

Five Ways Wisconsin Adults Can Earn A High School Diploma Or High School Equivalency Diploma¹

A High School Diploma or High School Equivalency Diploma is a minimum requirement for entry into most jobs and careers today. For all branches of the military, the University of Wisconsin System, and a growing number of employers, the GED certificate (column 1 below) is not the same as a High School Diploma or High School Equivalency Diploma (columns 2 through 6).

Technical colleges are heavily involved with preparing students for GED and HSED completion, as well as with helping students continue their education after receiving a high school credential.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	GED	High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED)				
	(General Educational Development) exams ²	HSED Based on the GED plus additional requirements	HSED Based on attainment of secondary and postsecondary credits	HSED Based on Postsecondary Education	HSED Based on a Foreign Diploma or Degree	HSED Based on completion of a Competency-Based Program
		P.I. 5.05	P.I. 5.06	P.I. 5.07	P.I. 5.08	P.I. 5.09
Requirements	Pass five tests with content similar to high school courses: writing, social studies, science, math, literature and the arts.	Pass the five GED tests plus course work or tests in health, civics, and career awareness.	Earn required high school credits by completing high school or college classes. Technical colleges are among those who offer classes for this option. Occasionally home study or work experience can count as credit.	Complete 24 postsecondary semester credits or more, including credit in each subject area not completed in high school.	Submit a high school diploma or college degree and transcripts from another country for approval by the State Superintendent, plus meet citizenship requirements.	Complete an approved program that demonstrates competency in academic areas: math, science, social studies, reading, writing, health, civics and employability skills.
Most appropriate for	Individuals prepared to study required subject material and then take required tests.	Individuals prepared to study required subject material and then take required tests.	Persons recently in high school, lacking 1-2 credits; also, those who enjoy school setting and group interaction and want to improve academic skills.	Adults interested in obtaining a career/vocational skill while completing necessary high school credits.	Students who have received their educational credential in another country.	Adults seeking an alternative option, based on demonstrating they meet high school-level competencies. Students usually build a portfolio rather than participate in extensive testing.
Diploma / Equivalency awarded by	State Superintendent of Wisconsin issues GED certificate.	State Superintendent of Wisconsin issues HSED certificate. Some local high schools will also grant high school diplomas.	High school diploma issued by a local high school.	State Superintendent of Wisconsin issues equivalency diploma. Some local high schools will also grant high school diplomas.	State Superintendent of Wisconsin issues equivalency diploma. Some local high schools will also grant high school diplomas.	State Superintendent of Wisconsin issues equivalency diploma. Some local high schools will also grant high school diplomas.

¹ To be awarded an HSED the adult must 1) be at least 18½ years old (or the class the student entered 9th grade with must have graduated from high school); 2) be a resident of Wisconsin, have lived in Wisconsin for at least 10 days, or be an eligible migrant worker or child of a migrant worker; 3) not be currently enrolled in a public or private high school; 4) have completed a required planning and counseling session(s); and 5) meet any other current requirements. *Note that there are also programs that can serve students who are still in high school - check with your high school counselor or a technical college for more information.*

² Note that although the GED is a worthy credential, by itself it is not considered the equivalent of a high school diploma in Wisconsin.