

Alternate Diploma Pathway Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

1. What is an Alternate Diploma Pathway?

The Alternate Diploma Pathway is a state-approved graduation option for students with the most significant cognitive and adaptive disabilities who participate in the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP). It is a state-defined diploma aligned to alternate academic achievement standards.

OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments and Consent Form Guidance

2. What is the purpose of the OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments?

The *OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments* documents eligibility based on cognitive and adaptive behavior assessments and ensures decisions are consistent and compliant with state guidelines. When used with current data, the required checklist helps the IEP team determine if the student qualifies for participation in the OAAP aligned with alternate academic achievement standards. The IEP team, including the parent, must complete the checklist each year for any student age 3 and older with significant cognitive and adaptive behavior disabilities being considered for OAAP participation.

3. What is required for parent consent when a student is qualifies for OAAP participation?

Parent consent is required annually for OAAP participation and is documented using the *Consent Form* included in the *OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments*.

4. When must the OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments and Consent Form be completed?

The checklist must be completed annually at the initial IEP and at all subsequent IEPs when OAAP participation is being considered. Parent consent is required annually for OAAP participation.

5. When should discussions about alternate assessments begin?

Teams should begin discussing the possible need for alternate assessments as early as preschool (age 3). This discussion is particularly important through 2nd grade if the student may be considered for alternate academic standards.

6. How must parents be informed about the IEP meeting when OAAP participation is being discussed?

Parents must receive the Invitation to Meeting form at least 5 school days before the scheduled IEP meeting. This ensures families have time to prepare for discussions about OAAP participation and other IEP decisions.

7. What is important for IEP Teams to remember about OAAP Participation?

- Begin OAAP discussions early (ages 3–8) if alternate academic standards may apply.
- Complete the *OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments* every year at the IEP meeting.
- Ensure parents understand the nature of alternate assessments and their role in supporting the student's educational planning.
- Ensure the *Consent Form* is signed annually by parents before OAAP participation.
- Provide parents with the Invitation to Meeting form at least 5 school days prior.
- Document all discussions and decisions in the IEP.

8. What happens if parents do not consent to OAAP participation?

If parents do not provide consent, the student will participate in the regular district and state assessments with appropriate accommodations, modifications, and supplementary aids/services. The student will be taught and assessed according to general education standards, not alternate academic achievement standards.

Differences Between the Standard Diploma and Alternate Diploma

9. What are the main differences between the standard and alternate diploma pathways?

Standard Diploma Pathway: To receive a standard diploma, students must meet all requirements, including participating in courses fully aligned with the Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS). Courses aligned with alternate academic achievement standards cannot count toward a standard diploma. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) ends when students graduate with a standard diploma.

Alternate Diploma Pathway: Students on this pathway enroll and participate in courses of study aligned with alternate academic achievement standards/essential elements. Students on the alternate diploma pathway must still be educated in the least restrictive environment. FAPE does not end when students graduate with an alternate diploma. Students must be offered continued enrollment until reaching the maximum of 22 years or older on September 1 of a school year.

Graduation Requirements, Alternate Diploma Courses, and Extended Transition Program Courses

10. What are the current Alternate Diploma graduation requirements?

Students must earn 23 total credits, including required coursework and electives.

Note: Refer to the *Alternate Diploma Graduation Checklist* for a complete list of Alternate Diploma Courses.

11. Are course substitutions allowed?

Yes. Students on the Alternate Diploma Pathway must still be educated in the least restrictive environment. Corresponding Oklahoma Academic Standard (OAS) courses may be substituted for Alternate Diploma courses.

Note: Refer to the *Guide for Allowable Core Substitutions and Approved List of Allowable Substitutions for Life Skills and Career Readiness* for more information.

12. How can counselors, special educators, and parents help students ensure they are on track for graduation?

Use the *Alternate Diploma Pathway Graduation Checklist* along with the student's courses of study in their IEP. For students in grades 9-11, plan future coursework to ensure they are on track to graduate. Confirm that current 12th-grade students have the required credits to graduate.

Alternate Diploma Courses and Extended Transition Courses

13. What is the difference between Alternate Diploma courses and Extended Transition Program courses?

Alternate Diploma courses (or approved substitutions) are required by state law (HB 1041) to meet graduation requirements. These courses are recorded on the transcript, and the transcript is closed upon graduation.

Extended Transition Program (ETP) courses are optional, supporting students ages 18-22 in receiving a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Districts may offer various courses based on student needs. Enrollment should be ambitious, individualized, and aligned with transition goals/IEP team decisions. ETP courses are graded on a pass/fail basis.

*Note: Refer to the *Alternate Diploma and Extended Transition Program Codes, Titles, and Descriptions* for a complete list of course codes, titles, and descriptions.*

Cohorts and Adjusted Graduation Rates

14. How long does it usually take for students to complete the Alternate Diploma?

Most students complete the Alternate Diploma in four years, but some may need additional time. Students may continue beyond grade 12 if they are still working toward earning their alternate diploma and/or continuing special education and related services up to the maximum age of 22 on or before September 1.

15. Do Alternate Diploma students belong to a graduation cohort?

Yes. All students with disabilities are assigned to a cohort year. For Alternate Diploma students, **the year they graduate becomes their cohort year.**

16. What is an adjusted or extended cohort?

If a student does not graduate in four years but remains continuously enrolled and actively working toward an Alternate Diploma, their cohort year may roll forward. This prevents the student from counting negatively in graduation rate calculations.

Entry and Exit Codes

17. What are entry and exit codes?

Entry and exit codes are data codes used in the student information system to document when students enter and exit public schools.

18. What entry and exit codes do we use for students who graduated or are working toward graduating with an alternate diploma?

Please refer to the *Entry and Exit Codes* document for specific code information.

19. What is Grade 13 and when is it used?

Grade 13 is used for students with significant cognitive disabilities participating in OAAP after completing grade 12, whether they are finishing Alternate Diploma credits or participating in the 18-22 Extended Transition Program. There is no Grade 14.

Postsecondary Options and Financial Aid

20. Can students who graduate with an Alternate Diploma attend college?

Yes. Students may attend approved non-degree Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs) at Oklahoma colleges and universities. Visit the [OKIPSE Alliance](http://okipsealliance.org) (okipsealliance.org) for more information. Some Career Tech programs also accept an Alternate Diploma.

21. Is financial aid available for IPSE programs?

Yes. Eligible students may access Oklahoma Access and Achievement Program (OAAAP), Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grants (OTAG), and Pell Grants (FAFSA completion required).

Referenced Documents and Resources

The following documents are referenced throughout this FAQ. All *italicized* OAAP and Alternate Diploma Guidance Briefs and documents are located in the Guidance Briefs and Memos Current folder within the Alternate Diploma Collaborative Google

Alternate Diploma Collaborative

- *OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments*
- *Consent Form (included in OAAP Criteria Checklist for Assessing Students with Disabilities on Alternate Assessments)*
- *Alternate Diploma Graduation Checklist*
- *Guide for Allowable Core Substitutions and Approved List of Allowable Substitutions for Life Skills and Career Readiness*
- *Alternate Diploma and Extended Transition Program Codes, Titles, and Descriptions*
- *Entry and Exit Codes*

Access the Alternate Diploma Collaborative Google Folder:

<https://bit.ly/440CzMS>



Acronym Reference

- **CTP:** Comprehensive Transition Program
- **ETP:** Extended Transition Program
- **FAPE:** Free Appropriate Public Education
- **IEP:** Individualized Education Program
- **IPSE:** Inclusive Postsecondary Education
- **OAS:** Oklahoma Academic Standards
- **OAAP:** Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program
- **AAAAP:** Oklahoma Access and Achievement Program
- **OTAG:** Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grants