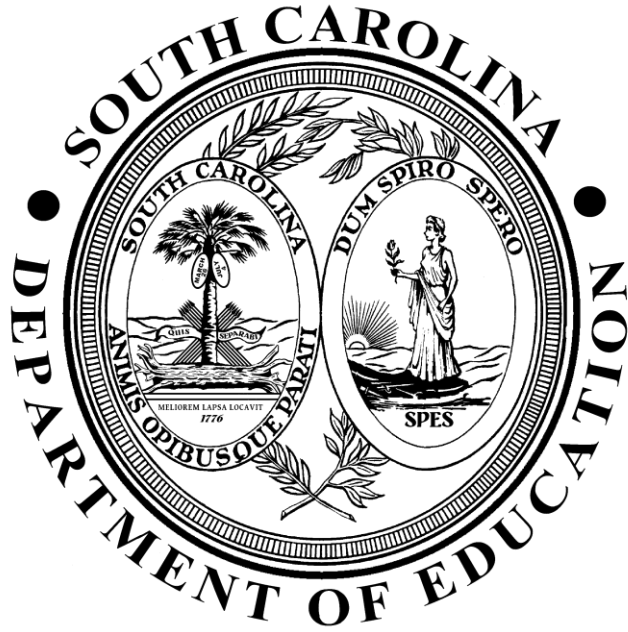


STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION



South Carolina Seals of Distinction 2021-2022 Overview and Guidelines

March, 2022

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Diploma Pathways Legislation

On May 19, 2017, the South Carolina Governor signed legislation allowing for personalized pathways to a South Carolina high school diploma. South Carolina Code Ann., § 59-39-100, was amended to read as follows:

To support the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, for students entering ninth grade beginning with the 2018-2019 School Year, the twenty-four units required are as prescribed in this section and in regulation by the State Board of Education. (1) Students will continue to be required to earn the units of credit as prescribed in regulation and, when applicable, be offered national industry certifications and credential. (2) Coursework must be aligned with a student's personalized diploma pathway. The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations that outline the process and procedures for approval of courses to personalize pathways based on students' postsecondary plans and include an annually updated course activity coding manual listing approved courses. The individualized graduation planning process must plan each student's personalized pathway based on his postsecondary plans.

This personalized path to a high school diploma is referred to as Diploma Pathways. There are three key components of this legislation: Diploma Pathway Courses developed by a school district to meet the unique needs of students, Seals of Distinction, and the State Employability Credential.

The amendment above led to the following addition to Regulation No.: R.43-234 Defined Program, Grades 9-12 and Graduation Requirements:

B. Students shall have the opportunity to earn endorsements within each high school diploma pathway; however, earning an endorsement is not a requirement for graduation. Endorsements shall identify a particular area of focus, beginning with the freshman class of 2018–19. The earning of a graduation endorsement shall be based upon the following criteria:

1. Students shall meet all requirements for earning a South Carolina high school diploma as set forth above and within this regulation.
2. Students may earn one or more endorsements in pathways approved in guidelines set by the State Board of Education (SBE). School districts may apply to the SBE to have additional endorsements approved.
3. English I, II, III, IV or their course equivalents (customized English I, II, III, IV as approved by the SBE through the locally designed course process as mentioned in II.H.1) or higher level courses (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Dual Credit, etc.) must be taken to receive an endorsement.

C. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has the authority to develop guidelines approved by the SBE in accordance with provisions of this regulation.

Seals of Distinction Overview

The South Carolina Seals of Distinction are a state-level award granted by the South Carolina Department of Education.

The Seals of Distinction do not appear on students’ transcripts or diplomas but are instead issued via the Parchment application in the form of a South Carolina Department of Education digital credential. Students must possess a Parchment account to claim their South Carolina Department of Education Seal of Distinction digital credentials.

The Seals of Distinction digital credentials will be available for students to claim after graduation. An email announcing their availability will be sent to the address stored in the ‘Post Graduate Email’ field in PowerSchool.

The implementation of this policy is required for all Local Education Agency high schools.

2021-2022 Seals of Distinction Qualifying Criteria



DIPLOMA PATHWAYS SEALS OF DISTINCTION OVERVIEW

Students shall meet all requirements for earning a South Carolina high school diploma to be eligible to earn any Seal of Distinction.

One or more Seals may be earned, but are not required for graduation.

Consult District or School Curriculum Guides for more information regarding curriculum choices and requirements.

Honors Seal of Distinction	College-Ready Seal of Distinction	Career Seal of Distinction	Specialization Seal of Distinction
UGP GPA 3.5 or higher	UGP GPA 3.0 or higher	UGP GPA 2.5 or higher	UGP GPA 3.0 or higher
<p>English - 4 credits 2 at honors or higher level</p> <p>Math - Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and a 4th higher level math requiring Algebra 2 as a prerequisite 3 at honors or higher level</p> <p>Lab Science - 3 credits 2 at honors or higher level</p> <p>Social Studies - 3 credits 2 at the honors or higher level</p> <p>World Languages - 2 credits of the same language for students entering 9th grade in 2018–2019 3 credits of the same language for students entering 9th grade in 2019–2020 and beyond</p> <p>Advanced Coursework - 4 additional credits of honors or higher completed during the Junior/Senior years (the last 2 years prior to graduation)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACT 20 or higher</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SAT 1020 or higher</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tests may be superscored</p> <hr/> <p>English - 4 credits</p> <p>Math - Algebra 1 (or the equivalent of Algebra 1), Algebra 2, Geometry, and a 4th Higher Level Math</p> <p>Lab Science - 3 credits</p> <p>Social Studies - 3 credits</p> <p>World Language - 2 credits In the same language</p> <p>Fine Arts - 1 credit</p>	<p>English - 4 credits</p> <p>Math - 4 credits</p> <p>Science - 3 credits</p> <p>Social Studies - 3 credits</p> <p><u>and one of the following:</u></p> <p>Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) major OR Career and Technical Education (CTE) Completer</p> <p><u>and one of the following:</u></p> <p>One industry recognized credential OR Silver or higher on WIN OR Completion of Career Ready Work-Based Learning (WBL) placement</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">(complete one area to qualify)</p> <p>STEM - 4 credits beyond required courses in math, science, technology, and engineering; at least 2 at honors level or higher; may be in 1 area of STEM or across 4 areas</p> <p>World Language - 4 credits in the same language OR minimum ACTFL Exam score of “Intermediate Low” (or an equated score on STAMP or ASL assessment) OR AP exam score of 3 or higher OR IB exam score of 4 or higher before the senior year; English Learners – all criteria above and Level 5 composite ACCESS test score</p> <p>Military - 4 credits in JROTC and an ASVAB score of 31 or higher</p> <p>Arts - 4 credits in single or multiple areas of the Arts; 2 or more at honors or higher level and *mastery on external exam or performance task. *waived for Class of 2022</p>

Updated August 20, 2021

Students must earn credit in all identified courses to qualify for the corresponding Seal of Distinction. Schools are encouraged to expand offerings in honors courses, fine arts courses, etc. to enable students to earn multiple Seals. Schools with limited capacity are encouraged to use VirtualSC, additional online platforms, or other creative avenues approved by the South Carolina Department of Education to expand course offerings.

Seal Specific Criteria Clarification

Honors Seal of Distinction		
UGP GPA 3.5 or higher		
AND		
English	4 credits	2 at honors or higher level
Math	Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and a 4th higher level math requiring Algebra 2 as a prerequisite	3 at honors or higher level
Lab Science*	3 credits	2 at honors or higher level
Social Studies	3 credits	2 at honors or higher level
World Language	2 credits of the same language for students entering 9th grade in 2018–2019	
	3 credits of the same language for students entering 9th grade in 2019–2020 and beyond	
Advanced Coursework**	4 additional credits of honors or higher completed during the Junior/Senior years (the last 2 years prior to graduation)	

*Lab sciences courses: biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, and any science for which biology, chemistry, physics and/or earth science is a prerequisite. Courses in general or introductory science for which one of these four units is not a prerequisite will not meet this requirement.

**The 4 additional credits of Advanced Coursework are in addition to the required 2 English, 3 math, 2 lab science, and 2 social studies courses at honors or higher level. The 4 additional credits of advanced coursework can be in any subject area if the course is weighted at the honors or higher level. The 4 additional credits of Advanced Coursework must be completed during the final two years of high school.

College Ready Seal of Distinction				
UGP GPA 3.0 or higher	or	ACT 20 or higher*	or	SAT 1020 or higher*
AND				
English	4 credits			
Math	Algebra 1 (or the equivalent of Algebra 1**), Algebra 2, Geometry, and a 4th Higher Level Math			
Lab Science***	3 credits			
Social Studies	3 credits			
World Language	2 credits of the same language			
Fine Arts	1 credit			

*SAT and ACT tests may be superscored

** The combination of Foundations in Algebra and Intermediate Algebra may be used to satisfy the Algebra 1 course requirement in the College Ready Seal of Distinction.

***Lab sciences courses: biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, and any science for which biology, chemistry, physics and/or earth science is a prerequisite. Courses in general or introductory science for which one of these four units is not a prerequisite will not meet this requirement.

Career Seal of Distinction				
UGP GPA 2.5 or higher				
AND				
English	4 credits			
Math	4 credits			
Science	3 credits			
Social Studies	3 credits			
AND				
Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) major*	or	Career and Technical Education (CTE) Completer**		
AND				
One industry recognized credential***	or	Silver or higher on Career Readiness Exam	or	Completion of Career Ready Work-Based Learning (WBL) placement****

*An Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) major is four aligned courses within a career cluster designated by the school district as a part of the EEDA legislation. Courses include state approved and/or local board approved courses based on district curriculum framework.

**A Career and Technical Education (CTE) Completer has earned all required units in a state recognized CTE program identified by the assigned Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code. State recognized CTE programs with approved course listing for each CIP code can be found on the [SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION website](#).

***A complete listing of South Carolina Industry Recognized Credentials (IRC) can be found on the [South Carolina Department of Education website](#).

****A Career Ready Work-Based Learning (WBL) Placement credit must meet the career ready qualifiers in the South Carolina Accountability System. These qualifiers can be found on the [South Carolina Department of Education website](#).

Specialization Seals of Distinction

STEM Specialization
UGP GPA 3.0 or higher
AND
4 credits beyond required courses in math, science, technology, and engineering; at least 2 at honors level or higher; may be in 1 area of STEM or across 4 areas*

*Courses that qualify as STEM courses:

- Graduation credit courses in science and math identified in the Activity Coding Manual.
- Course listed under the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics cluster of CTE courses listed in the Activity Coding Manual.
- Course listed in the Activity Coding Manual with Engineering or Technology in the course name.

World Language Specialization
UGP GPA 3.0 or higher
AND
4 credits in the same language OR minimum ACTFL Exam score of “Intermediate Low” (or an equated score on STAMP* or ASL assessment) OR AP exam score of 3 or higher OR IB exam score of 4 or higher before the senior year; English Learners – all criteria above and Level 5 composite ACCESS test score

* To reach the "Intermediate Low" threshold using a STAMP score, a minimum score of 4 in ALL areas (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking) is required. A score of less than 4 in ANY of the areas (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking), does not meet the minimum required score.

The Diploma Pathways Seals of Distinction for World Language differs from the South Carolina Seal of Biliteracy.

The [South Carolina Seal of Biliteracy](#) is a proficiency-based award. It is awarded based on the levels of proficiency measured by a nationally normed language assessment. Students cannot use accumulated credits to qualify for the South Carolina Seal of Biliteracy.

The Diploma Pathways Seal of Distinction for World Language Specialization can be earned with accumulated credits OR with a minimum score on a nationally normed language assessment.

Military Specialization
UGP GPA 3.0 or higher
AND
4 credits in JROTC
AND
ASVAB score of 31 or higher

Arts Specialization
UGP GPA 3.0 or higher
AND
4 credits in single or multiple areas of the Arts; 2 or more at honors or higher level
AND
mastery on external exam or performance task. *waived for Class of 2022*

Timeline for Meeting Qualifying Criteria for Seals of Distinction

The Seals of Distinction GPA requirements may be met by either the:

- End of first semester senior year GPA
- Final GPA

Seniors who meet the GPA requirement at the end of first semester do not have to requalify at the end of their senior year.

School districts should designate a cutoff date to report test scores, industry credentials, etc. that may be required to earn a Seal of Distinction.

PowerSchool Coding for Seals of Distinction

Earned Seals of Distinction are coded on the SC Student Information page. Only earned and verified Seals of Distinction should be entered on this page.

To enter a student's earned Seal(s) of Distinction, navigate to the SC Student Information page:

Start Page > Student Selection > South Carolina State Information > SC Student Information

Scroll to the field titled Diploma Pathways Seals of Distinction in the ordering diploma section.

Select the appropriate Seal(s) from the values in the corresponding drop-down menu:

SPEC – Specialization Seal

HON – Honors
CLGR – College Ready
CR – Career Ready

If the student earned more than one Seal, select multiple Seals by pressing the control key while clicking each Seal value.

If the student earned the SPEC – Specialization Seal, then the field Specialization Area will automatically be generated. Select the appropriate area from the values listed as follows:

S – STEM
M – Military
W – World Language
A – Arts

If the student earned more than one Specialization Seal, select multiple Seals by pressing the control key while clicking each Seal value.

Once all earned Seals have been selected, click Submit at the bottom of the page. Note that the entry will not be saved until submitted in PowerSchool.

The deadline to enter earned Seals of Distinction for first semester graduates is January 20, 2022.
The deadline to enter earned Seals of Distinction for spring graduates is June 15, 2022.
The deadline to enter earned Seals of Distinction for summer graduates is August 31, 2022.

Seals of Distinction Coding in IGPs

Seals of Distinction are not required but optional endorsements for students. Therefore, Seals of Distinction are NOT required to be entered into students' IGP Success Planner. However, by entering Seals of Distinction in the IGP Success Planner (on step 2), schools will have the ability to create reports to gather data for intended Seals.

EEDA Majors MUST be entered in the IGP Success Planner by the end of students' sophomore year.

Any EEDA Major and/or Seal of Distinction designated in the IGP Planner is 'intended', not 'earned.' All earned Seals of Distinction must be entered into students' SC Student Information page.

Post Graduate Email Address

Graduating students' personal email addresses must be entered into the new 'Post Graduate Email' field on the Student Demographic page. This field is located underneath the Home Phone field.

Instructions for claiming earned Seals of Distinction will be emailed to the address listed in the Post Graduate Email field a few weeks after graduation.

The deadline to enter students' Post Graduate Email address for first semester graduates is January 20, 2022. The deadline to enter students' Post Graduate Email address for spring graduates is June 15, 2022. The deadline to enter students' Post Graduate Email address for summer graduates is August 31, 2022.

Parchment Accounts

The Seals of Distinction are awarded by the South Carolina Department of Education in the form of digital credentials issued via the Parchment application.

Students must possess a Parchment account to claim their Seal of Distinction digital credential(s.)

Students with established Parchment accounts:

The post graduate email address entered into PowerSchool MUST match the students' personal email address associated with their Parchment account. If initially linked to a district email address, students' Parchment accounts must be updated with their personal email address before the student loses access to that district email address. This can be accomplished by the student after logging into their Parchment account.

Students without established Parchment accounts:

Students without established Parchment accounts must create an account associated with their personal email address stored in the Post Graduate Email field. This account can be created at any time, including after receipt of the notification email from the South Carolina Department of Education.

District Responsibilities

Dissemination of Information

Schools and districts will provide all students and their families information on the South Carolina Seals of Distinction as soon as possible so that students can organize their schedules and plan to meet the requirements necessary to receive this honor.

Schools and districts will provide all students and their families information on creating Parchment accounts that must be used to claim their earned Seal(s) of Distinction.

Record Keeping

Districts will designate a staff member (or multiple staff members) to serve as a liaison between the district and the Office of Research and Data Analysis (ORDA) at the South Carolina Department of Education. Districts will assign the designated person to the Seals of Distinction Contact role in the [District Entity Management System \(DEIM\)](#).

Schools and districts will develop procedures locally to ensure student Parchment accounts are available to students beyond graduation for accessing their digital Seals of Distinction.

Schools and districts will develop procedures locally to determine who at the school level will enter students' verified Seal(s) of Distinction and Postgraduate Email Address into PowerSchool.

- Deadline to enter earned Seals of Distinction and Post Graduate Email addresses for first semester graduates: January 20, 2022
- Deadline to enter earned Seals of Distinction and Post Graduate Email addresses for spring graduates: June 15, 2022
- Deadline to enter earned Seals of Distinction and Post Graduate Email addresses for summer graduates: August 31, 2022

Recognition and Awarding

Schools and districts are encouraged to make the awarding of South Carolina's Seals of Distinction a prominent component at appropriate ceremonies such as graduation.

However, schools and districts may not offer a district level recognition of earned Seals of Distinction until the digital credential has been verified.

Schools and districts will inform all graduates and their families their Seal(s) will be available a few weeks after graduation. Notification of availability will be sent to the students' personal email address recorded in PowerSchool.