



Parent and Student Handbook 2024-2025



Massachusetts Mayflower Academy

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is full-time online private high school based in Maynard, Massachusetts. We offer a rigorous teacher-led curriculum. Students choose from the VHS Learning catalog which includes 29 College Board-approved Advanced Placement courses and unique and engaging electives. Learning takes place within a safe, secure, and supportive environment. Join Us!



Dear Families,

Welcome to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy! We are excited you are interested in pursuing a diploma from our flexible, fully online school, where students are given opportunities to realize their potential and increase their love of learning.

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is the culmination of nearly 30 years of experience providing students with rich, engaging online learning opportunities through VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.). We believe in getting to know our students and providing them with a curriculum that meets their academic needs and improves their independence, communication, and self-advocacy skills.

Students at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy are supported by certified teachers, administrative staff, and a parent/guardian who work together to ensure students stay on track, understand expectations, and complete their courses on schedule. Teachers engage with students to ensure they understand the material they are learning and to help resolve any confusion and clarify expectations as needed. Teachers grade student work and provide supportive feedback, so students know just what needs improving, and the areas in which they excel.

I am proud to have been a part of this organization for the past 20 years and know that our dedication to student success and robust learning experiences will benefit many students who desire a full-time online program of studies. I look forward to working with your family and wish you the best of luck as you begin your journey at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy!

All the best,

Amy Michalowski

Amy Michalowski
Dean

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MISSION AND BELIEFS

At Massachusetts Mayflower Academy, we believe in high quality, collaborative learning where student exchange and interaction is integral to the instructional process. We believe education should not be limited by barriers of time, place, or availability. We believe that online learning offers students the benefits of highly qualified faculty and an innovative curriculum made up of diverse, exciting learning opportunities in a global classroom.

The mission of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy, powered by VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.), is to help students graduate from high school and succeed in life by providing an engaging, challenging, and supportive learning environment that meets the needs of students and families.

Each year, thousands of students engage with classmates from across the country and around the world in VHS Learning courses. Each course section is limited in size, ensuring students and teachers form a learning community to explore course concepts together. With a robust catalog of courses offered each semester, we meet students' academic needs and provide opportunities to explore career interests.

OVERVIEW

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is a full-time, online school offered by VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.), a non-profit organization with nearly thirty years of experience providing high quality, collaborative, online courses to students and schools. We believe all students can benefit from access to a robust variety of core, elective, and Advanced Placement courses. We have worked with schools and families since 1996 and are proud to offer a full-time high school option for students desiring a private, fully online education.

Central to our program is the curriculum, which consists of courses developed by experienced classroom teachers and aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks or appropriate national content standard. Certified teachers instruct all courses, and we maintain course enrollment caps of 25 students to ensure students can form relationships with their teachers and peers and to foster a vibrant learning community. Students are expected to work on a paced, asynchronous schedule, with individual and collaborative assignments due each week, but with the flexibility to work at a time that suits each individual student's needs. The balance of flexibility and structure at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy helps build individual accountability that will be invaluable in post-secondary pursuits.

Our team works closely with each student's learning coach, who is generally a parent or guardian that will support the student in the home environment. Learning coaches have access to the student's grades and are expected to communicate with the student's academic liaison and our school counselor on a regular basis to ensure any challenges are understood and addressed in a timely manner.

As a small program, opportunities to engage with other full-time students in a variety of extracurricular activities are limited but will be shared as they are available.

PROGRAM APPROVAL

Accreditation

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is offered by VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.), which is accredited by Middle States Association (MSA-CESS) and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is recognized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as an approved, diploma-granting, private school, pursuant to requirements set forth in M.G.L. c. 76, § 1. Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is accredited as a full-time private school by MSA-CESS.

NCAA

Student athletes can visit the NCAA website for information on NCAA eligibility and to find a list of courses approved for initial eligibility. Please use CEEB code 221356 to search for NCAA-approved courses. Massachusetts Mayflower Academy (NCAA code is 850943) uses NCAA courses approved under VHS Learning. Specific questions on NCAA eligibility can be answered by the student's counselor.

College Board/Advanced Placement

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is pleased to offer a comprehensive list of courses fully approved by the College Board for Advanced Placement (AP) credit. Course titles can be found in the [course catalog](#).

LEARNING TEAM

Though our students work online, they do not work alone! Our students are supported by their teachers, learning coach, and our staff. Each of these critical support components are described below:

Teachers

Our teachers are certified educators who have received additional training in the pedagogy of online instruction. Teachers are committed to working with each student to ensure the best possible chance for success. We require teachers to be present and engaged in the classroom throughout the week and to respond to student inquiries and grade student work promptly.

Learning Coach

The learning coach is typically a parent or guardian, though it can be any responsible adult. The learning coach plays a critical role in providing mentoring for the student and helping to facilitate communication with teachers and staff if problems arise. The learning coach has access to student grades and receives grade updates by email on a regular basis.

Academic Liaison

Each student is assigned an academic liaison, a member of our staff who will be the primary contact for the student and learning coach. The academic liaison meets with the student regularly via phone, webinar, or at the Maynard office, to review progress, connect with the student, understand their unique circumstances, and troubleshoot issues that might arise during the academic year. The student is required to meet with the academic liaison as a layer of accountability and support. Students who miss more than 2 meetings are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the school.

School Counselor

Our school counselor helps students plan their program of studies and provides support for the college admissions process. Although our school counselor provides college planning support, engaging with a professional college counseling organization is an option available to your family. Choosing a college counseling organization is a personal decision and should be made after consulting with multiple companies. We do not endorse any specific organizations.

Our school counselor is available to support the social-emotional health of our students and can refer students or families to additional support services as needed. Our school counselor uses email and phone calls as the primary method of communication with students and can meet a student and parent/guardian at the VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.) Maynard office if desired.

Support Staff

Support staff work with teachers and learning coaches to ensure students are supported throughout their journey at our school. Each student works with an enrollment counselor to ensure course selection compliments student abilities and post-secondary goals. During the academic year, our administrative team is available by phone and through our [Service Center](#) to resolve issues or answer questions.

CURRICULUM

Most of the curriculum is provided by VHS Learning, an accredited program with a catalog of more than 250 core, elective, and Advanced Placement courses taught by certified teachers. Students select courses to meet their graduation requirements. If a student requires a course that is not available, our team will source the course at no additional cost.

Curricular Approach

Our curricular approach includes a variety of objective and open-ended assignments, weekly discussion board activities, collaborative activities, and hands-on lab assignments. Students participate fully in the community of learners in their course and must login to the course at least four times per week to collaborate with their teacher and peers. Some courses are available in a self-paced model. Students may combine paced and self-paced courses to meet requirements, with the approval of the counselor.

Course Materials

Most courses do not require additional materials. All courses use a variety of open educational resources and web-based materials. Most core courses and all Advanced Placement courses utilize eBooks. If a student desires an additional hard copy textbook, they can request the ISBN for the book and purchase it at their own expense.

When required, lab kits are provided to students so that they can complete hands-on lab activities. Students who do not live in the Continental U.S. will be required to pay for shipment of lab kits to their home address. In rare instances, with Massachusetts Mayflower administration approval, the student may be allowed to procure lab materials independently, if materials are purchased before class starts.

Technology and Course Platform

Student information is contained within our [Student Information System](#) (SIS). The SIS is used for course registration, student documentation (IEP/504 plan documentation, transcripts from previous schools, test results, etc.), monitoring grades, and for transcript generation.

Courses are delivered on the [Brightspace by D2L platform](#), which provides access to eBooks, plagiarism detection tools, collaboration tools, and other third-party products that might be used in classes. After enrollment, students receive a username and password to access the learning management system.

Technology Requirements

Our courses use the Internet as the primary vehicle for instruction. Students must have Internet connectivity and have access to the Internet daily.

Courses may contain links to outside websites, and while every effort is made to maintain these links, we cannot guarantee that users following links from within a course will not encounter sites hosting malware or viruses. We strongly recommend all users install malware/virus protection from a reputable vendor, and make sure that the definitions are updated regularly to prevent infection.

Students can view lesson content, submit course assignments, and fully participate in most courses on mobile devices, including iPads, iPhones, and Android devices.

The following features within the learning environment will not work on portable devices:

- Some software is not compatible with iOS devices (iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch).
- Courses which use installed software may require regular access to a desktop/laptop computer for installation and use.

To view specific technical requirements that may be required for each course, review the course descriptions in the [course catalog](#).

Technology Support

All courses contain instructions that provide step-by-step explanations for technical tasks. Students have 24-7 access to submit a [support request](#) to request support or ask questions. Requests for support are resolved from 7 AM – 5 PM ET, Monday through Friday. Phone support is available Monday through Friday from 8 AM – 5 PM ET by calling 978-897-1900. Students also have access to Private Topic areas within their courses to ask course instructors for assistance as needed.

Student Orientation

Students complete Student Orientation, a self-paced module that provides an overview of course structure and navigation. Students remain enrolled in Student Orientation throughout the year, so they always have access to this resource. In addition, each course contains a module that introduces academic policies, provides tips for time management and organizing work, and explains additional elements of our courses.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

What's Unique About Massachusetts Mayflower Academy

At Massachusetts Mayflower Academy you will be working closely with your teacher and the other students in your online classroom. Classes have online discussions and opportunities to work in groups, so it is important that you stay on track. Use these tips to help you have a successful experience at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy.

Pace Yourself

Former students shared the most important lesson they learned from taking an online class. Almost every student gave the same advice: **Do not save all your work until just before the due date!** Waiting until the due date will leave you without enough time to pass in high quality work. **Help yourself by planning and setting goals to complete work before it is due.**

Attend Class Regularly

Classes are somewhat flexible; you can do your coursework in the evening or during the weekend. Though the minimum login requirement is 3 times per week, students who are successful login at least 4-5 times per week. Honors and Advanced Placement students should login 5 times per week.

Plan Ahead

There are times when life is hectic – **if you have a valid reason you might not meet course deadlines, communicate with your teacher and academic liaison ahead of time.** Often your teacher will be accommodating, but it is difficult after you have been absent.

Get to Know Your Academic Liaison

Your academic liaison will help you sort out any problems you may encounter. Check-in with your academic liaison regularly and ask for help prioritizing work or for tips and strategies for success. Do not wait until you are struggling before you ask for help!

Suggested Plan: How you might approach your work

- **Check the News for reminders** or important updates from your teachers.
- **Review the Overview lesson**, paying attention to the table of assignments and activities. Print the table to create a plan and track your work.
- **Pay close attention to due dates.** Although most activities in paced courses are due at the end of the week, some (such as discussions) might have mid-week due dates.
- **Check your Private Topic regularly** to see if you have messages from your teacher!
- **Focus on your goals of the day:** participate in class discussions, complete a written assignment, check in with a group. Your work will vary, so tackle assignments consistently. Read and post discussions a few times during the week!

GETTING HELP

Self-advocacy

In addition to time management skills and strong work habits, our students develop self-advocacy skills. Self-advocacy means taking responsibility and initiative to get what you need – not waiting for others to act for you. For some students, this skill comes naturally, while for others it takes effort.

One way to be a strong self-advocate is to **ask your teacher and academic liaison questions**. It is natural to have questions. The answer to some will be clear, but when the answer is not clear, communication is key. **We cannot answer a question or solve a problem if we don't know the question or problem exists!** Let us know how we can help you.

Tips for Requesting Help

- Don't be shy! Other students probably have the same question as you.
- Make your questions specific – providing detail helps your teacher solve your problem or provide information that will help you understand the concept more fully.
- Be patient! Teachers are expected to respond to your question within 1 day, Monday through Friday. Many teachers respond faster, but you should be aware of this expectation.
- Don't be afraid to ask your academic liaison for help. If you are struggling to get answers to your questions, ask your academic liaison or submit a support request. We are happy to help provide you with additional support and want you to succeed.

Asking Questions

Each class has discussion boards for specific types of questions. Students will be provided with additional information within each course. **Students should not use email to communicate with teachers.** When students post questions within the course, we are best able to help.

- **Have a Question?** – Most classes contain this discussion, where students ask questions about navigation, locating or posting assignments, or assignment expectations.
- **Private Topic** – You have a private topic (PT) where you can communicate with your teacher if you have questions about grades, information about absences, or other confidential matters.

Additional Suggestions

- Review the Student Success Module for tips and strategies to improve success in online classes.
- Complete assignments in a Google doc or word processor and copy/paste work into the assignment. This is helpful in case a technical issue creates a problem for posting work.
- Use the [Service Center](#) to submit a support request for technical support.

You can also call the school office for support. We can be reached at 978-897-1900 between 8AM and 5PM ET Monday through Friday.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS AND ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Application Process

Students may apply to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy at any time. Start dates are at the beginning of the fall or spring semester each academic year. Students must be in grades 9-12, under the age of 21, and must desire a high school diploma. Go to [our website](#) to learn more about the application process and submit the information form to receive information about applying to our school.

Acceptance to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy

Our admissions team reviews each student's application and academic transcript to determine if the student has the foundation necessary to be successful in our program. We speak with each family considering enrollment to ensure our program is the right fit. Factors such as past academic record, discipline records, grade point average, and personal statements are considered during the application process. Not every student applying to our school is accepted.

Application Appeal Process

Students who are denied admission to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy can appeal the decision by submitting a written letter of appeal to the Dean. The Dean will convene a review panel to review the application materials and determine if there are extenuating circumstances that warrant admission. Decisions of the review panel will be final and will be delivered to the appellant within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

Dual Diploma Application

Students who wish to remain matriculated at a local school and earn credit towards a Massachusetts Mayflower Academy diploma can apply to our Dual Diploma Program. In this program, students take at least 6 credits from Massachusetts Mayflower Academy. Generally, students will take 2-3 years to complete the 6 credits that they require from Massachusetts Mayflower Academy.

Student transcripts are evaluated to ensure their transfer credits and Massachusetts Mayflower Academy credits meet the graduation requirements and prepare students for the college application process. Dual diploma students are considered Massachusetts Mayflower Academy students and will have access to the support of academic liaisons and the school counselor for course planning, student support, and college admissions support.

Dual diploma tuition is based on the total number of credits the student will complete during their time at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy and will be shared with the student and family before admission is finalized.

English Language Learners

VHS Learning courses are written in English, so students who attend Massachusetts Mayflower Academy must have appropriate English language skills. Students should have a WIDA score of 4 or better in reading and writing to enroll in Massachusetts Mayflower Academy.

Enrollment Requirements

Once accepted, the following documents are required before students will be considered successfully enrolled in Massachusetts Mayflower Academy:

- Massachusetts Mayflower Academy online general information form
- Proof of identification via I-9 form (copy of birth certificate, passport, and/or driver's license)
- Student responses to application essay questions
- Health information form
- Academic records, transcripts, and release of records form
- Application fee and first semester tuition payment
- Signature agreeing to tuition and refund requirements
- Signature agreeing to adhere to handbook policies
- Placement tests (as required)

Part-time Students

Students interested in taking online courses on a part-time basis may do so via the VHS Learning supplemental education program. Students enrolled in VHS Learning courses are not enrolled in Massachusetts Mayflower Academy unless they have completed the application process and have been accepted to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy. For information about VHS Learning please visit the [VHS Learning website](#).

Registration process

Once application requirements have been met, transcripts are analyzed to determine course requirements for graduation. The student and learning coach approve the course plan before course enrollments are finalized. Enrollment notification and links to the learning management system are sent via email once registration into courses has been finalized.

Withdrawal Policy

Parents/guardians of students under 18 must submit, in writing, a request to withdraw the student from Massachusetts Mayflower Academy. Tuition will be refunded according to the tuition agreement signed upon admission. A student who withdraws from our school will be expected to share feedback, a reason for withdrawal, and a plan to ensure continuity of the student's education. Any student under 18 will be reported to the appropriate state/local agency to ensure continuity of the student's education, per local requirements.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Accommodations

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy does not complete academic testing for students with disabilities that impact their learning. If a family believes a student would benefit from accommodations that require a mental health diagnosis or neuropsychological evaluation, the family must seek those evaluations and determinations through their own clinicians. Students who attend Massachusetts Mayflower Academy might be eligible to receive academic testing, therapy, and related services through their district of residence.

Teachers will provide accommodations for students who might need extended time. Additional academic support or specialized services are the responsibility of the family. For students enrolled in AP courses, Massachusetts Mayflower Academy requires families to request accommodations from the College Board using the [parent request protocol](#).

Academic Calendar

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy follows the [VHS Learning academic calendar](#). Courses are typically either semester-length or full-year (two semester). The fall and spring semesters are 15 weeks in duration. Full-year courses are 33 weeks in duration with a break between weeks 15 and 16. Semester calendars are on the web site prior to the start of each academic year.

VHS Learning also provides some Self-Paced courses for initial credit. These courses can be added to a student's schedule after consultation with our school counselor. Credit Recovery courses are 20-week courses with rolling start dates. Complete course offerings can be found in the [course catalog](#).

Advanced Placement: AP Classroom

Students are expected to access and utilize AP Classroom resources as directed by their teachers. This requires students to have college Board accounts.

Advanced Placement: Predicted Score Requests

Teachers are not expected to provide colleges with predicted AP scores for Massachusetts Mayflower Academy students. Our teachers do not have access to the student performance data needed to make a valid prediction of success on an AP exam.

Advanced Placement: Summer Work

Paced AP courses require summer assignments that are submitted during Week 1 of the course and are graded by the teacher. Summer assignments take approximately 5 hours total and cover essential content for the course. Students that enroll in an AP course in late summer have flexibility to turn the work in through Week 3, though students are encouraged to finish summer assignments prior to course start if possible.

Summer assignments are linked in the course description of each AP course in the [course catalog](#).

Advanced Placement: Testing

Students enrolled in AP courses are expected to take AP exams. Students who are failing their AP class do not need to take the AP exam. Exam results do not affect the student's course grade or future enrollments.

AP exams are not offered at our school headquarters. Massachusetts Mayflower Academy students must locate a site in their local area where they can take the exam. The College Board provides [information for homeschooled and virtual students](#). Be aware of the timeline for this process; the College Board recommends contacting their AP Services for Students number (888-225-5427 or 212-632-1780) in September to obtain names of local testing sites as exams must be ordered during the fall.

Audit Request

Students that experience hardship can request to audit a course (remain enrolled for the purpose of enrichment rather than earning credit). Audit requests should be made to the school counselor or academic liaison and will be approved after consultation about the impact of an audit on graduation or grade level progression. Audited courses will be included in the student's transcript, with a notation that the course was audited, and the student did not earn credit.

Course Change Requests

Students who wish to change the level of a course must file a support request so their school counselor or academic liaison can discuss the request with the learning coach. Changes in course level, as available, are allowed through the first term of a course. Decisions about the appropriateness of the change are made on a case-by-case basis.

Course Enrollment

Course selection is a collaborative decision made by the student, parent/learning coach, school counselor, and school staff. Prior grades and transcript analysis are key components of the placement decision, as are math readiness assessments, as needed. A typical full-time student course load is 5.5 - 6 credits. There is flexibility for students to reduce course load if they receive credit for out of school experiences or an exemption for elective or physical education requirements.

Course Extension Request

Students will be allowed to finish work past the end of a semester only if there is an excusable reason for absence, as defined in the Excusable Reason for Absence policy, which prohibited the student from completing work on time. The student must work with their academic liaison and communicate with their teacher in the PT about the situation. Course extension requests are granted for up to one month from the course's end date.

Course Failures and Repeat Credit

Students must earn a final grade of 60% or better to pass a course. Courses required for graduation must be retaken or remediated, depending on the student's final score. Students who pass a course (earn a grade higher than 60%) are not allowed to retake a course for a higher score.

Students who fail a course with a grade between 45-59% are eligible for course remediation using the credit recovery program. If a student fails the course with a grade lower than 45%, the course must be retaken in its entirety. Once the new course is completed, the grade from the second attempt will count towards the student's GPA. The failed course will remain on the student's transcript but will not count towards the GPA.

Course Levels

Each course is designated as credit recovery, standard, honors, or Advanced Placement. Standard courses are college preparatory level. The course description indicates course level and prerequisite skills. The following parameters can be used as guidelines:

- A standard (college preparatory) level class requires approximately 6 hours per week.
- An honors level class requires approximately 8 hours per week.
- An AP level course requires approximately 10 hours of work per week.
- Credit Recovery courses require approximately 40 hours of work per 0.5 credit hour.
- Self-Paced courses contain similar assignments to the paced version of the course. The level and credit earned in a Self-Paced course dictate the approximate time to complete the course. Our estimation is as follows:
 - 1 credit AP: approximately 330 hours
 - 0.5 credit AP: approximately 170 hours
 - 1 credit standard: approximately 200 hours
 - 0.5 credit standard: approximately 95 hours

Given these expectations, students will spend at least 6 hours per day working on their coursework.

Course Offerings

As a full-time program of VHS Learning (VHS, Inc.), Massachusetts Mayflower Academy provides students with the opportunity to enroll in any of the courses in our catalog. In addition, we will source courses from accredited providers if a student requires access to a course not offered in our catalog. Course descriptions, objectives, and requirements can be found in the [course catalog](#).

Document Formats Allowed

To ensure integrity of work and validity of grades, students must submit work in file formats that work within our plagiarism detection tool. Students may be asked to resubmit work that has been shared in a format that is not compatible with our plagiarism detection tool, such as scanned images, screenshots, or other image-based files that contain text.

Dropping Courses

Students under age 18 who wish to drop a course must have a parent/guardian submit the request, in writing, to the academic liaison or school counselor. The request must include the student's name, parent/guardian name, name of course to be dropped, and reason for the request. The request can be faxed to 978-897-9839 or scanned and emailed to the academic liaison or school counselor. School counselors review the requests and determine if the course drop will be approved. Until an official determination is made, students should continue working in their courses.

Due Dates

Course dates and deadlines are based on the Eastern time zone. Students and teachers in different time zones should adjust their work habits to ensure they meet deadlines based on this time zone.

Dual Enrollment Courses

College courses will count towards graduation requirements with approval of the Massachusetts Mayflower administration.

- Courses taken prior to admission will be considered as part of the student's application and initial course transcript.
- Credit will be earned on a semester basis. Semester-length college courses will translate into 0.5 credit each on the Massachusetts Mayflower Academy transcript.
- College courses will be noted as transfer credit on a students' transcript.
- College courses will not count towards a student's GPA.
- The maximum number of college credits a student can apply to the Massachusetts Mayflower Academy diploma is 5.5 credits.

Excusable Reasons for Absence

Paced courses include discussions and group work. It is expected that students are actively engaged with their peers each week.

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy does not recognize overall workload, motivation, or sports and extra-curricular commitments as excusable reasons for absence. Students who have significant time commitments and cannot regularly attend their courses must discuss their concerns with the school counselor and their academic liaison.

Excusable reasons for absence include the following scenarios. The learning coach must confirm the student's excusable reason for absence via email to the academic liaison.

- Illnesses or accidents that require hospitalization
- Natural disasters or extreme weather events
- Family emergencies
- Traumatic experiences
- Concussions or medical conditions that prevent attendance at school

Failing Grade/Numerically Not Possible to Pass

We make every effort to support students who are struggling to be successful in our program. If there comes a time when a student is no longer able to pass a course, the following options are available. Dropping or auditing the course could affect graduation date; these options should be discussed with the school counselor prior to finalizing a decision.

- Drop the course to focus on other courses and attempt it again in a future semester.
- Remain enrolled in the course and remediate the failed grade in accordance with the Course Failures and Repeat Credit policy.
- Audit the course, according to the Audit Request policy.

Final Exam Exemption

Final exams are an important element of our student performance data set and are reported as part of our accreditation improvement goals, and students are asked to make their best effort to complete the exam. Students may take the exam any time during the last week of their class.

Grade Periods for Term and Semester Courses

Grade periods for semester-length courses (fall and spring):

Term 1 Grade: The Term 1 Grade represents student work from Weeks 1 through 8.

Term 2 Grade: The Term 2 Grade represents student work from Weeks 9 through 15.

The Final Grade represents an average of the Term 1 and Term 2 grades.

Grade periods for full-year courses:

Fall Term 1 Grade represents student work from Weeks 1 through 8.

Fall Term 2 Grade represents student work from Weeks 9 through 15.

Spring Term 3 Grade represents student work from Weeks 16 through 26.

Spring Term 4 Grade represents student work from Weeks 27 through 33.

Final Grade: The Final Grade for full-year classes is the average of Term 1, 2, 3 and 4 grades.

Grade periods for Self-Paced and Credit Recovery courses:

Self-Paced and credit recovery courses have only one term grade that is calculated based on total points earned in the course compared to total points possible. Term grades for Self-Paced classes are reported at the discretion of the school, as outlined in the Self-Paced Program section of the Handbook.

Grade Point Average (GPA) / Weighted GPA

Grade point average is determined by dividing the number of quality points earned by the number of credits attempted. Failed courses will be included in calculated GPA as attempted credit unless the course is remediated according to the Course Failures and Repeat Credit policy. GPA is determined using final course grades and is calculated once per year at the end of the academic year. Cumulative GPA is determined using all courses completed at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy only. VHS Learning classes taken prior to enrollment will count towards GPA. Transfer credits, college courses, and credits taken with partner providers are not used to calculate cumulative GPA. To acknowledge the rigor and expectations of honors and AP classes, GPA will be weighted according to the table below.

Grade Scale and Quality Points

Numeric Score	Transcript Grade	Quality Points Standard	Quality Points Honors	Quality Points AP
97-100	A+	4.3	4.8	5.3
93-96	A	4.0	4.5	5.0
90-92	A-	3.7	4.2	4.7
87-89	B+	3.3	3.8	4.3
83-86	B	3.0	3.5	4.0
80-82	B-	2.7	3.2	3.7
77-79	C+	2.3	2.8	3.3
73-76	C	2.0	2.5	3.0
70-72	C-	1.7	2.2	2.7
67-69	D+	1.3	1.8	2.3
63-66	D	1.0	1.5	2.0
60-62	D-	0.7	1.2	1.7
50-59	F+	0	0	0
0-49	F	0	0	0

Grade Dispute Process: Prior to End of Course

If, during the semester, there is a question about the validity of a student's grade, the student should consult with their academic liaison and communicate with their teacher in the Private Topic to ask about the grade item in question and seek clarification about the situation. If the student cannot resolve the issue the academic liaison will review the situation and consult with the teacher of the course and an Associate Dean if necessary. Results of this review will be shared with the teacher, student, and learning coach and will be final.

Grade Dispute Process: Final Course Average

If, after final grades have been confirmed, the student believes their grade is incorrect, they should discuss their concern with their academic liaison as soon as possible. The academic liaison will investigate the concern, consulting with the course instructor and Deans as warranted. The academic liaison will ensure the proper grade is reported to the Student Information System following resolution of the investigation.

If the student and learning coach disagree with the findings, they can share additional information with the Dean by submitting a support request in the Service Center or emailing the academic liaison and requesting an appeal. The Dean will review the findings and will make a final determination.

Grade Level Promotion

Students must earn a minimum of 22 credits to graduate. Students who fail one course each year will be allowed to promote to the next grade, so long as they have achieved minimum credit accumulation according to the following guidelines:

- to be considered Grade 10, a student must have earned at least 5 credits;
- to be considered Grade 11, a student must have earned at least 10 credits; and
- to be considered Grade 12, a student must have earned at least 16 credits.

We will notify parents/guardians of students under age 18 that have not earned enough credit to progress to the next grade. Students will be allowed to make up missed credits by completing a credit recovery course (when available) or beginning in the next available term, including summer.

Grades Over 100%

Teachers are not allowed to confirm grades over 100% in the Student Information System. If a grade is greater than 100% for a term, the grade will be confirmed as 100% in the system. Additional points may not be rolled over to a later term.

Grading: Term 1 Grade 50%

Recognizing that there are some students who take time to adjust to a paced, asynchronous course model, teachers will confirm a grade of 50% for any student whose **Term 1 grade** is 25% - 49%. Students whose grade is below 25% will have their numerical score entered in the SIS. This policy does not apply to Terms 2, 3, or 4.

Graduation Requirements

Subject	Years/Credits	Notes
English	4 years (4 credits)	
Mathematics	4 years (4 credits)	
Science	3 years (3 credits)	3 credits of lab courses required
Social Studies	3 years (3 credits)	World and U.S. History, and U.S. Government
World Language	2 years (2 credits) of same language	Students with demonstrated fluency and literacy in a language other than English can complete other elective credits in lieu of world language. Speak with the school counselor for more details.
Health/Personal Finance	1 year (1 credit)	0.5 credit each
Physical Education	1 year (1 credit)	

Arts/humanities	1 year (1 credit)	
Electives	3 credits	
TOTAL	22 credits	

Honor Roll

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy will publish an honor roll at the end of each semester. To earn an honors designation, confirmed semester grades must be A or B in all classes. Students with grades of A in all classes will be designated as high honors scholars. The honor roll, including limited directory information, may be published in the monthly newsletter, and will be reported to local media outlets for publication at the discretion of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy.

Incomplete Grades

Teachers may allow a student more time to complete course work after the marking period's close by issuing an Incomplete (I) for Term 1, 2, 3 or 4. If an excusable reason for absence, as defined in the handbook, exists, a student should talk with their academic liaison.

Incompletes, and the time allotted to complete the work, are granted by the teacher after review of the student's reason for absence. The additional time allotted for the completion of incomplete work may not exceed two weeks from the close of the marking period unless there is a course extension approved. The Dean will resolve disputes if the teacher and learning coach disagree about whether a student should be given an Incomplete. Learning coaches can request a review by filing a support request or communicating with the academic liaison.

Late Work

This policy applies to work submitted without an excusable reason for absence, as defined in this handbook. If a student has an excusable reason for absence that requires additional flexibility, the student and learning coach should communicate with the academic liaison as soon as possible. The academic liaison will work with the teachers to establish a schedule for turning in work late (without penalty) and will identify whether modification of expectations/assignments is required.

Review the Excusable Reason for Absence, Extended Absence, Incomplete, and Extension Request policies for additional guidance.

- Non-collaborative work will be accepted up to one week after the due date with a penalty of 20%.
- Collaborative work, such as discussion and group work assignments will not be accepted late unless confirmed circumstances made participation impossible during the scheduled week. Confirmation from the learning coach is required for this allowance.
- Due to grading deadlines, the late work policy for the final week of the semester is shortened from one week to three days. If a student requires more than three days past the end of week 15 or week 33, they must seek an Incomplete or Extension from the teacher in advance of the last day of the week. See the Incomplete and Extension Request policies for additional details.

Extended Absence (7 or more consecutive school days)

This policy applies to students who are absent from class for an extended period (greater than 7 consecutive school days) due to an Excusable Reason for Absence. Shorter absences are managed by the student's teacher and academic liaison under the Late Work policy. Students who are absent without an Excusable Reason for Absence are considered truant and are subject to the Truancy policy.

If a student misses more than 7 consecutive school days because of an Excusable Reason for Absence, the learning coach should notify the academic liaison so the team can evaluate the situation and suggest an approach for supporting the student.

In general, an absence of up to four weeks in a semester-length class can be accommodated through varied approaches (as described above). If a student will be absent for more than four weeks in a semester-length course, they will be allowed to re-enroll in a future semester or Self-Paced version of the course, as it is unlikely a plan will accommodate for that length of absence in a 15-week course.

If a student is absent for more than four weeks from a year-long course, every attempt will be made to accommodate using the approaches listed above. Students who are absent for more than 8 total weeks in a year-long course will have missed too much of the course to be able to successfully rejoin the class.

Notes about re-enrollment

VHS Learning will transfer grades for non-collaborative assignments completed in the initially attempted course. Student assignments will not be transferred from the initial course to the re-enrollment section.

The student will be expected to complete collaborative assignments and class discussions again in the new section of the course. It is expected that the student will have completed less than 50% of the initially attempted course.

Re-enrollment in the same section of a Credit Recovery or Self-Paced course should result in previous work being available to the student.

Concussion

If a student has a concussion during their course, the learning coach must communicate the student's status and outline expectations for returning to full-time learning. The preferred method of communication is via email to the academic liaison or submission of a support request in the [Service Center](#).

The learning coach is a critical support for a student with a concussion. As soon as it becomes clear that the concussion will impact the student's ability to complete assignments on time, the learning coach is expected to provide the following information to the academic liaison:

- What has the student been cleared to do in an academic setting?
- What are specific expectations for screen use and workload?
- Are there suggestions from the student's doctor regarding workload reduction?
- What is the student's target date for return to full learning?

Once supporting documentation, such as a medical note, is available, it must be shared with the academic liaison. Additional details can be found in this [Concussion Support at VHS Learning document](#).

Other Medical Issues

If a student is absent from school due to a medical issue lasting more than a few days, the learning coach must take an active role in communicating the student's status. The preferred method of communication is via email to the academic liaison or submission of a support request in the [Service Center](#).

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy requires verification of absence due to medical issues. A medical professional must provide a letter confirming the duration of time the student is excused from attending school. The letter should not contain specific medical information or a specific diagnosis, but it must include a date for returning to school and any limitations on the student

Proctored Exams

Many courses require a proctor to be available to supervise a final exam. A student's learning coach or other trusted adult can be a proctor.

- Students complete the [Proctor Identification Form](#) before the proctored exam. This form confirms the student has secured a proctor; both the student and their proctor sign the form.
- Once the Proctor Identification Form is submitted to the appropriate Dropbox, the student can see and begin their final exam at the appropriate time.
- The student completes the final exam in the presence of their proctor and the proctor completes the [Exam Verification Form](#).
- The student submits the Exam Verification Form to the appropriate Dropbox in their VHS Learning class. Failure to submit the Exam Verification Form will result in a grade of zero on the final exam.

Final exams are designed to be completed in approximately 45 minutes. Proctors should monitor the time spent completing the exam, to ensure students are within this guideline. Students who receive extended time will receive extended time on the final exam.

Resubmission of Work

Unless required by a student's IEP or 504 plan, or submission in a format that the teacher cannot open, Massachusetts Mayflower Academy students are not allowed to resubmit graded work for an improved score. Students should contact their teacher prior to submitting work if they have questions about an assignment.

Student Orientation

Prior to beginning a course, students will complete Student Orientation, a self-paced module that provides an overview of course structure and navigation. In addition, each course contains a module entitled **Start Here to Begin your Course**, which introduces general academic policies, provides tips for time management and organizing work, and explains additional elements of our courses.

Transfer Credit

To receive a diploma from Massachusetts Mayflower Academy, students must successfully complete at least one academic year of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy courses (5.5 credits). Students who wish to have credits earned at other institutions accepted for credit towards a diploma must provide official transcripts from other institutions. Students may be asked to provide samples of work to verify rigor of courses, especially in cases where the course name may not provide an adequate description of how the course content would meet our requirements.

Waiver Requirements

Some courses, including lab science and physical education courses, require students and/or their parent/guardian (if the student is under 18) to sign waiver documentation and upload it to the course. Waiver requirements are outlined in the course description of the catalog. If students do not return the waiver within the established timeframe, they will not be allowed to complete assignments for which the waiver is required.

STUDENT POLICIES (“Code of Conduct”)

Acceptable Internet and School Systems Use

All systems shall be used in a manner consistent with the purpose of the systems, the administrative rules for using the system, and according to school policies. Communications using system resources will be considered publications and will be governed by administrative policies and policies regarding publications.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a responsible, ethical, and polite manner while using our systems. Students must not access material that is contrary to prevailing community standards or inappropriate for classroom use. If such inappropriate material is accidentally encountered, immediately stop use of that site or resource.

Access to our systems is a privilege. Students are responsible for respecting and protecting the rights of other users in the school community and on the Internet. Please act in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner, in accordance with school policies, in conformance with the purposes of the other sites they use on the Internet, and in compliance with state and national laws. If students commit a violation their access privileges will be revoked, as well as any other disciplinary action that might be assigned by school administrators.

This policy cannot describe all behaviors by users of the system, so in any specific situation, students must exercise good judgment and appropriate conduct. To assist in such judgment, the following guidelines are offered:

- Any use for illegal purposes, or in support of illegal activities, is prohibited.
- Any use for political, religious, or commercial purposes is prohibited.
- The use of email in any manner that is contrary to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy policy is prohibited.

- Any use that disrupts the educational and administrative goals of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is prohibited.
- Any use of the system or a Massachusetts Mayflower Academy account by anyone other than the authorized owner of the account is prohibited.
- Any reproduction of copyrighted material without explicit permission is prohibited.

System storage areas may be inspected at any time. System administrators or other staff may review communications to maintain integrity system-wide and ensure that students are using the system responsibly.

Students should not download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware without written permission from the System Administrator or other appropriate staff. Do not keep other people's work or intrude into other people's files. All materials in courses are copyrighted and for use exclusively by the enrolled student. Enrolled students may print or photocopy material for their own use while enrolled, but distribution to others is strictly prohibited.

No profane, abusive, impolite, or inappropriate language should be used to communicate within Massachusetts Mayflower Academy systems and/or on the Internet.

Access or upload of material that has been deemed inappropriate for educational use is prohibited. Should you encounter such material by accident, please disengage immediately and report it to your teacher and academic liaison. In addition, creating and/or uploading any material that is inappropriate for educational use (text, video, images or other) is prohibited.

Students must use their own username and password. Sharing usernames and passwords is strictly prohibited. Students may not use another person's account. Students are responsible for making sure their password is private and secure. Do not publicly share personal contact information, or anyone else's, without express written permission. Unauthorized access to our web site, servers, and systems is strictly prohibited.

Students are expected to communicate with one another respectfully in your online classrooms.

Attendance Policy

Most courses run on a continuous, 15-week semester calendar. There is a break between fall and spring semesters, as indicated on the [academic calendar](#). We recognize that there are times when students may be absent from class due to illness, family commitments, or other reasons. When issues that impact attendance arise, teachers and support staff work with the student to adapt the course schedule. In the case of planned absence of 3 days or more, students must notify their teacher and academic liaison in advance, to accommodate for that absence.

Due to the collaborative nature of our courses, successful students will login and participate in class multiple days each week. Frequent or extended absences, as indicated by learning management system user progress analysis, may result in students being re-enrolled in a course in a future program, or withdrawn from the Academy altogether. The Dean makes these decisions, in collaboration with VHS Learning staff members.

Self-Paced courses are available to meet certain requirements. If these types of courses are required, the student must discuss the need with their counselor, so an individualized plan can be made to accommodate the request.

Verification of Attendance

Learning coaches are responsible for ensuring students are engaged with their learning each week. They should maintain a weekly log of time spent in class that, upon request, will be reviewed by school administrators. This document, along with user progress logs, is evidence of student attendance to ensure students are not truant from school.

Truancy

Student user progress, postings in class, and weekly learning coach attendance logs are evidence that students are engaged in their education. A student is considered truant if they fail to login and submit work to class for 7 consecutive days without notification to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy. In the case of truancy, the parent/guardian is notified of the absence and the fact that the student is in danger of being withdrawn from the Academy due to excessive absences. Upon parental notification, the student must return to class within 24 hours, or the student will be removed from the Academy. If the learning coach is not accessible a certified letter will be sent to the home address notifying the guardian of the attendance issue.

Copyright Notice

Courses might contain copyrighted materials that are used in compliance with U.S. Copyright Law. Under that law students cannot save materials to their computers, revise materials, copy materials, or otherwise distribute materials without permission. Materials are to be used in support of the instructional activities for the course only and shall be limited to the duration of the course, unless otherwise specified by the instructor or owner of the material. Students may only download or print materials if given permission by your teacher or academic liaison, who know which materials are copyrighted and which are not.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Teachers will follow established communication protocols to investigate incidences, to ensure a fair, consistently applied process that treats infractions as teachable moments and provides appropriate consequences.

Consequences

- There are circumstances where students should not be penalized, such as use of common knowledge that does not require citation, accidental submission of another student's file because it was similarly named to theirs and stored on a school computer, and the use of template prompts in their submissions.
- For a first incident, the student will receive up to 50% credit for assignment(s) that are resubmitted within 3 school days of notification.
- For second and subsequent incidents, the student will receive grades of zero and will not be allowed to resubmit assignments.

- In egregious incidents, the student may receive a zero on first offense or be withdrawn from the course with a failing grade, a decision made by the Dean or Associate Dean.
- If a student has been found to plagiarize on a written exam, the student will earn a score of zero for that portion of the exam and will not be allowed to resubmit an answer to the question.
- If a student is found to have shared work but did not intend to be complicit in a plagiarism incident, that student may receive a lesser penalty, of up to 20% off the work, and would not be required to resubmit the assignment. Any future instances will be penalized using the consequences outlined above (50% credit and then no credit allowed).
- In certain courses, students must complete an alternate assignment instead of resubmission of original work. This will be determined by the curriculum/instructional coordinator and will be communicated to the teacher, who will provide instructions to the student.

Students may appeal a decision by speaking with their academic liaison or submitting a support request so that a member of the VHS Learning team can investigate. Findings of the VHS Learning team are final.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Technologies powered by artificial intelligence (AI) have been in use in classrooms for many years and have benefits to students and teachers that can facilitate learning. We believe it is our responsibility to foster an understanding of ethical and appropriate use of AI tools in a VHS Learning class. The following guidelines apply in all classes:

- Students under 18 must obtain parental permission before creating an account to use AI tools, if needed.
- There are occasions where AI tools may be used in research or brainstorming. However, all work submitted for a grade must be the students' own work.
- Students are not allowed to use AI to brainstorm or research answers on quizzes, tests, summative activities, or activities specified by their teacher or identified within their course.
- If a student chooses to use an AI tool to brainstorm or research in completion of other activities, they must cite the use of a tool and abide by the following:
 - Recognize limitations to AI chatbot tools and validate any information gathered from these tools, using other resources to support claims or gather recent information.
 - Cite AI-generated text that is included in final submissions of work. Both APA and MLA style-guides include suggestions for citing AI-generated text.
 - Share a screenshot of the original AI text to illustrate how the student used the tool and clarify what was generated by the student.

Students are encouraged to contact their teacher before submitting work if they have a question about the use of an AI tool to research or brainstorm for an assignment. Work that is generated by AI tools will be considered plagiarism and will be addressed according to the VHS Learning Plagiarism/Academic Honesty policy.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: Online Translation Tools

An online translator refers to any software application or device that translates from one language to another. Due to advances in translation software and translation engines (i.e., Google Translate), it has become easier for everyone to access translation technology. Online translators are detrimental to language acquisition. Students who use online translators do not learn the vocabulary and grammar necessary to develop reading, writing, speaking, and conversational skills.

Although translation technology has progressed, word-for-word translation of phrases, sentences, or paragraphs using an online translator is often slightly, or significantly, incorrect. When using online translators, students often include words, phrases, and sentences that are not part of their learned vocabulary, which results in fluency levels above a student's proficiency level. Teachers use these clues to identify work that has been created using an online translator.

Use of online translators in place of completing the necessary language learning activities on one's own is not acceptable and is considered plagiarism. Refer to the Plagiarism/Academic Honesty policy for more information.

Respectful Discourse

Tone of voice and attitude can be difficult to convey in writing, but they are extremely important in an online class. We expect that students will treat their teachers and classmates with the same respect as they would in any face-to-face environment. Students who are disrespectful will be subject to consequences aligned with our Acceptable Use Policy. Here are some specific reminders about respectful posting in an online course:

Use standard English: It is easy to fall into the habit of using texting shorthand. This is a classroom, just like any other classroom. Use standard English and do not use unusual screen names, slang, or abbreviations in posts.

Choose words carefully: When we talk to someone in person, they can hear our words and see our faces. In classroom discussions it is easy to be misunderstood.

Don't make it personal: Expressing opinions is encouraged, but don't make disagreements personal.

NO YELLING: Refrain from using all capital letters – it is like yelling!

Keep it clean: No profanity, links to inappropriate websites, or inappropriate images.

Don't forget: all things posted in courses are recorded and saved.

Social Media Platforms

We recognize that students might connect with classmates outside of classes using social media but discourage students from creating groups in social media for the purpose of completing classwork. All discussion and group work must be completed within the learning management system to earn a grade.

Failure to Follow Code of Conduct: Penalties

Failure to follow our code of conduct guidelines may result in the following:

- Removal from courses and/or programs
- Suspension or expulsion from Massachusetts Mayflower Academy
- Legal and/or law enforcement action
- Forfeit of student tuition and/or fees paid

Note: Any activity in violation of local or federal laws is considered to also be a violation of the Massachusetts Mayflower Academy code of conduct.

Due Process

We believe the right to a quality education should not be infringed upon in any way. School administrators are here to help students if a problem should arise. All students are guaranteed due process. Except in the case of extreme infractions, such as felony charges, sexual misconduct, drug/weapons charges, and any other infractions that would jeopardize the safety of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy, students under consideration of expulsion from the Academy will be informed of the disciplinary offense and provided with an opportunity to respond and participate in a hearing before determination of suspension or expulsion. Written notice of the hearing will be provided to the student and parent/guardian with at least 48 hours' notice of the hearing. The following process will be used at the hearing:

- Student, parent/guardian, and administrators will convene in person or by video meeting. Parent/guardians can request the proceedings be recorded if they wish.
- Administrators will include Dean, Associate Dean(s), and School Counselor.
- The Dean will review the cause for the suspension/expulsion, providing facts and evidence used to determine necessity of this action.
- The student will respond to the description of the incident, providing any relevant information to the administrators for consideration.
- The administrators will ask questions of the student.
- The parents will be allowed to make a statement, if desired, and can invite a member of the faculty to speak on behalf of the student, if desired.
- The student and parents will be provided with a timeframe for the results of the hearing and will be asked to adjourn from the session. They can meet separately with the School Counselor if they have questions about the process.
- The administrators will deliberate and determine whether suspension/expulsion is warranted or whether more information is required.
- The results of the meeting will be delivered to the student and parents within 48 hours.

If the student and parents are not satisfied with the decision of the committee, they may appeal the decision, in writing, to the Dean of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy at 4 Mill and Main Place, Suite 510, Maynard, MA, 01754. The Dean has the authority to convene a review committee and review the decision at their discretion.

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

Administrative Oversight

We reserve the right to review all materials used and transmitted at the Academy, and through VHS, Inc. to oversee safety and determine that the materials are appropriate. Review may be done at any time, without notice, and may include emails, discussion postings, and other such communications. Academy policies are subject to change at any time. Students and families should refer to the most updated policy handbook for current policies and procedures.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

No student will be excluded from participation in the Massachusetts Mayflower Academy based on race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual preference, nation of origin, or disability. Students applying to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy will be considered for admission based on academic record, potential for success in an online learning environment, and adequacy of support network for the student who will be working in the home environment. Complaints should be filed with the Dean, who will investigate any allegations of discrimination.

Anti-Harassment/Cyber-bullying Policy

We are committed to safeguarding the right of all individuals involved in our school to work and learn in an environment that is free of harassment. Students are encouraged to report any incident of harassment/bullying to their teacher and the Dean. Teachers witnessing cyber-bullying within their course and/or notified of harassment/bullying issues are required to submit a service ticket to notify school administrators within 24 hours.

Harassment, intimidation or bullying and acts of cyber-bullying for any reason, including but not limited to race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or disability in any form is strictly prohibited. Anyone whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion. Violators may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

“Cyber-bullying” is the use of electronic information and communication devices, to include but not be limited to, e-mail messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephone communications, internet blogs, internet chat rooms, internet postings, and defamatory websites, that:

1. deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual or group of individuals; or
2. places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual or damage to the individual’s property; or
3. substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the course.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting by School Officials

Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 119, § 51A, requires that mandated reporters (which include private school teachers and administrators who in their “professional capacity, has reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from: (i) abuse inflicted upon him which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child’s health or welfare, including sexual abuse; (ii) neglect, including malnutrition; (iii) physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth,” shall

immediately communicate with the department orally and, within 48 hours, shall file a written report with the department detailing the suspected abuse or neglect; or (iv) being a sexually exploited child; or (v) being a human trafficking victim as defined by section 20M of chapter 233.

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy faculty and staff follow the mandated reported guidelines provided by the Department of Children and Families found here: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/DCF/can-mandated-reporters-guide.pdf>

Data Directory

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy abides by the Code of Massachusetts Regulations regarding student information, specifically 603 CMR 23. We maintain limited directory information about students, including a student's name, hometown, dates of attendance, class, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, degrees, honors and awards, and post-high school plans. We will release this limited directory information when required to announce academic honors, student achievements, and graduation information. Students or parents who wish to not have this limited directory information released must inform Massachusetts Mayflower Academy before September 15 of each academic year. Notification should be emailed to: MassMayflower@vhslearning.org or faxed to 978-897-9839.

Data Security and Retention Policy

Cybersecurity Framework and Risk Assessment

VHS Learning uses a custom cybersecurity framework based on industry standards provided by a third-party contractor. Our systems are audited periodically by a third-party contractor for compliance and security improvements.

Employee Training

All employees must pass a criminal background check and be fingerprinted. Employees complete ongoing training in best practices for information security, data protection and privacy regulations.

Backups

Our systems are cloud-based and backed up daily in accordance with industry standards.

Destruction of Data

Our data retention timeframes are in accordance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts records retention laws and have been approved by our accrediting bodies. Partners with differing needs may amend their individual contract upon mutual agreement with VHS, Inc. Individual student records may be deleted upon request by the parent or eligible student, per FERPA guidelines.

Data cannot be recovered after destruction. Data Retention is as follows:

- Course transcripts will be retained indefinitely.
- Student data, including assignment grades, will be retained for 5 years.
- Student assignment submissions and activity, communication, and teacher feedback will be retained for 5 years.

All questions or concerns regarding our Privacy or Data Retention policies should be directed to your Partnership manager or our Privacy Officer at privacy@vhslearning.org

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

As a program of VHS Learning, Massachusetts Mayflower is proud to share the VHS Learning Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging statement:

At VHS Learning, everyone matters.

We value differences, take pride in creating safe and inclusive spaces where students belong and thrive, and are committed to ensuring our educational services represent and serve the students and schools that will use them. We believe embracing and nurturing diverse perspectives improves learning and creates an environment where all people are respected. Representation matters: a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization better represents our global online learning community. We strive to meet these goals for students, educators, and VHS Learning team members, now and in the future.

We seek to create a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment where all staff, faculty, and volunteers, whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation or identity, education, or ability, feel valued and respected.

We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and strive to ensure that all voices are valued and heard. We are committed to modeling diversity and inclusion for the online education industry and the nonprofit sector, and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all. VHS Learning strives to:

- See diversity, inclusion, and equity as connected to our mission and critical to ensuring the well-being of our staff and the communities we serve.
- Acknowledge and dismantle inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services.
- Explore potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions that interfere with inclusiveness.
- Think about how systemic inequities impact our organization's work, and how best to address that in a way that is consistent with our mission.
- Practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions.
- Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership within our Board, and staff.
- Lead with respect and tolerance. We expect all our team members to embrace this notion and to express it in workplace interactions and through everyday practices.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law enacted in 1974 that guarantees the confidentiality of a student's records. Massachusetts Mayflower Academy and VHS, Inc. adhere to FERPA policies and regulations.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day that VHS, Inc. receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the Chief Privacy Officer (privacy@vhslearning.org) a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school will arrange access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask VHS, Inc. to amend their child's or their education record should contact the Chief Privacy Officer (privacy@vhslearning.org), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest must be set forth in the school's or school district's annual notification for FERPA rights. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. [NOTE: FERPA requires a school or school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request or the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student.]

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by VHS, Inc. to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Feedback on Course Content and Experiences

As a school that provides quality experiences and is committed to continuous improvement, we value student feedback. We seek feedback on our programs through our annual survey process. If a student or learning coach has concerns that need attention during the academic year, they should speak with their academic liaison or submit a support request in the Service Center so the information can be shared with the appropriate staff member for investigation and follow up.

Preferred Name Process

It is possible to update a student's name in VHS Learning systems if the student prefers a name other than their legal name. This policy does not apply to nicknames; it is intended for students who request a different name because of gender identity or a cultural preference. To initiate a name change, students should speak with their academic liaison, who will submit a [support request](#). Requests are evaluated and approved by VHS Learning staff, after which time changes will be applied to the system.

It should be noted that AP Classroom requires legal names and not preferred names. It can be difficult for teachers to track student progress when names in AP Classroom and the VHS Learning course differ. Please consider this when deciding whether to submit a preferred name change request.

A student's legal name will remain unchanged in the VHS Learning Student Information System unless a site coordinator updates the student's record to change the student's legal name. The student's legal name will be reported on the VHS Learning transcript.

Privacy Statement

Please visit <http://vhslearning.org/privacy-policy> to read our most current privacy statement.

Student Records

Student academic records are maintained for at least 5 years following withdrawal or graduation date. Requests for copies of academic records must be made in writing. Parents/guardians of students under 18 should contact the office for information and a form to request educational records. A records fee may be assessed should printing and mailing charges be incurred.

Massachusetts Hazing Law

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy complies with the Massachusetts Hazing Law

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS 269:17, 18, 19

269:17 HAZING; ORGANIZING OR PARTICIPATING; HAZING DEFINED. Section 17.

Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one, [sic] year, or both such fine and imprisonment. The term "hazing" as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

269:18 FAILURE TO REPORT HAZING. Section 18.

Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

269:19 Copy of secs. 17-19; issuance to students and student groups, teams and organizations; report Section 19.

Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post-secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team, or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams, or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its member, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or

organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full-time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the regents of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communication the institution's policies to its students.

The board of regents and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.

Technology Requirements

Our courses use the Internet as the primary vehicle for instruction. Instructors use a web browser for the delivery of courses and students use a web browser to access their courses. Students must have Internet connectivity and have access to the Internet daily.

Courses may contain links to outside websites, and while every effort is made to maintain these links, we cannot guarantee that users following links from within a course will not encounter sites hosting malware or viruses. We strongly recommend all users install malware/virus protection from a reputable vendor, and make sure that the definitions are updated regularly to prevent infection.

Students can view lesson content, submit course assignments, and fully participate in most courses on mobile devices, including iPads, iPhones, and Android devices. Some courses use installed software and will not work on portable devices unless students have regular access to a desktop/laptop computer for installation and use.

To view specific technical requirements that may be required for each course, review the course descriptions in the [course catalog](#).

VHS, Inc. Intellectual Property

All course materials that are VHS, Inc. intellectual property remain the property of VHS, Inc. They shall be used only for the education of students as outlined in VHS, Inc. participation agreements. Copies should not be made, and content should not be distributed unless authorized in writing by VHS, Inc.

SELF-PACED PROGRAM

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy students can take full-credit, teacher-led, self-paced courses to meet graduation requirements. Self-Paced courses are taught by licensed teachers and contain nearly identical content to the paced, asynchronous version of the courses. Students progress through the course independently, working at their own pace. Self-Paced courses follow all VHS Learning policies, with some exceptions, as outlined in this section of the handbook.

Start and End Dates for Self-Paced Courses

1 Credit Self-Paced Courses

Self-Paced courses worth 1.0 credit (AP and non-AP) will begin each Wednesday, starting on the first Wednesday in September. Students can enroll through the first Wednesday in December for AP courses and through the first Wednesday in February for non-AP courses. Students can enroll in 0.5 credit AP classes through the second Wednesday in January. During the registration process students can select any available start date in the future. Students have until June 15 (or the Monday thereafter) to submit all assignments. Course access will be removed on June 30.

0.5 Credit Self-Paced Courses

Self-Paced (non-AP) courses worth 0.5 credit will be available with start dates each Wednesday throughout the year. Students have 20 weeks from their start date to submit all assignments.

Add Period for Self-Paced Courses

Because of the frequent opportunity for enrollment, there is no add period for Self-Paced courses. Students who miss a Wednesday start date will be placed into the next Wednesday start

Extension Requests for Self-Paced Courses

The June 15 (or Monday thereafter) end date for 1 credit Self-Paced courses will not be extended except in the case of a student with a doctor's note excusing them from attending school for at least 2 consecutive weeks during the months of March, April, or May. Requests for additional time beyond June 15 must be submitted, in writing, to the academic liaison. If a student approaches a teacher about an extension, the teacher will ask the student to submit a support request in the Service Center.

Students enrolled in a 0.5 credit Self-Paced course can request a one-time extension if they do not finish their work within their initial 20-week enrollment period. Students must request the extension via a support request or email to their academic liaison. A student must have completed at least 50% of the course, or the 2-week extension will not be granted.

Minimum Enrollment Period for Self-Paced Courses

Students must be enrolled in a 1 credit Self-Paced course for a minimum of 20 weeks before they can earn credit for the course. Students who attempt to finish in less than 20 weeks will need to wait for the 20-week enrollment period to be complete before accessing their final grade and transcript. The minimum enrollment period for a 0.5 credit Self-Paced course is 6 weeks.

Pacing Expectations for Self-Paced Courses

Although Self-Paced courses do not have deadlines to submit work, it is important that students submit work regularly so that they can finish their course within the expected timeline. Students are encouraged to login to Self-Paced courses at least 3-4 times per week to maximize success and complete the course by the course deadline.

To provide students and learning coaches with an approximate picture of student progress, VHS Learning teachers will, approximately every 2 weeks, input grades of zero that represent suggested pacing for the course. These zeros are temporary and will be replaced with a score once the student has submitted the assignment in question.

The intent of inputting zeros is to ensure that the student, learning coach, and academic liaison are aware of whether the student is consistently submitting work in the class.

Students are expected to complete the course in the order the units are presented. Though students will see all course materials (except exams) on enrollment, they should progress through the content in order, unless otherwise directed by their teacher or site coordinator.

It is expected that students will submit assignments consistently as they progress through the curriculum. Students should turn in assignments as they are completed; if a student turns in a large volume of assignments at once, the teacher will not be able to return feedback within 3 days and likely will not be able to provide feedback before the student moves on to new material.

Grade Periods for Self-Paced Courses

All grades will be captured in a single term in the Student Information System. Students will be able to monitor their grades throughout the duration of the course, however, an official grade will be issued once, no later than June 30.

Transferring into a Self-Paced Course from a Paced Course

There are circumstances in which a transfer to a Self-Paced course from a paced course may be appropriate for a student. These guidelines outline the process for transferring to a Self-Paced course:

Timing of transfer

Students are eligible to transfer to a Self-Paced course until January 15, though students are encouraged to speak with their academic liaison about transferring as soon as they recognize they are not able to meet the deadlines in the paced course.

Transfer Fee

Except in the case of a student with an extreme hardship or medical issue, students will be required to pay a fee to transfer to the Self-Paced course.

Transfer of Grades and Work

If a student transfers to a Self-Paced course, a member of the VHS Learning team will transfer all grades earned in the paced version to the Self-Paced course. **Student work will not be transferred to the new course, so students should save a local copy of any work they wish to reference.**

Students will be expected to join the AP Classroom for their Self-Paced course, which could result in lost work, depending on the types of assignments submitted in the course.

Any zeros earned for missing work in the paced course will not be transferred to the Self-Paced course and students are encouraged to complete missing assignments before completing new assignments in the Self-Paced course. Students must work consistently in their Self-Paced course to complete any remaining assignments by the course end date.

Truancy Policy for Self-Paced Courses

The standard truancy policy does not apply to self-paced courses. Learning coaches and academic liaisons will receive updates from the VHS Learning system. It is expected that learning coaches will help students complete the course prior to the deadline.

CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAM

Credit Recovery Course Pacing and Credit

Credit Recovery courses are taught by licensed teachers and enrollment is available throughout the year, with start dates each Wednesday. Credit Recovery courses are not approved for initial eligibility with the NCAA.

Students complete coursework independently and can take up to 8 weeks to finish a credit recovery course, though students can complete a course in as little as 4 weeks. Credit recovery courses are 0.5 credit each. Visit the [Credit Recovery page](#) of the VHS Learning Website for additional details.

Credit Recovery Course Extension Request

If a student has not completed a credit recovery course by the end of 8 weeks, they are eligible to request a 2-week extension. Students who receive extra time accommodation will be granted an additional 2-week extension after the first extension is complete, if needed.

To be eligible for a credit recovery course extension, the student must have completed at least 50% of the assignments in the course. Extension requests should be submitted via the [Service Center](#), prior to or on the student's course end date.

Credit Recovery Course Partial Credit Request

Students are expected to complete all credit recovery content to receive credit for the course. Workload reduction is not possible due to the abbreviated curriculum in each course. In the rare instance that a student is required to complete only part of a credit recovery course, the school counselor or academic liaison will provide instruction about what units should be completed.

Credit Recovery Course Tuition

Credit Recovery tuition is refundable prior to the start of the class, less a \$25 administrative fee. No tuition refund will be granted after the start of the course.

CREDIT RECOVERY AND SELF-PACED TUITION POLICY

Full-time students take 5 - 6 credits each academic year to maintain their status at Massachusetts Mayflower Academy. Students are allowed to use their tuition towards Self-Paced courses according to the following guidelines:

- Students can take Self-Paced courses that are included in the 5-6 credits per year at no charge, with approval of the school counselor. Students will generally not be allowed to take all Self-Paced classes; it is our expectation that students will participate in some paced coursework each year.
- Credit Recovery enrollments are not included in Massachusetts Mayflower Academy tuition.
- Students requiring credit recovery courses will be charged tuition at 75% of the individual student registration rates.

FAMILY INFORMATION

Welcome to Massachusetts Mayflower Academy! We are excited that your family has chosen to be a part of our school and look forward to helping your student achieve his or her educational goals. We hope you have read this handbook so you can understand the policies that guide our program. If you, or your student, have questions about our school or policies, please do not hesitate to call our office at 978-897-1900 or speak with your academic liaison directly.

Benefits of Massachusetts Mayflower Academy

Massachusetts Mayflower Academy is a program of VHS, Inc., established to ensure all students have access to a rigorous, flexible, college-preparatory high school experience. We have found there are many benefits to experiencing asynchronous, cohort-based online courses.

Through exposure to our complete program of studies students have access to courses that allow them to discover a possible career of interest. In addition, our model encourages development of self-regulation, self-advocacy, and time management skills. Our class discussion boards give students time to think before posting their responses and offer an opportunity for all students to be heard. Exposure to students from across the United States and from a variety of international locations is also enriching, especially in courses that explore content where global perspective is critical.

Last, but by no means least, our program provides a safe way for students to take online classes. Our rigorous, but supportive courses are great preparation for post-secondary pursuits. Many colleges are using blended or online courses as part of their undergraduate programs. Our former students have shared that online course work in high school was beneficial to them in college.

Getting Help

We view the learning coach as a critical piece of your student's support system. After acceptance into Massachusetts Mayflower Academy each student is introduced to their academic liaison, a staff member who will be their primary point of contact throughout their time at our school. Academic liaisons are a support system for parents too! They can answer many of your questions about your student's classes. You will also connect with a school counselor who will be your primary point of contact for scheduling



and all other student support questions. We are here to help make your time at our school successful – if you need anything please ask.

Parent Advisory Council and Feedback

All parents are invited to participate in the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), a group that will convene at least twice each academic year to solicit feedback on specific aspects of our school programs. In addition to the PAC, students and parents will be surveyed each academic year so that administrators can reflect on program quality and identify areas of commendation and of growth. As an organization with a long history of reflection and continuous improvement, we encourage feedback at any time. Simply use our [Service Center](#) to file support request or email our Dean (amichalowski@vhslearning.org) with commendations or areas of concern.