Vista Charter School: Graduation Requirements and Waiver Policy

This policy establishes graduation requirements and procedures for awarding a high school diploma at Vista Charter School (VCS) in Montrose. As a Colorado charter school, Vista Charter School maintains authority through its governing Board to establish graduation requirements consistent with applicable law, charter obligations, and the school's educational mission. The Board may approve waivers or alternative pathways when circumstances support individualized student success while maintaining appropriate academic standards.

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1. Scope and Definitions

Scope: This policy applies to all students enrolled in high school programs at Vista Charter School seeking to earn a diploma.

Graduation Requirements: Board-approved academic, credit, competency, and readiness expectations required for awarding a diploma.

Waiver: A formal approval allowing modification of a graduation requirement due to extenuating circumstances or individualized educational needs.

Alternative Pathway: A Board-approved process allowing students to demonstrate readiness through methods other than traditional coursework.

Competency-Based Education: Demonstration of mastery through performance, assessments, projects, portfolios, work-based learning, or other approved methods.

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2. Authority and Governance

Vista Charter School operates as a charter school and maintains authority to establish graduation requirements through approval of the governing Board consistent with:

- Colorado state law
- Charter School authorizer requirements, when applicable
- School accreditation expectations
- Charter contract obligations

The Vista Charter School Board reserves authority to establish, modify, or update graduation requirements in alignment with the school's mission and student needs.

Board-approved graduation requirements may exceed state minimum requirements.

3. Graduation Requirements

Students shall meet all Board-approved graduation requirements before receiving a Vista Charter School diploma.

Academic Credit Requirements

Students shall complete required credits in areas including:

- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Electives
- Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness activities
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) experiences or coursework
- Additional Board-approved coursework

Specific credit requirements shall be established and maintained through Board action and school program guides.

Competency and Readiness Requirements

Students may also be required to demonstrate:

- Academic competency
- Postsecondary and workforce readiness
- Social Emotional Learning competencies including self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness
- Completion of Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) activities
- Capstone projects, portfolios, internships, service learning, or work-based experiences
- State or local graduation measures

Vista Charter School recognizes that social-emotional development contributes to student success in school, employment, postsecondary education, and community involvement. SEL opportunities may be embedded within coursework, advisory programming, counseling services, leadership experiences, community engagement, or other school-based activities.

The school may use multiple measures to determine student readiness for graduation.

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4. Individual Career and Academic Planning (ICAP)

Students are expected to participate in ongoing ICAP activities to support postsecondary readiness.

ICAP requirements may include:

- Career exploration
- Academic planning
- Postsecondary goal setting
- Graduation tracking
- Portfolio development

Students and families are encouraged to review ICAP progress regularly with school staff.

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5. Graduation Requirement Waivers

The Vista Charter School Board recognizes that limited circumstances may require modification of graduation requirements.

Waivers may be considered for:

- Medical or mental health conditions
- Significant educational disruption
- Transfer students with incomplete or non-aligned credits
- Students with disabilities consistent with individualized education plans
- Other circumstances deemed appropriate by administration or the Board

Waiver requests must:

- Be submitted in writing
- Include supporting documentation
- Identify the specific requirement requested for modification
- Be reviewed by school administration

Final approval rests with the governing Board or its designee.

Approval of a waiver does not remove the expectation that students demonstrate readiness for postsecondary success.

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6. Alternative Graduation Pathways

Vista Charter School may offer alternative pathways for students to meet graduation expectations through:

- Concurrent enrollment
- Career and technical education (CTE) coursework
- Work-based learning experiences
- Internships or apprenticeships
- Portfolios
- Capstone projects
- Competency-based demonstrations
- Other Board-approved methods

Alternative pathways must align with school standards and graduation expectations.

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7. Transfer Students

Graduation requirements for transfer students shall be evaluated individually.

The school may:

- Review and accept prior credits
- Determine credit equivalencies
- Develop individualized graduation plans
- Identify additional requirements needed for diploma eligibility

Flexibility may be applied to support timely and equitable graduation outcomes.

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8. Board Authority and Final Determinations

The Vista Charter School Board retains final authority over:

- Graduation requirements
- Diploma eligibility
- Waiver approvals
- Alternative pathway approvals
- Policy revisions

The Board may delegate review processes to administration while retaining final approval authority.

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9. Review and Amendments

This policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to remain aligned with state law, charter obligations, and school priorities.

Legal References:

- C.R.S. 22-32-109 (Board Duties and Authority)
- C.R.S. 22-30.5-104 (Charter School Act)
- C.R.S. 22-7-1008 (Individual Career and Academic Plans)
- C.R.S. 22-2-106 (State Graduation Guidelines)
- Applicable charter authorizer requirements

Adopted: [Insert Date], 2026