

MCAP Government: Frequently Asked Questions

Document Navigation Links:

[General Assessment Background](#)

[Assessment Structure and Administration](#)

[Graduation Requirements](#)

[Assessment Support Tools](#)

[Assessment Development Process](#)

[Reporting and Accountability](#)

Purpose of Document:

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document is updated yearly to provide answers to questions that arise as the MCAP government assessment is implemented.

General Assessment Background

What is Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP)?

The Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) encompasses all state and federally mandated assessments in English Language Arts/Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Kindergarten Readiness. It provides information to educators, parents, and the public on student progress toward proficiency on the Maryland state content standards.

When did the government assessment begin?

The operational government assessment began in 2004 as a part of the Maryland High School Assessment program.

Has the government assessment changed over time?

Yes, the time and structure of the test has changed since 2004, however, while the test structure and timing has been modified, the assessment limits have only slightly shifted. This uniformity in the assessment limits allows the ability to review and compare data over time.

Where can additional information about the content that is assessed be found?

The Maryland Social Studies Standards help to guide and structure the frameworks. It is through the [American Government Framework](#) where students are able to interact with content related to American Government through the State Standards. The assessment limits found in the framework designate the topics which can measure student understanding on the assessment.

What skills will be assessed?

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly amended Md. Ed. Art §7-203 Education Accountability Program. The amendment called for an update to the high school level social studies assessment to allow for a new item type that consisted of “criterion-referenced, performance-based task that require students to utilize critical and historical thinking skills and analyze primary sources.”

To help meet the requirements of the legislation, specific skills to be assessed were selected by Local School System social studies supervisors and teacher workgroups. The assessed skills are:

- evaluate the credibility of the sources by considering as the authority, origin, type, context, and corroborative value of each source;
- identify credible, relevant information contained in the sources; and
- construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims with evidence from multiple sources.

How will these skills be assessed?

The Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS) measures the skills-based assessment limits.

Should these skills be taught only in American Government?

No. The Maryland social studies frameworks introduce students to inquiry-based instruction and the social studies skills and processes in the Pre-K framework. These skills are interwoven through all of the social studies frameworks in the elementary and middle school levels, as well as the three required high school social studies courses. During the middle school grade band, students are assessed in the 8th grade on the skills and processes assessment limits and US History content.

Assessment Structure and Administration

What types of items will be on the assessment?

This assessment includes selected response, technology-enhanced, constructed response, and Evidence Based Argument Sets (EBAS) items. A description of these item types can be found on page two of the [American government Framework](#). Sample items can be found on the [practice test website](#).

What is the format for an EBAS item?

The EBAS is organized around a compelling question. In order to answer the compelling question, students are provided four to five sources; each source also includes source information. While all topics deal with government concepts, background information has also been provided to ensure the EBAS assesses skills and not content. Using the information provided by the EBAS set, students will answer skills-based, selected response questions. Then develop and support a claim to the compelling question using evidence from the sources.

How is the government assessment structured?

The assessment is divided into four forty-minute sessions. Two of those sessions have an Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS), selected response items, and technology enhanced items. The remaining two sessions consist of selected response items, technology enhanced items, and four-point constructed response items that measure student understanding of government content.

How should the government assessment be administered in schools?

The assessment is designed to be administered sequentially, however local school systems will determine if it is given as individual sessions or with multiple sessions in one day.

How is the End of Course (EOC) exam different from the current MCAP government?

The organization and the content being assessed will not change with the EOC government.

When will the End of Course Assessment (EOC) be administered?

The MCAP government EOC will be administered at the end of the government course. There will continue to be three MCAP government administrations throughout the school year (winter, spring, and summer).

Are there accommodated assessments?

Yes, assessments 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 EL plan must be followed.

Graduation Requirements

Who needs to take the MCAP government assessment?

According to the COMAR 13A.03.02.03 for social studies, students must earn one credit in a local, State, and national government course aligned with the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment for government. Due to COVID 19 and the transition to the End of Course (EOC) model, there are some updates to the assessment requirements in COMAR and through MSDE Board of Education waivers.

School Year	MCAP government assessment requirements for students who <u>passed</u> the government course
2018-2019	Must participate and pass the assessment or pass the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation
2019-2020	Participation and passing waived
2020-2021	Participation and passing waived
2021-2022	Must participate; passing waived
2022-2023	Students must pass course with EOC requirement.

What happens if a student does not pass the government assessment?

In the 2021-2022 school year, to satisfy the graduation requirements, any student enrolled in a government course must pass the course and must take the MCAP government assessment; however, passing the assessment has been waived for these students.

Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, the MCAP assessment, “shall account for 20 percent of the student’s final grade” ([COMAR 13A.03.02.06.H](#)). Therefore, if a student has passed the government course, they will receive the credit toward graduation. If a student does not pass the course, they will need to retake the government course.

Do students need to complete a bridge project in government if they do not pass the assessment?

In COMAR the bridge projects are still listed as an alternative path for any student who may not have been waived; however, the COVID related waivers addressed government students who would have traditionally been in need of a bridge project.

Assessment Support Tools

Is the practice test available online?

Yes, a four session [practice test](#) is available. This practice test allows students to interact with the same testing platform and associated tools that will be used on the actual test. A portion of the practice test is refreshed each year. Practice tests are also available for all accommodated formats.

Where can I find the older versions of the practice test?

Legacy practice tests and sample items can be found on [iTem/Pra](#), the MSDE item banking system. During the shift to this new item bank, items that are no longer relevant (dead assessment, not to current style) were removed. At this time, there are about 600 items available.

Will anchor papers be made available?

Yes, there are some anchor papers for the Brief Constructed Response (BCRs) items and Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS) currently available in the iTem/Pra item bank. Currently, these anchor papers and sample responses are on the main government tab. The MSDE will be adding more anchor and student responses to the iTem/pras item bank.

Are scoring rubrics available?

Yes, rubrics are provided for students to access while they are in the testing platform. The four-point and five-point rubrics can also be found at [MCAP Government Assessment](#) website.

Is the notepad tool available for students on the platform?

Yes, the notepad tool is available for all items on the testing platform. Within the EBAS items, the notepad will retain information entered for the entire EBAS. This will allow a student to navigate the sources and items within the EBAS and keep information typed for reference. Students also have the ability to use scratch paper and pencil during the assessment.

Can students cut and paste the source text on the Evidence Based Argument Sets (EBAS)?

No, since the testing platform is a secure site, the ability to cut and paste text has been disabled.

Assessment Development Process

Who writes the MCAP government items?

All of the government items are written by Maryland educators who work with the testing vendor. The items are written to align with the assessment limits.

How are the items reviewed prior to being placed on the assessment?

In the social studies assessment development process, Maryland educators provide direct input on stimuli and items during two reviews. The first review is prior to any items being written, committees of Maryland educators review and approve stimuli to be used with items. After the items are written, another group of Maryland educators review each of the items and provide feedback.

Who is a part of the review committees?

There are three committees during each review phase (1) content, (2) fairness, bias and sensitivity, and (3) accommodation. Each committee is comprised of educational stakeholders throughout the state of Maryland. To be a part of the social studies content committee, a teacher must be recommended by their LSS social studies supervisor.

Are there field tested items?

In order to make sure items perform well, all items are field tested prior to being used operationally. A small percentage of field test items are dispersed throughout the testing form, however, these items do not count toward the students overall score.

How long does it take for an item to be placed on the assessment?

Overall, it will take an item about two years from initial development to be ready to be placed on an operational test.

Reporting and Accountability

What type of reports are available?

Student level: Students will receive an Individual Student Report (ISR) to indicate their MCAP government score. The ISR also provides comparative data on the state, district, and school level. Finally the ISR will show students how they performed by the Maryland State Social studies standards that are assessed on the MCAP government.

School level: Each school will have access to the student roster report. The student roster report shows the breakdown of each student's overall scale score, including the breakdown of performance for each of the social studies standards.

District level: Districts will receive several reports that compare the MCAP government assessment data throughout the district. A district summary of schools report shows the breakdown of each school within the given district. The data compares the pass rate, scale score, and the social studies standards. Another report compares district level performance by demographic groups to the overall state data.

State level: MCAP government is not in the Maryland ESSA plan, and not calculated into the overall report card scores; however, in the data downloads on the Maryland Report Card, access to the scores with overall data and disaggregated data for sub-groups is available to a local school system.