

# Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement - Q&A



## Q1: How are the existing graduation requirements expected to change? What would students need to do to meet the new requirement?

- The proposed change to the graduation program would involve adding a requirement for secondary students to complete 4 credits of Indigenous-focused coursework in order to graduate. Students could earn these credits by successfully completing:
  - *One of the existing, Indigenous-focused provincial courses;*
  - *A First Nations language course at the Grade 10 to Grade 12 level; or*
  - *A locally-developed, Indigenous-focused course (BAA)*
- No changes would be made to the total number of credits required to graduate (80), nor would there be any changes to the Adult Graduation Program. In some instances, an Indigenous-focused course may also satisfy specific Language Arts, Social Studies, or elective course requirements of the graduation program in addition to the new requirement.
- A comparison of the current graduation requirements and the proposed requirements, including 4 credits of Indigenous-focused learning, can be found in the table below:

Current Graduation Requirements	Proposed Graduation Requirements <i>(Highlighted)</i>
At least 16 credits must be at the Grade 12 level, including a required Language Arts 12 and Career Life Connections	At least 16 credits must be at the Grade 12 level, including a required Language Arts 12 and Career Life Connections
52 credits are required from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Career-Life Education (4 credits), and Career-Life Connections (4 credits)</li> <li>○ Physical and Health Education 10 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ Science 10 (4 credits), and a Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ Social Studies 10 (4 credits), and a Social Studies 11 or 12 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ A Math 10 (4 credits), and a Math 11 or 12 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ A Language Arts 10, 11 and a required 12 (12 credits total)</li> <li>○ An Arts Education 10, 11, or 12 <u>and/or</u> an Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies 10, 11, or 12 (4 credits total)</li> </ul>	52 credits are required from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Career-Life Education (4 credits), and Career-Life Connections (4 credits)</li> <li>○ Physical and Health Education 10 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ Science 10 (4 credits), and a Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ Social Studies 10 (4 credits), and a Social Studies 11 or 12 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ A Math 10 (4 credits), and a Math 11 or 12 (4 credits)</li> <li>○ A Language Arts 10, 11 and a required 12 (12 credits total)</li> <li>○ An Arts Education 10, 11, or 12 <u>and/or</u> an Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies 10, 11, or 12 (4 credits total)</li> </ul>
	<i>4 credits required from an Indigenous-focused course(s)</i>
At least 28 credits must be elective course credits	<i>Potentially no change to elective course credits - student course choice combined with school/district course offerings would determine whether elective course credits would be used to meet the new requirement.</i>
Three graduation assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 10 Numeracy Assessment</li> <li>• Grade 10 Literacy Assessment</li> <li>• Grade 12 Literacy Assessment</li> </ul>	Three graduation assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 10 Numeracy Assessment</li> <li>• Grade 10 Literacy Assessment</li> <li>• Grade 12 Literacy Assessment</li> </ul>

## Q2: Why is a new graduation requirement needed? How will it benefit students?

- Introducing a new, Indigenous-focused graduation requirement is intended to support lasting and meaningful reconciliation.
- The new requirement will build on work to date, to integrate Indigenous perspectives and content across the redesigned provincial curriculum and into professional development and standards for B.C. educators.
- Currently, 1/3 of B.C. students completing the annual Student Learning Survey report having received education about Indigenous peoples, and fewer than 5% of graduates complete any of the Indigenous-focused provincial courses or First Nations language courses at the secondary level.
- Introducing a full, Indigenous-focused course requirement will provide all students with the time and opportunity to develop deeper understanding and a broader knowledge base of Indigenous worldviews, histories and cultures, and support the K-12 sector's mandate to develop the Educated Citizen.

## Q3: Where did the idea for an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement come from?

- The [Action Plan](#) for the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) includes a commitment to *“Implement a mandatory course or bundle of credits related to First Peoples as part of graduation requirements in B.C.”*
  - *In October 2021, in response to this commitment, Government directed the Ministry of Education to “implement a mandatory course or bundle of credits on First Peoples as a graduation requirement in B.C.” and to “engage with Indigenous communities, the education sector, and the public on how to implement this new graduation requirement.”*
- Implementing an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement is also part of the First Nations Anti-Racism Strategy being developed by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) at the direction of First Nations, to address systemic racism towards Indigenous students in the public education system.
- This work aligns with Ministry commitments in the [BC Tripartite Education Agreement](#), which include *“advancing reconciliation between the Crown and First Nations, as expressed in the [TRC's Calls to Action](#) and the UN declaration”* and *“decolonizing approaches to First Nations education and developing new approaches aligned with the UN declaration”*.
- [Minister mandate letters](#) for all provincial ministries outline expectations to focus on the foundational principles of lasting and meaningful reconciliation and addressing systemic racism and discrimination.
- The [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of B.C.'s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#) state that *“reconciliation is a fundamental purpose of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982” (#2)*, that *“reconciliation is an ongoing process that occurs in the context of evolving Crown-Indigenous relationships (#9)*, and that *“a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in B.C. are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented” (#10)*.
- [Gathering Strength – Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) states that *“educational institutions have a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society”* and that *“accurate information about the history and cultures of Aboriginal peoples and nations, the role of treaties in the formation of Canada, and the distinctive contributions of Aboriginal people to contemporary Canada should form part of every Canadian student's education.”*

- The First Nations Leadership Council, FNEESC, and education partners including the British Columbia School Trustees Association and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation have long advocated for an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement.

#### **Q4: Why is the new graduation requirement specific to Indigenous Peoples and not inclusive of other equity seeking groups?**

- Government is introducing this new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement in line with existing provincial commitments under the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) and the [BC Tripartite Education Agreement](#), and with the [TRC's Calls to Action](#). This reflects a commitment to build knowledge and understanding that BC First Nations are the First Peoples of B.C. and are recognized in the Constitution as having unique rights in Canada.
- B.C.'s redesigned K-12 curriculum is competency-based and flexible, and provides many opportunities for teachers to teach about different communities and address topics such as racism and discrimination in their classrooms.
- The Ministry of Education is committed to engaging broadly with the education sector, stakeholders and rightsholders on a process for ongoing evaluation, review, and updating of the curriculum.
- In the coming months, the Ministry will begin a collaborative process to create an engagement model for curriculum review. This process will be inclusive, inviting broad input from the education sector and will specifically seek out representation from the IBPOC community.
- The Ministry has heard feedback that the teaching of diverse cultural histories and anti-racism needs to be further enhanced and made more prominent in the curriculum.
- Strengthening topics like anti-racism and diverse cultural histories can help ensure that all students feel included and represented throughout their studies.
- This work is aligned with the broad cross-government approach to address racism and hate, being led by the Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Division of the Ministry of Attorney General.

#### **Q5: Who informed the development of the proposed new graduation requirement model?**

- The Ministry of Education has been working closely with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC) on the development of the proposed model for an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement to support a more relevant and responsive education system for all students.

#### **Q6: How can students, parents/caregivers, educators and other members of the public provide input into the implementation of the new graduation requirement?**

- Between March 7 to April 22, 2022, a public engagement process to gather feedback on the proposed model for the new graduation requirement will be available on the [govTogetherBC website](#).
- The Ministry of Education will also consult with Indigenous communities and the K-12 in March and April, and FNEESC will facilitate information sharing with First Nations.
- The results of these activities will inform a finalized implementation plan for the new graduation requirement, that will be made available in August 2022.

**Q7: Could this create negative impacts for Indigenous students (e.g., straining relationships with non-Indigenous peers, placing students in the position of being expected to “speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples”, etc)?**

- It is important to recognize that not taking action to support lasting and meaningful reconciliation negatively impacts all students, including Indigenous learners.
- [Gathering Strength – Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) emphasizes the important role of education “to correct erroneous assumptions and to dispel stereotypes that still abound in the minds of many Canadians, distorting their relationships with Aboriginal people.”
- A new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement will provide all students in B.C. with the time and opportunity to develop deeper understandings of the experiences, cultures, and histories of Indigenous peoples in B.C and Canada, which can in turn help to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in our schools and communities.
- Supports for educators to be proactive and responsive to Indigenous-specific racism will also be a key component of the provincial implementation plan for the new graduation requirement.
- Professional learning opportunities (e.g. workshops, webinars) will be co-developed with the First Nations Education Steering Committee and include best practice strategies for implementing the new graduation requirement in ways that support Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

**Q8: Would this affect implementation of existing Indigenous-focused learning standards in the current curriculum (i.e., if it is assumed that “required” Indigenous content is being covered in one of the mandatory Indigenous-focused course options for graduation)?**

- The new graduation requirement is intended to build on the existing curriculum and provide students with the opportunity to engage in a full Indigenous-focused course to develop a deeper understanding and broader knowledge base of First Peoples perspectives, histories and cultures.
- Educators would still be required to deliver the current mandated provincial curriculum, including all Indigenous-focused learning standards.

**Q9: Would this limit student choice regarding electives?**

- Not necessarily. Under the proposed model, students may have the option to choose one of the provincial courses that meet both an existing graduation requirement as well as the new graduation requirement, depending on their school/district’s specific course offerings.
- Examples include:
  - *English First Peoples 12 would meet both the existing English Language Arts requirement for Grade 12 as well as the new graduation requirement.*
  - *B.C. First Peoples 12 or Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12 would meet both the existing Social Studies requirement for Grades 11 and 12, as well as the new graduation requirement.*

### **Q10: Would this change increase the number of credits needed to graduate?**

- No. The proposed approach would not involve increasing the number of credits required for graduation, which would remain at 80.
- Students would not necessarily need to take additional courses, as they may have the option to choose one of the provincial courses that meet both an existing graduation requirement as well as the new graduation requirement, depending on their school/district's specific course offerings.
- Alternatively, students could choose to take additional credits if desired – over 90% of B.C. graduates already earn more than 80 credits towards graduation.

### **Q11: Would the new requirement impact students' transitions to post-secondary?**

- No, the proposed approach to the new requirement would not impact students' transition to post-secondary studies.
- The proposed model includes options for students to meet the new graduation requirement through completion of an existing Indigenous-focused provincial course(s).
- Current English First Peoples courses are already accepted by post-secondary institutions in Canada.
- For post-secondary programs offered outside of Canada, or with highly specific entrance requirements, students could potentially choose a Grade 10 level English First Peoples course or could include the new requirement as one of their electives.
- The new requirement aligns with actions taken by an increasing number of public post-secondary institutions to introduce required Indigenous education coursework for students, including B.C. teacher education programs and UBC School of Law.

### **Q12: Who would teach the Indigenous-focused courses?**

- Eligible courses in the proposed model (including provincial courses, First Nations language courses, and locally developed, Indigenous-focused BAA courses) would be taught by teachers trained to teach in the related content area, as currently exists in the K-12 system.

### **Q13: What resources would be provided to educators, schools and districts to implement the new requirement?**

The Ministry is consulting with educators, schools, districts and the public on what tools and resources may be useful to support the implementation of the new requirement.

Implementation supports could include:

- Professional development opportunities (e.g. workshops, webinars) that focus on the new requirement, eligible provincial courses, existing teacher resource guides, and strategies to support students and staff (including communicating with parents/caregivers).
- Teacher resources for existing provincial courses
- Time for planning

## Q14: When would the change be implemented? What would implementation look like?

Implementation is expected to involve a phased-in approach, with the new graduation requirement proposed to take full effect in 2023/24:

### 2021-2022

- March to April – sector and public consultations about the change to the graduation program
- May – release of “*What We Heard*” report from the consultation process
- August – announcement of final implementation model
- School districts and independent school authorities begin to prepare for any necessary capacity building in school districts and schools

### 2022-2023

- Continued communication with education partners
- Where existing courses are in place, students in Grades 10 and 11 *may* complete courses that meet the new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement
- School districts and independent schools increase capacity to offer mandatory course options (including teacher professional learning, gathering of needed resources, etc.)

### 2023-2024

- Change to Graduation Program takes full effect for students graduating in this year.

## Q15: What would the transition to the new requirement for students look like under the proposed model?

### For students currently in Grade 9

- In 2021/22 (Grade 9) - *No requirement*
- In 2022/23 (Grade 10) - *May complete requirement early*
- In 2023/24 (Grade 11) - *May complete requirement before entering Grade 12*
- In 2024/25 (Grade 12) - *Must complete requirement to graduate*

### For students currently in Grade 10

- In 2021/22 (Grade 10) - *May complete requirement early*
- In 2022/23 (Grade 11) - *May complete requirement before entering Grade 12*
- In 2023/24 (Grade 12) - *Must complete requirement to graduate*

### For students currently in Grade 11

- In 2021/22 (Grade 11) - *No requirement*
- In 2022/23 (Grade 12) - *No requirement – if all other graduation requirements have been met by the end of the school year*

### For students currently in Grade 12

- In 2021/22 (Grade 12) - *No requirement – if all other graduation requirements have been met by the end of the school year*

### Q16: Would all students be required to complete the requirement?

- Yes, all students working towards the BC Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma, in both English and French) would be required to complete the new graduation requirement, including students at B.C. certified offshore schools.

### Q17: Are there circumstances where a student could receive an equivalency for one of the eligible courses in the proposed model?

- Boards of education and independent school authorities would be expected to apply the same policies and procedures for equivalency requests as are used for other current graduation course requirements.
- The policies and procedures for a course equivalency also apply to locally developed, Indigenous-focused BAA courses.
- Please see the [full policy](#) for complete details and requirements.

### Q18: Are there circumstances where a student could challenge the new graduation course requirement?

- Boards of education and independent school authorities would be expected to apply the same policies and procedures for challenge requests as are used for other current graduation course requirements.
- The policies and procedures for a course challenge also apply to locally developed, Indigenous-focused BAA courses.
- Please see the [full policy](#) for complete details and requirements.

### Q19: How would the local BAA course option work in the proposed model?

- Boards of education and independent school authorities would be required to follow the existing policies and procedures for creating and approving a BAA course, including reporting the course information to the Ministry.
- Procedures for reporting a locally developed, Indigenous-focused BAA course as meeting the new graduation requirement are being determined and would be made available prior to implementation of the new requirement.
- Consideration is also being given to specific content requirements for locally developed, Indigenous-focused BAA courses meeting the new graduation requirement. Information and guidelines on any specific requirements would be made available prior to implementation of the new requirement.