Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing:

Procedures for Determining if Verified Credit Is Awarded

(Effective Fall 2020)

On September 20, 2018, the Virginia Board of Education approved *Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessments to Verify Credits in Writing* (*Guidelines*), as announced in [Superintendent’s Memo #266-18](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/37945/638060879330300000). The *Guidelines* provide an overview of the local process that will be used when determining if verified credit will be awarded based on the writing samples that comprise a body of evidence completed by the student. The body of evidence, also referred to as a “collection of evidence,” must include three types of writing covered by the *English Standards of Learning* (SOL) for grades 9-11: persuasive, analytic, and argumentative, with at least one writing samples to include a research component. Writing samples are to be collected under appropriate testing conditions throughout the student’s high school career. The *Guidelines* include the following information.

# Determining if a Verified Credit Should be Awarded

The student writing samples and the results of any other assessment used by the school division to determine student proficiency in the writing skills included in the English SOL for grades 9-11 constitute a body of evidence. School divisions will review the body of evidence against the performance level descriptors that describe the student’s level of achievement in high school writing and will determine if the student’s achievement is advanced, proficient, or does not meet the standard (fails). Students who are judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should be awarded a verified credit.

Based on implementation questions received regarding following the release of the guidelines, additional support materials and guidance for the process used by the local panel to determine if verified credit is awarded in writing were developed to assist school divisions that have chosen this option. The *Procedures for Determining if Verified Credit Is Awarded* (Effective Fall 2020) is intended to be used in conjunction with the *Guidelines.*

Additional information regarding the local process used to determine if a verified credit should be awarded is included within the *Implementation Support* (2019):

# Determining if a Verified Credit Should Be Awarded:

Although individual writing samples will be scored according to the High School Writing Scoring Rubrics (2017), the student’s final body of evidence is evaluated during a separate process using the 2017 EOC Writing Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs), which describe levels of achievement in high school writing: advanced, proficient, or does not meet the standard (fails). A body of evidence that is judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should earn the student a verified credit in writing.

The rubric scores on individual writing samples and the PLD determination are independent, as there is no numerical score on the rubric that correlates with a Pass/Proficient or Pass/Advanced performance level from the PLDs.

School divisions should develop a protocol for identifying, training, and qualifying the panel that will evaluate the bodies of evidence. Additionally, it is best practice to determine an appeals process that will be followed, should the need arise.

In response to additional questions from school divisions subsequent to the release of these documents, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has developed more materials for school divisions to use in training the local panel that will evaluate collections of evidence to determine if verified credit in writing is awarded. These materials include:

* Sample collections of evidence that represent a range of achievement, including Pass/Advanced, Pass/Proficient, and Fail/Does Not Meet
* An annotation that corresponds to each sample collection of evidence and that describes the attributes and features of the writing, pointing out examples from the collection while maintaining holistic evaluation of the collection and relating this evidence to the Performance Level Descriptors

# Expectations and Procedures for the Local Panel When Determining if Verified Credit Is Awarded

Beginning with the fall 2020 semester, school divisions using local performance assessments to verify credits are to establish local procedures that will enable the local panel to meet the following expectations for determining if verified credit is awarded:

* The local panel should consist of at least two educators who have expertise in the English content standards assessed by the local performance assessments used to verify credit in writing. The current teacher of record for the student who completed the collection should not be included in this panel. The panel may be convened virtually, or the panel may meet in person.
* School divisions are expected to use the sample annotated collections of evidence provided by VDOE as part of the local process to train the panel that will evaluate the collections of evidence.
* Each panelist should complete an independent review of each completed collection of evidence without knowledge of the student’s identity. The recommendation by each panelist should be documented, and this documentation should be maintained as part of the collection of evidence.
* During review of a completed collection, panelists are expected to consider the achievement demonstrated within writing samples themselves rather than the scores previously assigned to those writing samples.
* Each collection of evidence must be evaluated by at least two panelists. If there is not complete agreement regarding the level of achievement demonstrated in the collection of evidence, an additional independent evaluation must be conducted by a person who has expertise in the 2017 *English SOL* and meets the above expectations. Divisions are encouraged to designate a person, such as an English supervisor or division-level specialist, to make this final determination.

# Desk Reviews

Department staff will conduct annual “desk reviews” in which documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of these reviews will be to determine how local school divisions that choose to use performance assessments to verify writing credits are implementing these guidelines. The reviews will help Department staff to identify technical assistance needs and to identify best practices for sharing with other Virginia school divisions. School divisions should expect documentation related to the process used to determine if verified credit is awarded to be included as part of the desk review process. Examples of this documentation may include, but is not limited to: a list of students whose collections of evidence were reviewed and whether verified credit was awarded to each, a list of the individuals comprising the local panel, the information used to train the panel and documentation of attendance, a sample of collections of evidence evaluated, etc.