

# End of Course Exams

Frequently Asked Questions  
2023-2024 School Year



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1.0	July 2022	Initial Document
2.0	August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background and purpose of end of course exams</li> <li>• Clarification on Credit Recovery options</li> <li>• Clarification on makeup testing</li> <li>• Clarification for Advanced Placement Courses, Dual Enrollment Courses, and International Baccalaureate courses</li> <li>• Clarification on semester courses</li> <li>• Clarification on alternate assessments</li> <li>• Clarification on Spanish trans adapted EOC exams</li> <li>• Clarification on end of course grading and reporting timelines</li> </ul>

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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 recommendations by the Task Force was to decouple the assessments from graduation requirements at the high school level 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 end of course (EOC) high stakes exit assessment?

An EOC assessment is content specific and is taken at the conclusion of a high school course. An EOC high stakes exit assessment is one where a student must earn a passing score on the assessment.

## What is an MCAP EOC exam?

An 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 MCAP 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 MCAP EOC exam is incorporated into the student's final course grade. There is no requirement for the student 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 percent of students' final grade.

## When was the MCAP EOC established?

The EOC exam was adopted by the State Board on May 25, 2021. The EOC adoption superseded the former 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 approved a waiver for the 2022-2023 school year for the EOC exam requirement to be included at 20 percent of the final course grade (COMAR 13A.03.02.06.H). No other graduation requirements were waived. The EOC exam requirement will begin in the 2023-2024 school year.

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

Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, all first-time 9th grade 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 and 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 Life Science and Government. In addition, beginning with first time ninth grade students in SY 2023-2024, students taking Life Science and Government will have the EOC exam account for 20 percent 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 percent 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.

## **End of Course (EOC) Grading**

### **What percentage of the final course grade is the EOC?**

The EOC exam will comprise 20 percent 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.

**What happens if a student is absent during EOC testing?**

The MCAP assessment program has “not tested” codes, categorized as “excused” and “unexcused,” that can be used during the administration of the assessments. These identify reasons for students not taking an assessment. 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 subsequent administration as appropriate. Please refer to your LEA for more information about grading and make up testing policies.

School Test Coordinators (STCs) and Local Accountability Coordinators (LACs) can use “not tested codes” in the final student results file and LEA designated incomplete policies to monitor absent students and eligibility for make-up testing. LEAs LACs were trained on “not tested codes” in September 2022 and used them operationally during the SY 2022-2023 winter, spring, and summer MCAP administrations. Absent students can retest within the administration window or next administration offering as appropriately determined by the LEA.

**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 percent of their final grade have met the graduation assessment requirement.

**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 percent of a student’s final grade. If a student does not participate, they will receive a grade conversion based on the lowest score on the assessment. The student is still required to take an approved exam to meet graduation assessment requirement.

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

The EOC exam accounts for 20 percent 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, they will meet the course and assessment graduation requirements.

**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 with the EOC as 20 percent 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 percent 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.

**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 percent 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. The previous passing cut score of 394 is now the cut score between levels 1 and 2. For the MCAP assessments, a level 2 is passing and level 3 or above is considered proficient.

**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.

**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 submitted during the operational assessment administration window.

## Alternatives and Exemptions

### Are there any alternatives or exemptions to the EOC exam?

#### 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.

#### EOC Exam Participation Requirements for English Learners Who Have Recently Arrived in the United States

Per ESSA 1111(b)(3)(A)(i)(I), English learners who have recently arrived in the United States may be exempted from one administration of the English language arts assessment. A recently arrived English learner is a student who has attended school in the United States for less than 12 cumulative months. English learners must still participate in all other required MCAP assessments.

Although the recently arrived English learners participate in MCAP assessments, their performance or result on the assessment is not included in reporting. As such, the EOC exam is not required to count as 20% of the final course grade for recently arrived English learners.