

University Schools			
Monitoring:  <b>Review: Annually, in December</b>	Descriptor Term:  <b>Graduation Requirements</b>	Descriptor Code: <b>4.605</b>	Issued Date: <b>June 2025</b>
		Rescinds: <b>418</b>	Issued:

The State Board of Education has established minimum standards for graduation from any Tennessee public high school. Any student who meets those requirements shall be awarded the appropriate diploma as specified in the Tennessee State Board of Education Rules, Regulations and Minimum Standards for the Operation of the Public School System. The University delegates to the Vice Provost for Educational Initiatives the authority to delineate areas that may be substituted for the physical education requirement and to identify areas of elective focus beyond those listed in the State’s High School Policy.

***Regular High School Diploma***

To earn a regular high school diploma, students must meet the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education and earn the following 22 units of credit and meet the University High School Standards.

Minimum Standards	
English	4 credits
Mathematics	4 credits
Science	3 credits
Social Studies	3 credits
Wellness	1 credit
Physical Education	0.5 credit
Personal Finance	0.5 credit
Focus Area	3 credits
World Language	2 credits
Fine Arts	1 credits

<b>Total:</b>	<b>22 credits</b>
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\*Beginning with the Class of 2028, the State requires 1.0 credit of Computer Science as an additional graduation requirement.

University High School requires all students to complete a capstone experience during senior year. Requirements for the Competency and Portfolio Capstone will be determined by University High's Executive Director.

### ***Graduation with State Honors***

Students who score at or above all of the subject area readiness benchmarks on the ACT or equivalent score on the SAT will graduate with honors.

<u>Readiness Benchmarks</u>	
English	18
Mathematics	22
Reading	21
Science	24

### ***Graduation with State Distinction***

Students will be recognized as graduating with “distinction” by attaining a B or better average and completing at least one of the following:

- Earn a nationally recognized industry certification
- Participate in at least one Governor's Schools
- Participate in one Tennessee All-State musical organizations
- Be selected as a National Merit Finalist or Semifinalist
- Attain a score of 31 or higher composite score on the ACT (or equivalent e.g., 1360 on the SAT)
- Attain a score of 3 or higher on at least two Advanced Placement exams
- Successfully complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
- Earn 12 or more semester hours of transcribed postsecondary credit

### **EARLY GRADUATION**

**STATE MOVE ON WHEN READY:**

A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready program shall complete an intent form available from the Department of Education and submit it to her or his high school principal and the Department of Education. Intent forms will be available in the counseling office of each high school and should be completed upon entry into the 9th grade. Applications will not be accepted for Move On When Ready later than May of the Sophomore year. A public high school student may complete an early high school graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two (2)-year institution of higher education or conditional entry into a public four (4)-year institution of higher education, if the student fulfills each of the following requirements:

(a) Earns seventeen (17) credits that include:

1. English I, II, III, and IV
2. Algebra I and II\*
3. Geometry
4. United States History
5. Two (2) courses in the same world language;
6. One (1) course selected from:
  - (i) Economics
  - (ii) Government
  - (iii) World Civilizations
  - (iv) World Geography
7. One (1) course selected from:
  - (i) History and appreciation of visual and performing arts
  - (ii) A standards-based arts course, which may include studio art, band, chorus, dance, or other performing arts
8. Health and Physical Education (Wellness)
9. Biology
10. Chemistry

(b) Has a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2 on the Uniform Grading System four (4) point scale;

(c) Scores at the on-track or mastered level on each end-of-course assessment taken (excluding end-of-course assessments taken during the student's final semester prior to early graduation);

(d) Meets benchmark scores of twenty-one (21) or higher composite score on the ACT or an equivalent score on the SAT;

(e) Achieves a passing score on a nationally recognized world language proficiency assessment;

(f) Achieve a passing score on a state-normed civics test, as required by the Tennessee State Board of Education; and

(g) Completes two (2) early postsecondary courses.

A student pursuing early graduation through the Move on When Ready Program may take two (2) high school English courses in an academic year and is exempt from any additional graduation requirements. A student who completes the Move on When Ready Program shall be awarded a regular high school diploma.

### **UHS Early Graduation**

To earn a regular high school diploma, students must fulfill each of the following requirements:

1. Be in the fourth (4th) year of high school;
2. Meet the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education;
3. Achieve a passing score on a state-normed civics test, as required by the Tennessee State Board of Education;
4. Candidates for early graduation shall submit an “Intent to Graduate Early” to their respective counselors prior to their senior year.
5. Meet qualifications for the state definition of a “Ready Graduate”.
6. Earn the following twenty-two (22) units of credit:
  - a. English 4 Units
  - b. Mathematics 4 Units
  - c. Science 3 Units
  - d. Social Studies 3 Units
  - e. Wellness 1 Unit
  - f. Physical Education 0.5 Unit
  - g. Personal Finance 0.5 Unit
  - h. Elective Focus 3 Units
  - i. Fine Arts (may be waived pursuant to State Board Policy 2.103) 1 Unit
  - j. World Language (may be waived pursuant to State Board Policy 2.103) 2 Units

### ***Adjustment of Graduation Requirements – Provisions for Students of Military Parents***

University Schools shall waive specific courses required for graduation for students of military parents who enroll/transfer into the district if the student has satisfactorily completed similar course work in another district; or University Schools shall provide reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, University Schools shall provide an alternative means of acquiring the required course work. University Schools shall accept the exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state, norm-referenced achievement tests, or alternative testing in lieu of testing requirements mandated for graduation by the

state of Tennessee or University Schools. If alternatives cannot be accommodated by University Schools for a student transferring in their senior year, University Schools and the sending district shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student meets graduation requirements in the sending district.

Additionally, for a student of military parents transferring to University Schools at the beginning or during their senior year, who is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, University Schools and the sending district shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student meets graduation requirements in the sending district. If the sending district is not a member of the Interstate Commission, University Schools shall use best efforts to facilitate the on-time graduation of the student through adjustment of graduation requirements based on course waivers and acceptance of the sending state's examinations/tests or alternative testing.

### ***Special Education Diploma***

A special education diploma may be awarded at the end of their fourth year of high school to students with disabilities who have (1) not met the requirements for a high school diploma, (2) have satisfactorily completed an individualized education program, and (3) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. Students who obtain the special education diploma may continue to work towards the high school diploma through the end of the school year in which they turn twenty-two years old.

### **Honor Roll, Awards, and Laude System**

#### ***Honor Roll***

Honor roll students shall be determined by standards recommended by the Director of Schools.

#### ***Awards and Contests***

Prior to a school department or club presenting honors or awards or conducting contests, the school's Executive Director shall approve such honor, award or contest.

#### ***Class Designation***

A laude system will be used to delineate the three categories of High Academic Distinction, for 12<sup>th</sup> grade graduating students. The categories shall be determined by weighted cumulative grade point average. All high school credit grades earned in grades 7-11 and the first semester of 12<sup>th</sup> grade year will be counted towards the student's grade point average.

- Summa Cum Laude: GPA of 4.4 and above
- Magna Cum Laude: GPA of 4.2-4.39

- Cum Laude: GPA of 3.9-4.19

University Schools will not rank students numerically. A blind internal calculation of rank (determined by Weighted GPA) will be provided to higher education institutions for scholarship purposes as requested.

### ***Valedictorian and Salutatorian***

- Student must have been consecutively enrolled in their respective University School District High School since the first day of their 11<sup>th</sup> grade year.
- Student must qualify for the highest Latin System honor (Summa cum laude) awarded in the respective school (weighted 4.4 and above GPA) to be in consideration for valedictorian and/or salutatorian.
- Any disputes or discrepancies in the Valedictorian/Salutatorian selection process must be submitted, in writing, to the Executive Director of Academics by no later than the last day of January during the student's 12<sup>th</sup> grade year. The decision of the Executive Director of Academics shall be final.
- Selection process will be based on the score (rounded to the hundredth place) assigned using the Index Score Formula as calculated upon completion of the first semester of the senior year: Cumulative Weighted GPA (rounded to hundredth place) x 9 + ACT Composite\* = Index Score (i.e., 4.57 GPA x 9 + 34 ACT = 75.13)

*\*Highest composite score on the official (State or National) ACT from a single test date taken no later than October of the senior year. Superscores will not be considered as part of this process. The "ACT Composite" score will be defined in the same way that ACT defines Composite scores on the date the exam is taken. No other standardized test scores will be considered in calculating the index score.*

The student with the highest Index Score will be named Valedictorian and the student with the second highest score will be named Salutatorian as long as they also meet the additional criteria listed below. In case of an exact tie, students may share a title. If more than one student shares the valedictorian title, salutatorian will not be awarded. Graduating Juniors are excluded from Valedictorian and Salutatorian eligibility.

### ***University High Legacy Scholar***

In addition to the Valedictorian and Salutatorian honors, the student who best reflects University High's mission and vision, and who most embodies the school's core values and competencies, will be recognized as the University High Legacy Scholar and receive a scholarship. This distinguished award will be granted based on a holistic evaluation of the student's engagement across various aspects of the University High experience, including Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning, Experiential Learning, Community Service, and more. Selection for this prestigious award will be conducted through an

application process and will be determined by a committee appointed by the Executive Director of University High School. The decision of the committee will be final and cannot be appealed. (Valedictorian/Salutatorian are not eligible to be designated University High Legacy Scholar).

In addition to the criteria above, any student named Valedictorian, Salutatorian, or University High Legacy Scholar:

- Must successfully pass all courses they are registered for in the Spring semester of senior year and sit for any Advanced Placement exams or the Executive Director may rescind the Valedictorian or Salutatorian honors.
- Any instance of academic honesty will disqualify a student (including but not limited to cheating and/or plagiarism).
- Must not receive any major discipline violations in Junior or Senior year (i.e., Out of School Suspension).