

Roxbury Prep's Competency Determination Overview

In Massachusetts, all public high school students must meet the Competency Determination (CD) requirement in order to graduate. The CD ensures that students demonstrate both mastery of essential academic skills and the successful completion of key high school courses.

Background

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) defines the Competency Determination as a student's demonstration of mastery in English language arts, mathematics, US history and science through both coursework and assessments. For many years, the CD was based solely on MCAS exam results. However, in November 2024, Massachusetts voters approved a ballot measure removing MCAS as the sole requirement. In May 2025, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations (603 CMR 30.00), requiring each school district to develop its own CD policy.

Competency Determination Requirements

Under the new state regulations, the Competency Determination is based on two accomplishments:

1. **Demonstrating Mastery**

Students must show they have mastered skills in English language arts, mathematics, US history and science. Mastery can be demonstrated by:

- Successfully completing the final assessment for a course, or
- Completing a capstone or portfolio project, or
- Meeting another equivalent measure identified in the district's Competency Determination policy.

2. **Satisfactorily Completing Coursework**

Students must earn full course credit, in line with their district's grading policy, in English, math, and science courses aligned to Massachusetts standards.

Graduation Requirements

The Competency Determination is one requirement students must meet in order to graduate from any Massachusetts public high school. In addition, students must satisfy their district's local graduation requirements. These local requirements may go beyond the Competency Determination to include credit-earning, attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, community service, and other district-specific expectations. Graduation requirements are solely determined by the school district.

Roxbury Prep's requirements to earn a Competency Determination and our High School graduation requirements are defined below.

Roxbury Prep's Competency Determination

Roxbury Prep's new Competency Determination will be in effect starting in SY 2025-26. Students who met the CD standard in English language arts, mathematics, and science prior to January 3, 2025 through a regular or retest administration of the MCAS, or through a DESE appeal process, retain that benefit. Roxbury Prep High School students will achieve a Competency Determination by showing Mastery of skills in English Language Arts, mathematics, US History and science.

Mastery

At Roxbury Prep, students are graded on a scale of 70-100. The minimum passing grade is a "C." In order for a student to achieve Mastery and receive full credit in a course, students must earn a cumulative average of at least 70 for the course.

Coursework Requirements

To earn a CD, Roxbury Prep High School students will show Mastery and satisfactorily complete the following coursework:

English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	US History - beginning with the graduating class of 2027
- English I - English II	- Algebra I* - Geometry	- Biology - Chemistry	US History

English I

Roxbury Prep students demonstrate mastery of the ELA frameworks by earning a cumulative average of at least 70 in each class. English I students will engage with complex texts across genres and disciplines while developing the critical reading, writing, and speaking skills necessary for academic and real-world success. In reading, students independently analyze literary and informational texts, determining meaning, interpreting structure, and evaluating authors' choices, while also mastering both academic and domain-specific vocabulary. In writing, they produce arguments, informative essays, and narratives that are coherent, well-structured, and adapted to audience and purpose. Students learn to integrate evidence from multiple sources, use precise language, and incorporate appropriate text features and multimedia to strengthen communication. In speaking and listening, they participate in discussions, present findings, and adapt their style for a range of contexts. Students will be able to read and comprehend grade-level texts proficiently, construct and critique evidence-based arguments, and communicate ideas effectively across academic and technical domains.

English II

Roxbury Prep students demonstrate mastery of the ELA frameworks by earning a cumulative average of at least 70. English II builds on the knowledge and skills from English I with more complex texts. In

reading, students independently analyze literary and informational texts, determining meaning, interpreting structure, and evaluating authors' choices, while also mastering both academic and domain-specific vocabulary. In writing, they produce arguments, informative essays, and narratives that are coherent, well-structured, and adapted to audience and purpose. Students learn to integrate evidence from multiple sources, use precise language, and incorporate appropriate text features and multimedia to strengthen communication. In speaking and listening, they participate in discussions, present findings, and adapt their style for a range of contexts. Students will be able to read and comprehend grade-level texts proficiently, construct and critique evidence-based arguments, and communicate ideas effectively across academic and technical domains.

Algebra I

At Roxbury Prep, students demonstrate mastery of the Algebra I frameworks by earning a cumulative average of at least 70 in that class. Students apply algebraic reasoning to solve real-world and mathematical problems. They learn to interpret and manipulate expressions, create and solve equations and inequalities, and analyze the connections between symbolic representations and graphical models. Students engage deeply with linear, quadratic, piecewise, absolute-value and exponential functions, using multiple representations—tables, graphs, and equations—to interpret and model real contexts. They strengthen their problem-solving by analyzing polynomial operations, factoring techniques, and quadratic solutions while justifying their methods. In addition, students interpret data by summarizing, representing, and fitting models to real-world sets, using technology where appropriate. Students will have the ability to construct viable arguments, critique reasoning, and make meaningful mathematical connections across contexts.

**If students satisfactorily complete and show Mastery of Algebra I in 8th grade, then this fulfills the CD requirement for this course.*

Geometry

In Geometry, Roxbury Prep students demonstrate mastery by earning a cumulative average of at least 70 in that class. Students apply deductive reasoning to explore transformations, congruence, and similarity, developing proofs and justifications for geometric relationships. They extend proportional reasoning to trigonometry, applying the Pythagorean Theorem and right triangle ratios to solve for missing lengths and angles, and building toward the unit circle definition of sine and cosine in radian measure. Students analyze geometric figures in the coordinate plane, deriving equations of lines and circles, calculating slopes, and proving geometric theorems algebraically. They apply angle relationships, properties of polygons and circles, and theorems about chords, tangents, and arcs to reason about diagrams and contexts. Students use perimeter, area, surface area, and volume formulas to model and solve real-world measurement problems. Throughout the course, they are expected to construct viable arguments, critique the reasoning of others, and connect algebraic, visual, coordinate, and contextual representations to deepen their understanding of geometry as both a logical system and a modeling tool for the world.

Biology

In alignment with the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Science and Technology/Engineering, Roxbury Prep students demonstrate mastery of the Biology frameworks by earning a cumulative average of at least 70 in that class. Students exhibit proficiency in constructing and utilizing models to elucidate complex biological processes, including DNA transcription, translation, photosynthesis, and cellular respiration. Their understanding of the cell cycle and its significance in multicellular organisms is demonstrated through detailed explanations and modeling. Students analyze models to explain how monomers can combine to form large carbon-based

macromolecules. In ecosystem studies, students analyze data to explain the impact of biotic and abiotic factors on carrying capacity, employing mathematical reasoning to elucidate population dynamics, biodiversity, and matter and energy cycling. Genetics concepts are mastered through the application of probability principles to represent possible genotype and phenotype combinations in offspring caused by different types of Mendelian inheritance patterns. Students communicate scientific information that common ancestry and biological evolution are supported by multiple lines of empirical evidence. Students make and defend a claim based on evidence that genetic variations may result from new genetic combinations during meiosis, mutations that occur during replication, and/or mutations caused by environmental factors.

Chemistry

Roxbury Prep students demonstrate mastery of chemistry concepts by earning a cumulative average of at least 70 in that class. Students proficiently use the periodic table to predict elemental properties and apply understanding of electron configurations and Coulomb's law to explain reactivity trends. They design and predict simple reactions for binary compounds, relating bulk properties to molecular-level structures and electrostatic forces. Students develop models illustrating energy transfer in chemical reactions, emphasizing bond energy relationships in exothermic and endothermic processes. Their mastery extends to applying mathematical reasoning in concepts such as conservation of matter and stoichiometry. Roxbury Prep students engage in critical scientific thinking, designing and evaluating practical applications of chemistry knowledge, including unknown sample analysis. This approach ensures students grasp fundamental chemistry concepts while developing essential scientific and engineering practices.

US History

Roxbury Preparatory Charter School students demonstrate mastery of United States History by taking AP History or US History Concepts in 11th grade and by earning a cumulative average of at least 70 in that class. They analyze key periods from the founding of Jamestown through the early 21st century, as outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework. They exhibit proficiency in examining the origins of the nation, early political developments, westward expansion, economic growth across regions, and social reforms of the 19th and 20th centuries. Students show a deep understanding of the Civil War, Reconstruction, industrialization, immigration, the Progressive Era, the World Wars and the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement and other rights-based movements of the mid-late 20th century. They evaluate America's changing role in world affairs throughout its history, culminating in the Iraq War. Throughout their studies, Roxbury Prep students engage critically with primary sources, develop analytical questions, consider multiple perspectives, and construct evidence-based arguments. This approach ensures students not only grasp fundamental historical concepts but also develop essential historical thinking skills.

Satisfaction of the requirements of the competency determination shall be a condition for high school graduation. If students don't complete the required coursework listed above, and do not demonstrate the required level of competency by the end of the 10th grade, the student will have the opportunity to recover the credit and demonstrate content mastery by successfully completing a summer school course.

Students with Disabilities

Students with Disabilities may achieve their Competency Determinations through the criteria listed above, or through a portfolio process. For students whose Individualized Education Plan places them in courses other than those listed in the table above, Competency Determination will be attained by demonstrating progress and mastery of skills aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in ELA, Math, and Science and history through the portfolio process. Teachers will support students in developing this portfolio. The portfolio will be evaluated by a committee including the Instructional Leader and the Principal.

English Language Learners

At Roxbury Prep, English Learners are provided with equitable opportunities to meet our Competency Determination (CD) requirements through instruction aligned with the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards Framework. Instruction is designed with both content and language objectives in mind, ensuring that students are building academic knowledge while developing the language needed to demonstrate their learning. Teachers plan lessons that integrate WIDA's Key Language Uses—such as explaining, arguing, and narrating—so that students practice meaningful, real-world communication skills in every subject area. Scaffolds like sentence frames, visual organizers, and structured peer discussions are embedded into instruction to make rigorous content accessible while supporting English development. This approach reflects WIDA's "Can Do" philosophy, which highlights the assets and strengths that multilingual learners bring to the classroom, ensuring that instruction builds from what students can do rather than focusing on deficits.

Collaboration between content teachers, Multilingual Learner (MLL) specialists, and families further strengthens support for English Learners. Pull-out and push-in support allow language scaffolds to be embedded into grade-level curriculum, and progress is closely monitored through formative assessments aligned with a combination of grades using a combination of standardized tests, such as determine competency with the WIDA ACCESS or state-specific assessments, IAs, to measure proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as considering attendance with academic achievement and teacher evaluations. Professional development for teachers helps ensure consistent use of best practices in supporting language development across all subjects. Together, these systems ensure that English Learners at Roxbury Prep are not only acquiring academic English but also accessing and mastering the same grade-level content as their peers. Through this integrated, asset-based approach, Roxbury Prep ensures that English Learners can meet CD requirements while developing the language skills that will support their long-term academic success.

Plan for Late Enrolling Students

Roxbury Prep is committed to ensuring that all students, including 9th grade students who enroll after the start of the year, have equitable access to the requirements necessary to earn the Competency Determination (CD). Students may enroll at Roxbury Prep between grades 5 and 9. 9th Grade students who enroll after the beginning of the academic year will take the required classwork for their grade outlined above. Students must demonstrate mastery in these courses by earning a final grade of 70 or higher in each of these classes. For students who do not meet this benchmark during the academic year, Roxbury Prep will provide the opportunity to re-take the course in summer school in order to achieve mastery. This policy provides late-enrolling students with structured and

equitable pathways to demonstrate mastery while maintaining compliance with all state requirements.

Appeals Process

Students and their parents/guardian will be notified at the beginning of their 12th grade year if the student has not achieved their Competency Determination. A student's CD status will also be updated in Powerschool.

Competency Determinations are determined by students showing mastery in the standards-aligned courses listed above. Parents who believe their students have achieved mastery of the required courses to earn a Competency Determination and would like to appeal a Competency Determination decision are able to appeal to the Principal of RPHS between September and May 15th of the student's 12th grade or terminal year at Roxbury Prep.

Parents must submit their appeal in writing to the Principal. The Principal will then have two weeks to schedule an appeal meeting with the student and parent/guardian, and four weeks to complete the appeal meeting. After the meeting, the Principal has ten school days to issue a written decision regarding the Competency Determination appeal. Students who are 18 years old or above can also initiate an appeal using the same process described above.

Diploma Request Process for Previously Enrolled Students

Previously enrolled students at Roxbury Prep in the classes of 2003 through 2024 who did not earn a diploma due to not meeting the state's CD requirement, may now determine their current eligibility under Roxbury Prep's new CD requirements. To do so, they should contact the Roxbury Prep High School Director of Operations and request a transcript review. The Director of Operations or their designee will confirm if the student showed mastery in the required courses needed to earn a CD. If a Competency Determination was established, the Director of Operations or their designee will provide written determination to the student and/or guardian within thirty days of receiving the request.

Certification of Competency Determination

Roxbury Prep's Board of Trustees approved Roxbury Prep's new Competency Determination at their September 25, 2025 Board meeting, held in accordance with the Roxbury Preparatory Charter School By-Laws and the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

After Board approval, Roxbury Prep's CD policy will be distributed to families, guardians and students through our monthly newsletters and posted on [Roxbury Prep's Website](#) and will be available in multiple languages.

Roxbury Prep's Graduation Requirements

To graduate from Roxbury Prep High School for the class of 2026 and beyond, students must complete the following:

- **Credits**
 - A Credit is earned when a student successfully completes a course at Roxbury Prep HS. Each year-long course, both academic courses and specials, equals one credit.
 - Students must earn 23 Credits in the content areas below to graduate.
- **Core Academics**
 - **4 Credits English Language Arts** (English I, English II, English III, English IV, AP English Language, AP English Literature).
 - **4 Credits Math** (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Calculus, AP Calculus AB)
 - **4 Credits Science** (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, AP Biology).
 - **4 Credits Social Science/History courses** (Ancient World History, AP World History, AP US History, AP US Government).
 - **2 Credits World Languages** (Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, AP Spanish)
 - **2 Credits Physical Education**
 - **2 Credits Arts Education**
 - **1 Credit College Seminar**
- **Other Requirements**
 - Successfully earn a Competency Determination from Roxbury Prep
 - Participation in 3 years of HS Talent and Voice Co-curriculars
 - Successfully complete at least 1 AP class