

Indigenous-focused Graduation Requirement – Q&A



Q1: What do students need to do to meet the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement?

- Secondary students are required to complete 4 credits of Indigenous-focused coursework in order to graduate. Students can 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*
 - *A locally developed, Indigenous-focused course (BAA) that meets specific criteria*
- No change has been made to the total number of credits required to graduate (80), nor are there 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 summary of the new 2023 graduation program requirements, including 4 credits of Indigenous-focused learning, can be found in the table below:

2023 Graduation Program Requirements
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">○ Career-Life Education (4 credits), and Career-Life Connections (4 credits)○ Physical and Health Education 10 (4 credits)○ Science 10 (4 credits), and a Science 11 or 12 (4 credits)○ Social Studies 10 (4 credits), and a Social Studies 11 or 12 (4 credits)○ A Math 10 (4 credits), and a Math 11 or 12 (4 credits)○ A Language Arts 10, 11 and a required 12 (12 credits total)○ An Arts Education 10, 11, or 12 and/or an Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies 10, 11, or 12 (4 credits total)○ Indigenous-focused (4 credits)
<i>Potentially no change to elective course credits – student course choice combined with school/district course offerings determine which elective course credits can be used to meet the new requirement.</i>
Three graduation assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Grade 10 Numeracy Assessment○ Grade 10 Literacy Assessment○ Grade 12 Literacy Assessment

Q2: How does this requirement benefit students?

- The Indigenous-focused graduation requirement is intended to support lasting and meaningful reconciliation.
- The new requirement builds on work to date, to integrate Indigenous perspectives and content across the provincial curriculum and into professional development and standards for B.C. educators.
- Prior to the introduction of the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement, fewer than 5 percent of graduates completed any of the Indigenous-focused provincial courses or First Nations language courses at the secondary level.
- This Indigenous-focused graduation requirement provides 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: Do all students need to complete the requirement?

- Yes, all students working towards the B.C. Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma, in both English and French), with an expected graduation year of 2023/24 or later, are required to complete the new graduation requirement, including students at B.C. certified offshore schools.

Q4: 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 [B.C. 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, FNESC, and education partners including the British Columbia School Trustees Association and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation have formally advocated for an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement.

Q5: Why is the graduation requirement Indigenous-focused and not inclusive of other equity seeking groups?

- Government has introduced the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement in line with existing provincial commitments under the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) and the [B.C. Tripartite Education Agreement](#), and with the [TRC's Calls to Action](#). This reflects a commitment to build knowledge and understanding that B.C. First Nations are the First Peoples of B.C. and are recognized in the Constitution as having unique rights in Canada.

B.C.'s K-12 curriculum is concept-based, competency-driven and flexible, and provides many opportunities for teachers to teach about different communities and address topics such as racism and discrimination in their classrooms.

- Some of these opportunities are listed in the Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives in K-12 curriculum documents found on the [Ministry of Education and Child Care's website](#).
- 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.
- The Ministry of Education and Child Care is in the early stages of discussions with rightsholders and education partners surrounding a potential review process for B.C.'s curriculum to ensure that the curriculum is up to date and meets the needs of students and teachers throughout the province.
- The ministry has worked with a team of IBPoC (Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour) educators to develop [Anti-Racism: A Guide for Teachers](#). This guide gives teachers in B.C. additional tools and strategies to include anti-racism education as part of their teaching practices in all learning areas, and to help foster learning, address hatred, and celebrate diversity.
- Focused Education Resources and the Anti-Racism Learning Resource Advisory Committee have published a list of B.C.-specific resources aligned with B.C.'s K-12 curriculum that improve the representation of racialized communities and promote a more comprehensive understanding of anti-racism, human rights, and diverse cultural experiences, histories, and contributions. This inventory of resources is available on the [Focused Education Resources website](#), as well as [ShareEd BC](#).
- 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.

Q6: Who informed the development of the graduation requirement model?

- The ministry worked closely with FNEC on the development of the model for an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement to support a more relevant and responsive education system for all students.

Q7: How did students, parents/caregivers, educators and other members of the public provide input into the implementation of the 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 was made available on the [govTogetherBC website](#).
- The ministry also engaged with Indigenous communities, provincial K-12 organizations and other stakeholder groups during the Spring, and FNEC facilitated information sharing with First Nations.
- The results of these activities informed the implementation plan for the new graduation requirement.

Q8: 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.”
- The Indigenous-focused graduation requirement provides 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 is also a key component of the provincial implementation plan for the graduation requirement.
- Professional learning opportunities (e.g., workshops, webinars) have been co-developed with FNEC and include best practice strategies for implementing the graduation requirement in ways that support Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

Q9: Does 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 Indigenous-focused graduation requirement builds on the existing curriculum and provides 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 are still required to deliver the current mandated provincial curriculum, including all Indigenous-focused learning standards.

Q10: Does this limit student choice regarding electives?

- Not necessarily. Students have the option to choose one of the provincial courses that meet both an existing graduation requirement as well as the Indigenous-focused 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.*

Q11: Has the number of credits needed to graduate increased?

- No. There has been no increase in the number of credits required for graduation, which remains at 80.
- Students will 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 can choose to take additional credits if desired—over 90% of B.C. graduates already earn more than 80 credits towards graduation.

Q12: Does the requirement impact students' transitions to post-secondary?

- No, the requirement does not impact students' transition to post-secondary studies.
- The Indigenous-focused graduation requirement includes options for students to meet the requirement through completion of an existing Indigenous-focused provincial course(s).
- The Indigenous-focused English Language Arts and Social Studies provincial course options already satisfy requirements for the B.C. Dogwood Diploma and are recognized by post-secondary institutions across 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 requirement as one of their electives.
- The 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.

Q13: Who teaches the Indigenous-focused courses?

- Eligible courses (including provincial courses, First Nations language courses, and locally developed, Indigenous-focused BAA courses) continue to be taught by teachers trained to teach in the related content area.

Q14: What resources have been provided to educators, schools, and districts to implement the requirement?

Implementation supports have included:

- Several Indigenous-focused courses that are currently available as part of the provincial curriculum.
- FNEC teacher resource guides for existing provincial courses ([English First Peoples](#), [B.C. First Peoples 12](#)).
- An [implementation handbook](#) for school districts with information, suggestions, templates and links to resources, along with a set of communication materials (PowerPoint, [Q&A](#), [brochure](#) for families).
- [Video materials](#) communicating the rationale and benefits of the new requirement through Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices, for use at sessions with staff, students and families.
- Professional development opportunities (e.g., workshops, webinars) that focus on the new requirement, eligible provincial courses, and strategies to support students and staff.

Q15: Where can parents/caregivers and the general public go for more information about the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement?

- Information related to the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement can be found on the [provincial government website](#).
- A [brochure](#) has been developed for parents/caregivers, outlining key information related to the new graduation requirements. The brochure is available in [English](#), [French](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Traditional Chinese](#), [Farsi](#), [Punjabi](#), [Tagalog](#), and [Urdu](#).
- Parents/caregivers are also encouraged to connect with their child's school for information specific to their child.

Q16: Are there circumstances where a student could receive an equivalency for one of the eligible courses that meet the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement?

- Boards of education and independent school authorities are 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.

Q17: Are there circumstances where a student could challenge a course that meets the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement?

- Boards of education and independent school authorities are 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.

Q18: How can a local BAA course option meet the new requirement?

- Boards of education and independent school authorities are required to follow the existing policies and procedures for creating and approving a BAA course, including reporting the course information to the ministry.
- The criteria and processes related to courses intended to meet the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement can be found in the BAA/FNA Guidebook.
- The BAA course form has been updated so boards/authorities are able to indicate that the course is being put forward is intended to meet the new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement.
- Additional information such as a formal letter from the local First Nation(s) outlining their support for the course must also be submitted to the ministry along with the completed course form.

Q19: Can external credentials, dual credit courses, and/or Independent Directed Studies (IDS) meet the new requirement?

- Currently, options for external credentials, dual credit, and IDS to meet the new requirement are not available. These options may be explored at a later date.

Q20: How is the diversity of Indigenous peoples (including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples), being addressed in the new graduation requirement?

- The learning standards of existing Indigenous-focused provincial courses that meet this requirement (e.g., Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12) allow the flexibility for teachers and students to explore the diversity of Indigenous peoples in B.C. and Canada across multiple content strands.
- At this time, BAA courses co-developed with the First Nation(s) on whose territory schools/districts are located are the only BAA courses eligible to meet the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement. Boards/authorities can collaborate with other Indigenous peoples and organizations, in addition to the First Nation(s) on whose land they reside, to create a BAA course. However, the co-development process with the local First Nation(s) is required for the BAA course to meet the new graduation requirement.

Q21: Are students on the Adult Graduation Program required to take an Indigenous-focused course(s) to graduate?

- No, at this time there are no changes to the Adult Graduation Program.

