# Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation

# Frequently Asked Questions Guidance February 13, 2019

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides guidance pertaining to school divisions’ requests for Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodations. Local school divisions’ policy and procedures for Locally Awarded Credit Accommodations should be reviewed to ensure compliance with current state policies and local practices. The Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation is intended for students who would have been eligible to participate in the state accountability system using the Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP), which is no longer available as an assessment option. The Virginia Board of Education approved the use of the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation to provide those students with disabilities who previously might have used the VSEP with a pathway to earn the necessary locally awarded verified credits to obtain a standard diploma. This Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation Frequently Asked Questions resource, which is available at the website [Credit Accommodations](http://doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml) will be periodically updated as more questions and answers are added.

**Question 1: VDOE Review Responses**

After the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) reviews the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation, what are the possible responses back to the school division?

**Answer 1**

The VDOE’s review response options are:

1. Based on the information provided, the school division may move forward with the local policy and procedures for awarding the locally awarded verified credit; or
2. The information provided is insufficient to complete the review.

Comments will be included.

**Question 2: VDOE Response Return**

How will the VDOE’s response be sent back to the school division?

**Answer 2**

The result of the VDOE review will be sent to the school division’s Special Education Director through the SSWS Dropbox.

## Question 3: Submission Deadline for the VDOE Review

Is there a time frame to submit student information for the VDOE review of the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation?

**Answer 3**

There is no time frame or deadline. School divisions may submit multiple students at the same time on one form that is available at the website [Credit Accommodations](http://doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml).

## Question 4: VDOE Review Response Time Frame

What is the expected VDOE turn-around time after the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation review request form has been submitted?

**Answer 4**

The turn-around time will vary as it is based on students’ anticipated graduation date.  The VDOE review team will prioritize reviews for current seniors anticipating to graduate this year.

## Question 5: IEP Team and 504 Plan Committee Role

Does the criteria for this Special Permission Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation need to be discussed and documented on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan?  If so, what if the VDOE suggests that there is insufficient information to proceed?

**Answer 5**

Yes, after the IEP Team or 504 Plan Committee determines that the student is eligible to receive a Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation, then IEP Team or 504 Plan committee needs to determine which credit accommodation(s) would be appropriate for the student, including the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation.

The IEP Team or 504 Plan Committee is not making the decision to award a verified credit; the public school division has the authority to award a verified credit through its policy and procedures. The IEP Team or 504 Plan Committee should discuss if the student meets the criteria to recommend that, the school division request a VDOE review, or not. If there is insufficient information provided to complete the VDOE review, then the school division may resubmit with additional information.

## Question 6: Number of Test Attempts

Under the regular Locally Awarded Verified Credit procedure, students have to take an End of Course (EOC) test twice to be eligible for the verified credit.  Is there a required number of attempts for the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation?

**Answer 6**

No.  As stated in the criteria for the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation, only one state test attempt is required.

## Question 7: Documentation

Should school divisions produce their own forms or documentation to keep track of locally awarded verified credits?

**Answer 7**

Yes. Local school divisions should have a way to track Locally Awarded Verified Credits, including Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodations. The school division’s policy and procedures for Locally Awarded Verified Credits should include tracking and documentation procedures. Local documentation will be accessed in VDOE’s monitoring of the use of Locally Awarded Verified Credits, including the Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodations.

## Question 8: Course Documentation

Under the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation, the student must take the SOL test and fail it. Then, if the student is approved for Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation he/she would have to produce work samples or evidence of student work to a committee in the school division to determine if a verified credit is to be awarded. Could this documentation of evidence consist of the student being enrolled in an elective Credit Recovery course (taught based on the Standards of Learning) for a semester and passing that course?

**Answer 8**

Yes. Ultimately, it will be up to the local school division’s panel of educators to determine if the evidence from a specific course warrants the local awarding of the verified credit. The local school division’s policy and procedures on Locally Awarded Verified Credit should include what evidence is sufficient.

## Question 9: Retroactive for Students Who Have Exited School

Is this Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation retroactive for students with IEPs who have previously graduated with a Modified or Applied Studies Diploma who have not yet turned 22?

**Answer 9**

Yes, however there are different age of eligibility requirements for students with IEPs and students with 504 Plans. The local policy should be consulted for the age that the school division accepts returning students with 504 Plans. The school division may identify students who would be eligible and contact them. The student may return for an IEP or 504 Plan meeting to discuss the criteria for Locally Awarded Credit Accommodations as well as the specific Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation.

## Question 10: Student Work Documentation

Must the evidence for the Special Permission Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation that is submitted to the local school division’s panel of educators be a collection of work or notebook of work samples? What options may schools consider as evidence?

**Answer 10**

The local review panel will review information that provides evidence of the student’s achievement of adequate knowledge of the course’s content. The panel shall have discretion in determining the information to be considered and may include, but not be limited to, results of classroom assessments, division-wide exams, course grades, and additional academic assignments (e.g., papers, projects, essay, or written questions) as deemed appropriate. Based on the evidence reviewed, the local review panel may award the verified credit, deny the verified credit, suggest participation in a remedial program and retesting, or make additional academic assignments as deemed appropriate prior to determining whether to award the verified credit (*Guidance on the Use of Locally Awarded Verified Credits,* Attachment B, Superintendent’s Memo No. 130-18 May 11, 2018) at the website [Superintendent's Memos 2018](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2018/130-18.shtml).

## Question 11: Retroactive Documentation

Since the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation is retroactive, may a school division grant verified credits to students who took a class two years ago, passed the course but did not pass the state End of Course test?  What evidence do we need to collect at the division level to show this student’s performance since there might not be classwork that was kept from two years ago, as we did not anticipate Special Credit Accommodation policy. Would a review of records be sufficient to say that the student mastered the concepts given our ability to go back historically and look at grades from that class in PowerSchool?

**Answer 11**

School divisions have the authority to award verified credit through their policies and procedures. These situations should be discussed with content specialists, locally since the locally awarded verified credit policy is not specific to special education.  The school division’s leadership team might want to consider what evidence would be required of a general education student in the same circumstance.  For example, if the division's team of content specialists/teachers agrees that a review of records and grades in an archived system, such as PowerSchool, suffice for any student, then that would be part of the local procedures for implementation of credit accommodations, as well.

## Question 12: Impact on School Accreditation

Would the student with this Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation still be counted in the Standards of Learning assessments pass rate for schools?

**Answer 12**

No. The locally awarded verified credits under this guidance will not be used to recalculate a school’s accreditation rating.

## Question 13: Impact on School Graduation Rate

How will the diploma status of the student who receives verified credits under the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation, be included in cohort graduation rates, especially if the student left school before this year?

**Answer 13**

All three of the VDOE cohort graduation calculations are refreshed quarterly for at least four years after the cohort year. The refreshed On-Time Graduation Rates (OGR) are published on the VDOE website. Once state Accreditation and federal ESSA ratings are published, neither the Federal Graduation Indicator (FGI in ESSA) nor the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI in Accreditation) will be updated to reflect a new graduation rate. However, when calculating either of those accountability programs in future years, the refreshed rates will be used to calculate three-year averages when applicable.

## Question 14: Newly Identified Student with a Disability

I have a student that has qualified as a student with a disability needing special education as an 11th grader.  The student has a previous End of Course (EOC) test that he did not pass in his earlier grades (9th and 10th) prior to being identified as a student with a disability, but he did pass the course. Can this student be considered for the Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodation for EOC test that is below 375 when he was not identified as having a disability?

**Answer 14**

Yes. There is no requirement that the student was identified as a student with disability when that assessment was administered.  If the student's IEP Team and school division personnel determine that the student meets all other criteria to be considered for a Special Permission Credit Accommodation for Locally Awarded Verified Credit then the school division may submit the request for VDOE to review.

## Question 15: Limits on the Number of Verified Credit Accommodations

Is there a limit on the number of Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodations students with IEPs and 504 Plans may receive?

**Answer 15**

No. Students with IEPs or 504 Plans who qualify for Special Permission for Locally Awarded Verified Credit Accommodations, are not subject to a limit on the number of verified credits that they can apply for from the local school division.

## Question 16: Sample Credit Accommodation Form

Can the sample credit accommodation form on VDOE’s website be used or should school divisions develop their own local form?

**Answer 16**

Yes. The VDOE Credit Accommodation Sample Form has been revised and is available on the VDOE website [Credit Accommodations](http://doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml). School divisions may develop a local form.