

OREGON MODIFIED DIPLOMA AND FEDERAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

In July, 2009 the United States Department of Education (USDE), responded to a written request from the Oregon Department of Education regarding whether the Oregon Modified Diploma meets the high school diploma requirement for Federal student aid eligibility. The USDE cited 34 CFR 668.32:

“a student must have a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such certificate, or that a student meet certain specified alternative standards” to be eligible for Federal financial aid.

The USDE stated that the Oregon Modified Diploma does not meet this eligibility requirement. However, as an alternative to having a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, a student may establish eligibility for Federal student financial aid by passing an independently administered ability-to-benefit test approved by the Department of Education. Examples of USDE approved ability-to-benefit tests are listed in the table below.

<p>ASSET Program: Basic Skills Tests (Reading, Writing, and Numerical)—Forms B2, C2, D2, and E2 <i>Passing Score:</i> Reading (35), Writing (35), and Numerical (33)</p>	<p>Career Programs Assessment (CPAT) Basic Skills Subtests (Language Usage, Reading and Numerical)—Forms B and C <i>Passing Score:</i> Language Usage (42), Reading (43), and Numerical (41)</p>	<p>Combined English Language Skills Assessment (CELSA): Forms 1 and 2 <i>Passing Score:</i> CELSA Form 1 (90) and CELSA Form 2 (90)</p>
<p>COMPASS Subtests: Prealgebra/Numerical Skills Placement, Reading Placement, and Writing Placement <i>Passing Score:</i> Prealgebra/Numerical (25), Reading (62), and Writing (32)</p>	<p>Computerized Placement Tests (CPTs)/Accuplacer (Reading Comprehension, Sentence Skills, and Arithmetic) <i>Passing Score:</i> Reading Comprehension (55), Sentence Skills (60), and Arithmetic (34)</p>	<p>Wonderlic Basic Skills Test (WBST)— Verbal Forms VS-1 & VS-2, Quantitative Forms QS-1 & QS-2 <i>Passing Score:</i> Verbal (200) and Quantitative (210)</p>
<p>Descriptive Tests of Language Skills (DTLS) (Reading Comprehension, Sentence Structure and Conventions of Written English)—Forms M-K-3KDT and M-K-3LDT;</p>	<p>Descriptive Tests of Mathematical Skills (DTMS) (Arithmetic)—Forms MK- 3KDT and M-K-3LDT <i>Passing Score:</i> Reading Comprehension (108), Sentence Structure (9), Conventions of Written English (309), and Arithmetic (506)</p>	

According to David A. Bergeron, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning and Innovation, Office of Postsecondary Education, USDE, “Oregon students who obtain a Modified Diploma may still be eligible for Federal student financial aid if they pass an independently administered test proving their ability to benefit from the training or instruction offered.”

Most Oregon Community Colleges and Private Career Schools administer an approved Ability-to-Benefit Test as an entrance requirement. If students who receive a modified diploma achieve a passing score on these approved tests, they may be eligible for Federal student financial aid.

Recommendation: Contact the school you anticipate attending and ask about entrance requirements, including diploma requirements and ability-to-benefit testing before you make final decisions.