



End of Course Exams

Frequently Asked Questions
2025-2026

Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Performance Reporting

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1.0	July 2022	Initial Document
2.0	August 2023	• Background and purpose of end of course exams • Clarification on Credit Recovery options • Clarification on makeup testing • Clarification for Advanced Placement Courses, Dual Enrollment Courses, and International Baccalaureate courses • Clarification on semester courses • Clarification on alternate assessments • Clarification on Spanish trans adapted EOC exams • Clarification on end of course grading and reporting timelines
3.0	April 2024	• Clarification of unique circumstances • Clarification of grading practices

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Purpose

The Maryland High School Graduation Task Force was convened in 2018 at the request of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools. The Task Force was asked to focus on three areas: credit and program requirements (number of credits, subject areas, and other requirements), assessments, and options for awarding high school diplomas.

One of the Task Force recommendations was to move from a standalone graduation requirement to an end of course assessment and no longer require a passing score because research shows that high stakes exit exams disproportionately and negatively impact students of color and economically disadvantaged students, reducing their likelihood of graduation from high school. Research also shows that a student's course grade is a stronger predictor of college and career success than standardized assessments and suggests that switching to an End of Course Exam model does improve achievement for all students. (Hanushek, E., & Raymond, M., 2004; Rockoff, J., & Turner, L., 2008).

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document provides answers to questions related to the implementation of the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) End of Course (EOC) exams for high school. This document will be updated periodically, and the most current version will be available on the Maryland public school website.

Relevant State Requirements

State Law

Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

13A.03.02 Graduation Requirements for High Schools in Maryland

Federal Law

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 34 CFR § 200.1-200.79 (2015)

Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program

What is the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP)?

The MCAP encompasses all state and federally mandated assessments which includes English Language Arts/Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, English Language Proficiency and Kindergarten Readiness. The MCAP provides information to students, families, educators, and the public on student progress towards proficiency on the Maryland state content standards. An assessment system provides information on how schools are performing and where targeted assistance can be directed to support student growth and achievement.

End of Course Implementation Timeline and Graduation Requirements

What is an MCAP EOC exam?

An MCAP EOC exam (hereinafter EOC Exam) is a state-administered high school assessment, incorporated into local education agency (LEA) courses as a final exam with a percentage counting towards the students' final course grade. This stands in contrast to an EOC high stakes exit assessment where the student must earn a passing score on the assessment to meet a graduation requirement.

What is the difference between the current EOC exam and the previous high school assessment (HSA)?

The HSA assessment program was a series of high school assessments where a student had to earn a passing score to meet the graduation assessment requirement. A student's performance on the assessment had no impact on the student's final grade in a course or in earning any related course credits.

The EOC exam is incorporated into the student's final course grade. The student is **not** required to pass the EOC exam as a separate graduation requirement.

What is the difference between an end-of-grade assessment and the EOC exam?

End-of-grade assessments are designed and administered by local educators to measure student performance on the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies for locally selected curriculum in courses that do not have a COMAR end of course exam requirement. An EOC exam is a state-administered high school assessment, incorporated into local education agency courses as a final exam. The EOC exam counts as 20% of students' final grade.

When was the MCAP EOC established?

The EOC exam was adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education on May 25, 2021. The MCAP EOC adoption superseded the former HSA requirement in Maryland for students to pass high school assessments to meet graduation requirements. When does the MCAP EOC go into effect?

The Maryland State Board of Education approved a waiver for the 2022-2023 school year for the EOC exam requirement to be included at 20% of the final course grade (COMAR 13A.03.02.06.H). No other graduation requirements were waived. The EOC exam requirement took effect in the 2023-2024 school year.

Which students will be impacted by the EOC exams when they go into effect?

Beginning with students entering 9th grade in the 2023-2024 school year, students are subject to the EOC requirement as required by 13A.03.02 Graduation Requirements for High Schools in Maryland.

Which courses have an EOC exam requirement?

The current COMAR 13A.03.02.06 identifies the following courses as having an EOC exam requirement: High School Life Science (LS MISA) and American Government. Students enrolled in High School Life Science must participate in the MCAP LS MISA. Students enrolled in American Government must participate in the MCAP American Government.

How will students meet assessment requirements for graduation beginning in the 2023-2024 school year?

Students are still required to meet the graduation assessment requirement by taking the requisite MCAP assessment after earning course credit for Algebra I, English 10, Life Science and Government. In addition, beginning with the first time ninth grade student cohort in SY 2023-2024, students taking Life Science and Government will have the EOC exam account for 20% of their final course grade as required by 13A.03.02 Graduation Requirements for high schools in Maryland.

Are there accommodated versions of the EOC exams?

Yes, the EOC exams are available in braille, American Sign Language, and large print. As always, testing accommodations found in a student's Individualized Education Program, 504 Plan, and/or English learner plan must be followed. The Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, & Accommodations Policy Manual has more details about specific accommodations found on the MCAP assessments.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities may be registered to take the alternate assessments. Students with IEPs and 504s should take the accommodated EOC exam unless they are registered to take the alternate assessments as appropriate. Students taking the alternate assessments will not be required to have the assessment account for 20% of their final grade in the course.

Are EOC exams offered in languages other than English?

For the 2023-2024 SY and beyond, the EOC exams will have a Spanish trans adapted version available for students.

If a student moves in from outside of Maryland and has already taken life science or government, do we have them retake the courses so they can complete the EOC requirements?

In COMAR 12A.03.02.12 guidance allows for students that transfer into Maryland schools to be declared exempt from assessments if, consistent with local school system policy and procedure, the local superintendent determines that the course associated with the assessment is aligned and provides the student with credits. If the LEA accepts the course as meeting the requirement and accepts the credit, then the student does not have to take the assessment.

End of Course (EOC) Grading

What percentage of the final course grade is the EOC?

The EOC exam will comprise 20% of the student's final course grade in the course. (Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.02.06).

What percentage of a student's grade does a teacher determine?

Teachers determine 80 percent of a student's final grade. A teacher's careful, personalized instruction with remediation, enrichment, and acceleration comprises most of the student's final grade as they learn skills to master state standards.

How are EOC scores converted into student grades?

The "Test Scale Score" refers to the student's EOC exam overall (either LS MISA or American Government). It is based on the questions answered correctly on the exam. The "GCS Score" refers to the Grade Conversion Scale score that is based on the Test Scale Score. It has a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 100. The "Letter Grade" refers to the grade, A through F, the student received on the EOC exam and that will count for 20% of the student's final course grade.

LEAs have varying grading policies and will apply the 20% according to their local methodology.

What happens if a student is absent during EOC testing?

LEAs also have "incomplete" policies, which enable the monitoring of absent students and their eligibility for "making up" testing. As determined by the LEA, absent students can test within the administration window or the following administration, as appropriate. Please refer to your LEA for more information about grading and make up testing policies.

Per the Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.03.02.08 (5.a) A timeline for final grade changes cannot exceed 45 school days following the last day of the grading period. Unless students can assess within the designated assessment window or are subject to local make-up policies, they should be assigned a grade conversion based on the lowest score on the assessment.

What happens if a student does not receive a score after completing the EOC testing?

There are two **scenarios** that can result in a student not receiving an EOC assessment score on time.

- If the student did not select **"SUBMIT"** at the end of the assessment, the EOC assessment will not be collected for scoring until after the assessment window closes. After the state determined assessment window closes, **"UNSUBMITTED"** assessments are automatically collected for scoring. Scores will become available after 12 business days. **School Test Coordinators and Local Accountability Coordinators can prevent this by checking the administration platform to verify all student tests are submitted.**
- There is a mismatch between the students' demographics in the local student information system and the state record. The most common fields where errors are problematic are the SASID, student name, date of birth, and reporting school. All students are matched against the state records to ensure scores are assigned to the correct student. If this problem occurs, LEAs will be able to make the corrections, but the student results will not be available until final reporting. **School Test Coordinators and Local Accountability Coordinators can prevent this by verifying student**

demographics in the state record match the student record in the test administration platform PRIOR to testing.

In this situation the LEA will have to use local policy to determine how and when to apply the 20% to the student score.

How will the LEA track students that need to complete the EOC for graduation requirements?

LEAs should track their own student participation and graduation requirements. If a student transfers into the district, they can be checked against the Comprehensive Assessment Data file that is produced twice annually. They can also email ranjani.thunga@maryland.gov at MSDE with a list of SASIDS to determine if the students need to test.

What happens if a student completes and passes courses that require the EOC exam but does not take the EOC exam?

The EOC is 20% of a student's final grade. If a student does not participate, they shall be assigned a grade conversion based on the lowest score on the assessment. The student is still required to take the EOC to meet graduation requirements unless those requirements are met in another way as described in this document. Students in this situation should not be removed from the assessment platform.

What happens if a student completes and passes courses that require the EOC exam and passes the EOC exam?

Students who pass the course with the EOC exam accounting for 20% of their final grade have met the graduation assessment requirement.

What happens if a student fails the EOC exam but passes the course?

The EOC exam accounts for 20% of a student's final course grade. There is no longer a requirement to pass an EOC assessment to meet the graduation assessment requirement. If a student's final course grade is passing and they participated in the assessment, they will meet the course and assessment graduation requirements.

For students who have not passed the EOC but passed the course, there should not be a blanket policy of reenrolling students in the same EOC course or of reassessing. However, based on individual student need and LEA discretion, the needs of individual students should be considered.

What happens if a student fails the course and fails the EOC exam?

Students who fail the course and fail the EOC exam must retake the course and retake the EOC as 20% of their final grade. Alternatively, students can take the LEA determined credit recovery course to earn course credit. Credit recovery courses are not required to include the EOC as 20% of the final grade.

What happens if a student fails the course and passes the EOC exam?

If a student's final course grade is failing and they participated in the assessment, they will meet the assessment graduation requirement, but they must retake the course and retake the EOC as 20% of their final grade. Students that refuse to retake the assessment will receive the lowest possible score of 50. The LAC should consult with the family to make this decision. Students may not use the previous year's assessment score for the 20% requirement.

Alternatively, students can take the LEA determined credit recovery course to earn course credit. Credit recovery courses are not required to include the EOC as 20% of the final grade.

What is the timeline for updating a grade for a student who takes an incomplete in the EOC course or does not take the test in the test window and receives the lowest possible grade conversion score?

Per the Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.03.02.08 (5.a) A timeline for final grade changes that cannot exceed 45 school days following the last day of the grading period. For a change of grade for the fourth marking period, the timeline would begin on the first day of school in the new school year.

For a student who receives an incomplete in an End-of-Course (EOC) assessment course due to an excused or unexcused absence or is unable to participate in the spring testing window, can the student be tested during the summer window and have those results applied as 20% of the final grade?

Per the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.02.08(5)(a), final grade changes must be completed within 45 school days following the last day of the grading period. If a student is unable to complete the EOC assessment during the spring window, the summer testing window may be utilized, provided test results are received within this 45-day timeline.

If the student cannot assess and receive results within the 45-day window, the student must be assigned a grade conversion based on the lowest allowable score (50) for the EOC, which will be applied as 20% of the final course grade.

Are credit recovery options available for students who fail a course that requires an EOC exam?

Credit recovery course models are determined by each LEA. Students who take a credit recovery course aligned with the content of Government or Life Science are not required to take the EOC exam and is not required to be counted as 20% of a grade in the credit recovery course.

How does the EOC exam affect pass/fail reporting models?

The Government exam has transitioned from being a pass/fail model to having four performance levels. There is no longer a requirement to pass the Government exam to meet the graduation assessment requirement.

Will students be allowed to retake the EOC to improve their course grade?

No. Students may not retake the EOC exam separate from the course to earn a higher score.

Will students be allowed to retake the course and the EOC to improve their course grade?

If the student passes the course, re-enrollment to improve grades is not recommended.

Do students need to complete a Bridge Project for Academic Validation if they do not pass the EOC exam?

No, Bridge projects were an alternative to assessments in the previous high stakes exit exam model. Passing the Bridge project was an alternative means of meeting the graduation assessment requirement. Students no longer need to pass the EOC exam to graduate; they are required to pass the respective course to receive course credit for graduation.

What is the scoring timeline for the EOC exam?

A grade conversion score will be provided to Local Accountability Coordinators (LACs) in a results file nine business days after the student exam is digitally submitted during the operational assessment administration window. To meet the 9-day requirement, paper tests must be transcribed and submitted digitally.

What happens if the LEA did not transcribe the paper tests before the assessment window closed?

There is not a mechanism in place for scoring assessments that were not transcribed. LEAs should consult with MSDE in these unique cases. All efforts should be made at the LEA level to ensure all data for paper testing is transcribed within the window.

Alternatives and Exemptions

Advanced Placement (AP)

Students who enroll in the Advanced Placement (AP) Biology course are required to pass the course and participate in the LS MISA EOC exam to meet graduation requirements. The LS MISA EOC exam is not required to count as 20% of their final AP course grade.

Students who enroll in the Advanced Placement (AP) American Government course are required to pass the course and either participate in the Government EOC exam or the AP exam to meet the graduation requirement. If students choose to take the Government EOC exam instead of the AP exam to meet their graduation requirement, it is not required to count as 20% of their final course grade.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Students who enroll in a life science International Baccalaureate (IB) course are required to pass the course and participate in the LS MISA EOC exam to meet graduation requirements. The LS MISA EOC exam is not required to count as 20% of their final IB course grade.

Students who enroll in a social studies aligned International Baccalaureate (IB) course are required to pass the course and either participate in the Government EOC exam or the IB exam to meet the graduation requirement. If students elect to take the Government EOC exam to meet their graduation requirement, it is not required to count as 20% of their final course grade.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment students taking a college level life science course are required to pass the course and participate in the LS MISA EOC exam to meet graduation requirements. The LS MISA EOC exam is not required to count as 20% of their final college course grade.

Dual enrollment students taking a college level government course are required to pass the course and either participate in the Government EOC exam or the college course final exam to meet the graduation requirement. If students choose to take the Government EOC exam to meet their graduation requirement, it is not required to count as 20% of their final college course grade.

Semester Courses

Some districts offer EOC courses (Biology/Life Science, Government) as two $\frac{1}{2}$ credit courses where each $\frac{1}{2}$ is its own separate grade. In this situation, students should take the assessment when they have completed the full curricular sequence and can be assessed on the material in a comprehensive, summative manner. The state assessment does not need to be taken twice or counted in both semesters.

Accommodations

As always, testing accommodations outlined in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, and/or Multilingual Learner (ML) Plan must be implemented as specified. Detailed guidance on allowable accommodations for the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) can be found in the [*Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, & Accommodations Policy Manual \(MAAAM\)*](#).

Students with IEPs or 504 Plans should participate in the accommodated End-of-Course (EOC) exam with the EOC exam accounting for 20% of a student's final course grade.

Students who are unable to participate in the general state assessments, even with accommodations, due to the most significant cognitive disabilities, may take the [*Dynamic Learning Maps® \(DLM®\)*](#) assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics (grades 3–8 and high school), and in Science (grades 5, 8, and high school). Students who participate in DLM are exempt from the requirement that the assessment count as 20% of their final course grade.

Additional Considerations

Grading scales are specific to each LEA. Passing or failing scores are beyond the scope of this document. Decisions beyond the scope of this document should be applied through local policy and LEA interpretation of COMAR.