graduation Program is for students to develop the attitudes, knowledge and positive habits they need to be healthy

individuals who are responsible for their physical and emotional well-being. This is achieved through a combination of Physical Education instruction and other means of encouraging healthy choices.

- Physical Education 10 is required for all students.
- To graduate, students are also required to meet a provincial standard for physical activity and to be assessed in other health-related areas as part of their Graduation Portfolio Assessment.

### **Fine Arts and/or Applied Skills**

These courses of study help students understand and appreciate various forms of artistic and aesthetic expression and/or hands-on applied learning.

- Fine Arts courses are those which foster creativity and self-expression, supporting students to develop talents in the visual arts, dance, drama or music.
- Applied Skills involve the practical, hands-on application of skills that are useful in students' daily lives and support their achievement in areas such as problem-solving, communication and the use of technologies. Examples of Applied Skills areas of study include home economics, business and marketing, product design, technology, and human services.
- Students are required to earn a total of 4 credits in Fine Arts and/or Applied Skills at any time during the Graduation Program. This can include 2 credits from each area. The 4 credits can be in Grade 10, 11 or 12 level courses.

This requirement takes effect for Grade 10 students in September, 2004.

### **Planning 10**

This course is designed to help students develop the confidence and skills they need to become self-directed individuals who display initiative, set priorities, establish goals, make thoughtful decisions, and take responsibility for pursuing their goals in an ever-changing society. Planning 10 also encourages students to explore a full range of career and education choices; to think about their prospects for success in those careers; and to plan the actions required to pursue their chosen career paths and post-secondary education destinations.

*Career and Personal Planning 10, 11 and 12 are replaced by Planning 10 and the Graduation Portfolio Assessment. Health and fitness are addressed in Physical Education and Planning 10 curricula and in the Graduation Portfolio.*

Planning 10 supports students in the areas of:

- education planning,
- career planning,
- health, and
- finances.

This course also introduces students to the concept of Focus Areas (See p.13), Graduation Portfolios (See p. 11) and other elements of the Graduation Program.

### **Graduation Program Examinations**

During the 2004 Graduation Program, all students are required to write five Graduation Program Exams:

- Grade 10 Language Arts
- Grade 10 Science
- Grade 10 Mathematics
- Social Studies exam attached to the required Grade 11 or 12 course taken by the student
- Grade 12 Language Arts exam attached to the required course taken by the student.

The Social Studies and Mathematics exams a student writes are designed to correspond to the outcomes of the courses a student has chosen, but can have some content in common.

These 5 exams contribute to high standards for the British Columbia education system by measuring the knowledge and skills of all students in the key curriculum areas during the Graduation Program.

Except for the Grade 12 Language Arts exam, all other Grade 12 exams are optional. A student can enrol in a Grade 12 course that has an exam and elect not to take the exam. In that case, 100 percent of the student's final mark will come from classroom evaluation by the classroom teacher. Some post-secondary institutions may require Grade 12 exams for entrance. Writing Grade 12 exams also provides opportunities for provincial scholarships. Students are encouraged to consider these facts as part of their education planning.

*The Grade 10 and 11 Graduation Program Exams (plus BC First Nations 12) count for 20% of the final course mark. All other Grade 12 exams count for 40% of the final mark.*

## **Purpose of the Graduation Portfolio Assessment**

To build successful futures, students need more than academic skills. They need to develop a level of proficiency in areas such as career planning, employability skills and personal health. As part of the Graduation Program, students demonstrate their achievement in these areas by assembling Graduation Portfolios.

## **Graduation Portfolio Content and Preparation**

The Graduation Portfolio is a paper-based or electronic collection of students' work or other records of achievement. Portfolio assembly begins in Grade 10, with specific support and guidance provided as part of the course Planning 10, and focuses on:

- information technology
- community involvement and responsibility
- personal health
- employability skills
- education and career planning, and
- art and design.

*Students are assessed in key skills in a variety of ways — a great opportunity for “hands-on” learners.*

Students can collect evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and competence in each of the six areas in a variety of ways. They may use school or community experiences to collect evidence, or use examples of projects they have completed in class. For example, a portfolio might include:

- materials created as part of a school assignment
- a memo from a teacher or letter from a community organization attesting to the student's participation
- a video or photographs of the student demonstrating a skill
- a document or certificate for completing a course or project
- a verified record of hours of fitness activity outside school
- an oral report recorded on tape
- a demonstration of a product or computer program developed by the student or
- a website designed by the student.

*A guide for Graduation Portfolio Assessment supports schools and their students (available on the ministry website and in schools in 2004).*

## **Graduation Portfolio Assessment**

Each of the key areas in the portfolio is assessed against a provincial standard. Standards are developed by the Ministry of Education in consultation with educators, based on a series of pilots in 2003 – 2004. For the latest information on these standards see the ministry website.

Portfolios are assessed by teachers throughout Grades 10-12. Students choose portions of their portfolio to showcase their achievement for a panel. Schools may develop their own panel processes. Panels could consist of :

- a teacher, principal or vice-principal, and
- other parties, such as parents, interested community members or employers.

Students may meet most of the provincial portfolio standards at any time during the Graduation Program. For example, a student could meet or exceed the standard for information technology in Grade 10.

Consistent with the principle of giving students choices, Elective Studies provide opportunities for students to tailor their learning within the broader Graduation Program. They may earn elective credits towards graduation by completing ministry-authorized courses, board/authority-authorized courses, or courses from external sources such as post-secondary institutions.

Students may also earn elective credits by completing Required Courses, over and above those needed for graduation. For example, a student could meet the science requirement for graduation by completing Science 10 and earning 4 credits in Biology 11. The student could then go on to earn 4 elective credits by completing Biology 12.

### **Board/authority-authorized courses**

Just like every student, every school and community in the province is unique. As part of its commitment to improving student achievement, the Ministry of Education encourages districts and independent-school authorities to develop locally-relevant courses, possibly in partnership with communities and/or employers. In 2004, for locally developed or approved courses to be used for graduation credits they must meet the ministry standard. Courses that meet this standard will be called board/authority-authorized courses (more information on these standards will be on the ministry website in 2004). Courses previously used as part of a Career Program must also meet this standard.

*Students must earn a minimum of 28 elective credits to graduate.*

Different schools and districts will have a range of capacities to develop their own courses. Students may choose as many of these courses as they like as electives to count towards their graduation. Board/authority-authorized courses may not be used as required courses except in the areas of Fine Arts and Applied Skills.

### **Focus Area studies**

The goal of Focus Areas is to have all students consider a broad range of education choices and career options during the Graduation Program. Students who participate in focused studies that interest them are more engaged in school and graduate at a higher rate than unfocused students. As part of the Planning 10 course, students learn about and consider eight possible Focus Areas that relate to courses widely available

in BC schools. Each Focus Area can lead to a wide range of post-secondary education or career opportunities.

In addition to the Focus Areas that all students will be asked to consider, many schools and school boards offer specialized programs in specific career or academic areas. Schools and school districts are encouraged to continue offering a wide range of specialized local courses and programs to meet the needs of their students.

*Schools are encouraged to continue offering specialized programs as part of the Graduation Program.*

Programs that are aimed specifically at hands-on learners include Secondary School Apprenticeship, Career Technical Centre programs, and industry training courses. Specialized career preparation and cooperative education programs have been developed by many schools to address a wide range of student interests and skills. These programs include either career exploration courses or extended work experience courses. Other programs offered in schools that are aimed specifically at certain university-bound students include Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs.

In addition to completing ministry-authorized or board/authority-authorized courses, students can earn graduation credits in a variety of other ways, including:

### **Course Equivalency**

Course Equivalency provides students an opportunity to receive credit, based on documentation that indicates a student has achieved the learning outcomes for a ministry or board/authority-authorized Grade 10, 11 or 12 course outside the B.C. school system. For example, a student may have moved from another province or country, or may have credentials from an out-of-school program that boards, authorities or the ministry deem equivalent.

### **Course Challenge**

Course Challenge provides students an opportunity to receive credit for an authorized course at the Grade 10, 11 or 12 level, where the student's prior learning is undocumented. To challenge a course, a student must:

- demonstrate that he or she has met the course's learning outcomes, and
- achieve at least 50% in the challenge course assessment, which is administered by the school.

See the ministry website for the most up-to-date policy on course challenge, including courses that have a Graduation Program Exam.

### **Independent Directed Studies**

The Independent Directed Studies (IDS) program allows students to initiate, develop and earn credit for courses under a teacher's supervision, outside of a structured class. This option gives students the choice of pursuing learning outcomes beyond those normally taught in the classroom, and the choice of pursuing studies on their own time, independent of the classroom schedule.

IDS courses must be based on the learning outcomes for ministry- or board/authority-authorized courses. Under the 2004 Graduation Program, students may earn up to four IDS credits for any course.

### **External Credentials**

This program allows students to earn credits by completing credentials developed and/or offered outside the B.C. school system — provided they are authorized by the ministry. For a current list of accepted Grade 10, 11 or 12 external credentials, see the ministry website.

### **Distance/Electronically Delivered Courses**

Students may earn graduation credits for any Grade 10, 11 or 12 ministry- or board/authority-authorized course they complete through distance or electronically-delivered learning.

### **Credits from Post-secondary Courses**

Students may earn graduation credits for any course completed at a B.C. post-secondary institution that is listed in the most recent edition of the *British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer Guide* ([www.bccat.bc.ca](http://www.bccat.bc.ca)), or included in a B.C. public post-secondary institution's calendar as a course leading to a credential, a two-year diploma or a degree.

## **The British Columbia Graduation Certificate or Dogwood Diploma**

Students who meet graduation requirements receive a Dogwood Diploma, attesting to the fact that they have attained the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies described in the Attributes of the BC Graduate and met all the requirements for graduation.

## **School Completion Certificate**

School boards or independent school authorities may also issue School Completion Certificates to students with special needs and others who are not working towards graduation but have met other standards — set by the board/authority — and have achieved their individual education goals.

## **The British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma**

The British Columbia Adult Graduation Diploma, the “Adult Dogwood,” is awarded upon successful completion of provincial adult graduation requirements.

To earn this credential, an adult student (19 years of age, or 18 years and out of school for at least one year) must take at least three courses as an adult, either through enrolment or prior learning assessment, and meet the requirements for graduation as set out in the British Columbia Adult Graduation Requirements Order. See the *Handbook of Procedures* for additional information.

*School boards set standards for their students' School Completion Certificates.*

## **Transcript of Grades**

Each student receives a Transcript of Grades, which is an official record of all credits successfully completed. It lists completion dates and indicates achievement levels.

Schools may print unofficial transcripts at any time during the Graduation Program to serve as a student's record of achievement. This may be particularly valuable to students who leave school before completing Grade 12.



The 2004 Graduation Program is part of a broader, continuing effort to strengthen and improve British Columbia's K-12 education system. Specifically, the program is designed to help improve student achievement, increase graduation rates and better prepare youth to succeed in their personal lives, in the workplace, and in further education and training.

The program sets high standards for graduation, offers students more choices and gives schools, boards and authorities greater autonomy and flexibility to innovate and meet local needs. It reflects the advice and input of thousands of British Columbians, and lays the foundation for a future in which all B.C. graduates have a quality education, with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies they need to build successful lives, both as individuals, and as members of our broader society.

