
Why is an academic core important?

ACT studies have shown that students who have taken courses listed as the “ACT Core” (as well as electives in music, speech or debate, and world languages) tend to score higher on the ACT Assessment, earn better grades in college, and earn degrees at higher rates than students who take less than core.

In Montana, fewer than 50% of the students who take the ACT Assessment report that they have taken or will take this core of classes. In 2006, Montana students with core had 23.1 average composite scores and those without averaged 20.8.

What should students take if they know they do not want to begin pursuing a bachelor’s degree within two years after graduating from high school?

All students should take a solid core of academic courses. However, these students may want to explore Tech Prep, a program of study that begins in high school, continues at some postsecondary institutions and culminates in an associate degree, certificate, apprenticeship or further postsecondary study.

Tech Prep credits are earned through a process of articulation. Articulation is a cooperative effort between some of Montana’s high schools and colleges, linking

high school courses with certificate, diploma and associate degree programs. This process of articulation enables students to receive postsecondary credit for skills mastered in high school.



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HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STANDARDS

Keeping Options Open



The courses students take in high school set their direction to the future. The mission of K-12 education is to develop the full potential of every citizen. The Montana University System provides students with a wide array of options, from certificates that can be earned in one year to doctoral degrees. When students set high expectations for themselves, taking rigorous courses in high school (such as upper-level mathematics courses) they keep their options open.

COMPARING STANDARDS

The Montana School Accreditation Standards require that high schools include certain courses in their “basic offerings.” From those offerings, the state has set minimum graduation requirements, consisting of 20 units and specific coursework listed in this table. Local school districts can set more rigorous requirements.

The Montana University System includes five Colleges of Technology and six Universities. In addition, there are three Community Colleges and seven Tribal Colleges.

Only the four-year programs have academic admissions standards. The University of Montana Missoula, Montana Tech of The University of

Montana in Butte, and Montana State Universities in Bozeman and Billings offer four-year programs only. Montana State University Northern and The University of Montana Western also have two-year programs in addition to their four-year programs.

Students who apply for full-time admissions to one of the four-year campuses less than three years after graduating from high school are considered “traditional students,” and are subject to the following admissions standards:

- They must have taken the Regents College Preparatory Program listed in this table.
- They must have earned a math score of at least 17 on the ACT or 420 on the SAT for admission in 2006; and 18 on the ACT or 440 on the SAT for 2007; OR have completed the Rigorous Core listed in the table.

- They must meet at least ONE of the following requirements:
 - 1) Minimum ACT Composite Score of 20 or SAT Score of 1440 for UM Western or MSU Northern; OR minimum ACT Composite Score of 22 or SAT Score of 1540 for UM Missoula, Montana Tech, MSU Bozeman and Billings;
 - 2) GPA of 2.5 or higher; OR
 - 3) Rank in the upper half of their graduating class.
- In addition, for FULL admission, students must satisfy a Writing Proficiency Standard, beginning in the fall of 2007, by earning a minimum score of 5 on the Writing Subscore or 16 on the Combined English/Writing Test of the ACT; a 5 on the essay or 390 on the Writing Section of the SAT; a 2.5 on the Montana University System Writing Assessment*, or a 3 on AP English or English Literature Examination.
- These threshold scores gradually increase to 7 on the ACT or SAT essays (and 18 or 440 on the combined scores) and 3.5 on the MUSWA for admission in 2008.

* the MUSWA is administered by high schools that volunteer to participate in this testing program.

Note: Each campus may exempt up to 15% of first-time, full-time undergraduates from these requirements.

Comparing Board of Public Education Accreditation Standards with Board of Regents Admissions Standards						
Coursework	Accreditation Standards		Admissions Standards for Four-Year Campuses			ACT Core
	Basic HS Offerings	Graduation Requirements	Regent’s Preparatory Program	Rigorous Core (alternative to ACT or SAT math score)		
English	4 units	4	4 units	4		4
Mathematics	3 units	2	3 units	4		3
Science	3 units	2	2 units	3		3
Social studies	3 units	2	3 units	3		3
Vocational/technical	2 units	1	*	*		
Arts	2 units	1	*	*		
Health enhancement	1 units	1				
World language	2 units		*	*		
Electives	2 units Note: a unit is two semesters		2 units, chosen from *s above, including computer science; recommending 2 units language	3 units, chosen from *s above; recommending 2 units language, speech, arts and information technology		