Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual School

Terms of Certificate

This document and its attachments are the material terms of the certificate for TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School. From time to time, the material terms of the certificate may be amended pursuant to 603 CMR 52.00. The school’s board of trustees must vote on all amendments to the certificate and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (Commissioner) must approve them before such changes are effective and implemented. Once approved, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) will update this document accordingly.

# Name:

TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA)

# Board of trustees:

Jean Kenney Peter Sanchioni Grace Magley

Edmund F. DeHoratius Sandra Einsel

Jerry Helsing Joanne Menard

The board of trustees must include a minimum of five members. Members of the boards of trustees of Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools may not be paid for attendance at board meetings but may receive reimbursement of reasonable expenses.

All appointed and proposed members of the board of trustees who hold or held a position, whether paid or unpaid, with The Education Cooperative or its member school districts must request a written opinion from the State Ethics Commission. Upon receipt, such individuals must provide a copy of that opinion to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

# Term of certificate:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year Opened** | July 1, 2014 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2017 (5-year certificate term) 2022 (4-year certificate term) |

July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2026

Note: The 2022 renewal of TECCA’s certificate was explicitly conditioned. Failure to meet the conditions may result in the Board placing TECCA on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate (see section 20: Conditions).

# Annual per pupil tuition rate:

In fiscal year 2026, TECCA’s annual per pupil tuition will be thirteen thousand, one hundred and fourteen dollars with seventy-five dollars per pupil retained by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for administration of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual schools program.[[1]](#footnote-1) The cost of special education services shall be calculated in accordance with 603 CMR 10.07(3) and shall be added to the per pupil tuition amount unless such services are provided in kind by the sending district.

The tuition for individual courses must be agreed upon between the virtual school and the sending districts pursuant to G.L. c. 71, § 94 (2) (b) and (k) and 603 CMR 52.05(12). The virtual school may offer full time and individual courses to districts that are members of The Education Cooperative at a discount of no more than 50 percent of what other districts or schools are charged.

# Maximum enrollment and grade levels:

The maximum enrollment was amended, on October 6, 2021, with an increase of 300 additional seats, for a new maximum enrollment of 3,000. Granting additional seats was explicitly conditioned on TECCA amending its enrollment policy to provide the first order of enrollment preference to students who are unable to attend school in-person because of the student’s medical condition. This request was granted to meet the elevated demand for students who are unable to attend to school in-person because of the student’s medical condition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Grades | Enrollment |
| K-12 | 3,000 |

# Enrollment region:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

# Mission, purpose, and specialized focus:

The mission was amended in November 2023, to read:

*“Through a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging TEC Connections Academy will provide students a high quality, innovative, virtual public school experience through access to education that empowers students to demonstrate respect, life skills, growth mindset, critical thinking, communication skills, and application of knowledge to prepare them for the next stage of their life's journey*.”

# Educational program, instructional methodology, and services for students:

1. **Educational Program:**
* The TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will offer a rigorous, effective curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
* A Learning Coach (parent/guardian) who works in person with the student, monitors progress, and communicates with the teacher.
* Education management system provides access to the curriculum, schedules, and assignments; stores student data; and monitors student progress.
* Asynchronous interactive tutorials that employ graphics, audio, and video
* The school will offer high school students a broad selection of courses, including diverse electives, to enable students to meet graduation requirements and prepare for college and a career. The school will offer mathematics, English language arts, science, history, foreign language, and arts courses, including Advanced Placement courses. All high school students will be offered courses sufficient to meet MassCore requirements, and the school’s graduation requirement will meet or exceed the state competency determination standard required for high school graduation.
* Students will also be provided with internship opportunities.
1. **Instructional methodology**:
* Teacher contacts via telephone, email, or live web conference at least once every two weeks.
* Teachers will communicate regularly with parents/guardians via live synchronous sessions, email, and telephone conferences.
* Real-time web conferences with individual students or groups of students using telephone, video, chat, electronic whiteboard, and shared web surfing.
* Online and offline assessments including state assessments, ongoing informal assessments, telephone-based curriculum assessments, and portfolio assignments
* Threaded discussions (at the high school level) to provide opportunities for collaboration and interaction
* Teachers will communicate with students as needed and at least once every two weeks, depending on the needs of the student.

**C. Services for students**:

* Personalized learning plans to tailor curriculum and instruction
* Computer and Internet connection to enable learning anytime, anywhere
* Multi-tiered intervention approach to provide targeted support for students who need it
* Online student orientation opportunities such as videos and an online course to familiarize students with online learning.
* The school will provide opportunities for students to develop socially, including but not limited to:
	+ regular field trips and outings facilitated by school staff and parent volunteers;
	+ back-to-school and end-of-the-year events such as picnics or other activities;
	+ clubs and activities through which students explore interests beyond the classroom;
	+ message boardsto communicate with teachers, other students, and families; and
	+ school newsletters.

# 11. Governance and bylaws:

The bylaws were last amended and approved by the Commissioner on November 7, 2024 (Available upon request).

# 12. Schedule/School year:

Late August or early September through June, with a minimum of 180 days,

* + a minimum of 990 hours for grades 6-12, and
	+ a minimum of 900 hours for grades K-5.

# 13. Enrollment policy and preferences:

The TECCA enrollment policy was last amended on October 25, 2021. (Available upon request) The enrollment policy outlines the following enrollment preference to:

1. Students with medical conditions that require a virtual school setting due to health and safety;
2. Siblings of students currently attending the virtual school;
3. Students who reside in the districts that are members of The Education Cooperative;
4. Students with disabilities;
5. Students who have been expelled;
6. Students in institutionalized settings;
7. Students who are over-age for their grade;
8. Students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out;
9. Students who are pregnant or who have a child;
10. Students who feel bullied or who are out of school due to other safety concerns;
11. Students with unusual needs requiring a flexible schedule;
12. Students who seek academic work not available in their school;
13. Students in rural communities; and
14. Students who are gifted and talented.

If more applicants are received than the Commonwealth virtual school can admit within its enrollment limit, the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School will admit students with an enrollment preference in the order of priority listed above and then will conduct an admissions lottery using an impartial lottery process that is consistent with state guidelines and regulations. Students who do not receive an offer of admission will have their names placed on a waitlist.

1. **Attendance Policy:**

TECCA amended its attendance policy in November 2023. (Available upon request).

# 15. The identity of third party software or curriculum vendor partnerships:

Educational courses including management software, learning materials, and technical support services will be provided by Connections Academy/Pearson.

# 16. Proposed contracts or contract amendments with management/operational organization, including payments:

The Board of Trustees of TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School revised its existing contract with Connections Education LLC (doing business as Pearson Virtual Schools USA (Pearson)), to provide substantially all of the virtual school’s educational services, including, but not limited to enrollment services, curricular materials, and a learning management system.

On July 5, 2023, the Commissioner approved this revised contract, for the remainder of the school’s certificate through June 30, 2026. This revised agreement has two major changes including a. the removal of all of the technology services provided by Pearson and b. a new fee structure, which charged the fee structure to $3,115 per full time enrollment. The number of enrolled pupils is based on the total number of funded Students as reported on the final School Choice Tuition Form (“Funded Enrollment Report/Final Receiving Roster”) for the Academic Year in question. (Available upon request).

Other operational services may be provided by the Education Cooperative.

# 17. Demonstration of capacity to support and store all critical data in compliance with state and federal law:

TEC Connections Academy has secured a contract with a Massachusetts SIF Vendor by the end of the 2023-2024 school year and develop systems which will allow for the regular transmission of data from the Pearson Online Classroom to DESE by the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

# 18. Accountability Plan:

On February 7, 2023, the TEC Connections Academy received approval from the Commissioner to amend the Accountability Plan for the 2022-2026 Certificate term.

# 19. Expulsion Policy:

On April 6, 2023, the TEC Connections Academy received approval from the Commissioner to amend its expulsion policy (Available upon request).

# 20. Conditions on the Certificate:

The 2022 renewal of the TECCA’s certificate is explicitly conditioned as follows. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the Board placing TECCA on probation, revoking its certificate, or imposing additional conditions on its certificate.

1. *By August 1, 2022, TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School must develop four-year goals for non-statewide assessments in its Accountability Plan that will allow the school to demonstrate a track record of academic success during the certificate term.*
2. *By January 1, 2023, the board of TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School must ensure a timely submission of its annual financial audit; the fiscal year 2022 audit must demonstrate progress or full resolution of findings outlined in prior audits.*
3. *By December 31, 2024, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science for all student subgroups.*
1. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education delegates authority to the Commissioner, in accordance with General Laws c. 15, § 1F, paragraph 3, to act on behalf of the Board in amending the current certificates for the TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School to increase the annual per pupil tuition amount by no more than the annual rate of inflation for fiscal year 2026. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)