

NH DoE Update: Clarification relative to Ed 306.27: Course Level Competencies and Grading

Local vs. State Decisions:

The *Minimum Standards for School Approval* state that local districts must have a competency assessment process and defined course level competencies in place for all public high schools. They also state that credit toward graduation is to be awarded based on student demonstration of mastery of these course level competencies. The Department will require local districts to assure that a plan and method of assessing course level competencies has been developed and is supported by a policy that will include the implementation of the standards. Further, it is expected that the plan and method will be regularly reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness.

In emphasizing the need for flexibility and autonomy for local school districts in implementing competency assessment, the state has left local districts the responsibility for developing policies relative to the state approval standards. It is the purview of the local school district to:

- ◆ identify or develop high school course competencies,
- ◆ decide on appropriate competency assessment methods, and
- ◆ define sufficiency (identifying necessary and sufficient evidence for students to demonstrate mastery).

Although sufficiency of evidence and appropriate assessment methods are local responsibilities, the Department encourages school districts to think of these as extending beyond a single test to multiple forms of assessment, for the following reasons:

- ◆ it is consistent with national research-based best practice;
- ◆ multiple forms of assessment allow for the use of formative assessment, encouraging students to learn and reach beyond current understanding and performance, and,
- ◆ multiple forms of assessment minimize the use of single tests to be used solely as a means to test out of courses perhaps inappropriately.

While the Minimum Standards for School Approval require defined course level competencies and a competency assessment process, they do not mandate either the content of the course level competencies or the grading method used with the competency assessment process. These are local decisions.

Support and Recommendations:

In order to assist schools in determining the strength of their locally developed course level competencies, the Department has developed and disseminated a Competency Validation Rubric, (http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs_redesign/competencies.htm). High Schools are urged to review their current work against the rubric with staff and modify competencies where warranted.

There are a variety of reliable, research-based grading methods for competency assessment that may be adopted or adapted by local school districts. The Department strongly recommends that local school districts make substantial efforts to engage the input and feedback of their community (including parents and students) before making significant changes to their assessment, grading, or grade-reporting systems.