



Georgia

Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) and Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)

Type of test	Comprehensive standards-based
Purpose	<p>The purpose of the exam is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide schools with student academic diagnostic information. • Determine prospective high school graduates' mastery of the state curriculum. • Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure. • Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform educational policy decisions. • Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards. • Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups. • Meet a state mandate.
Major changes/pending changes in exit exam policy	<p>The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is working on a proposal to phase out the GHSGT and replace it with a series of end-of-course tests. This plan remains in development; no final decisions have been made at this time.</p> <p>The GaDOE currently has a system of end-of-course tests in eight courses. The plan for replacing the GHSGT with end-of-course tests will likely involve adding new tests and/or revising current tests.</p> <p>The most important change in the GHSGT for the 2007-08 year is that the English language arts (ELA) and science tests transitioned from the Quality Core Curriculum Standards to the new Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Accordingly, there are new performance standards. These tests are now reported on a different scale with four performance levels:</p> <p>Below Proficiency: less than 200 Basic Proficiency: 200-234 (inclusive) Advanced Proficiency: 235-274 (inclusive) Honors: 275 and greater</p> <p>Students who score with Basic Proficiency or higher (200+) have met the graduation requirement for these GPS-based tests and will be classified as proficient for adequate yearly progress (AYP) calculations in ELA.</p>
Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?	No. The state places the GHSGT scores on student transcripts, but there is no statewide protocol specifying how institutions of higher education will use these scores. Students who receive a certificate of attendance instead of a regular diploma because they failed the exam may be admitted to a two-year college after completing a GED.

Year first administered	1991
Year diplomas first withheld	1994
Subjects tested	English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing
Types of questions	Multiple-choice, writing prompt/essay
Grade first administered	11 th ; the writing assessment takes place in the fall, and the GHSGT in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies occur in spring of 11 th grade.
Grade(s) exam aligned to	9 th -11 th
Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12	Five. Students who do not pass on the first attempt have multiple opportunities to receive additional instruction, retest, and qualify for graduation before the spring of 12 th grade.
Retakes after grade 12	Students who have met all other graduation requirements are allowed to retake the exit exam as many times as they need to after 12 th grade to receive a regular diploma.
Alternate paths to graduation for general education students	<p>The state has a waiver process that must be initiated by the student’s home school. All students are eligible for the waiver, but the waiver request must include documentation of limitations that would account for failing the test. A waiver may be granted to a student who, due to disability, is rendered incapable of passing a section of the GHSGT or to a student who has not had a reasonable opportunity to pass a section of the GHSGT due to substantial hardship beyond the student’s control, such as a significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of deprivation. Students who are granted the waiver and meet all other requirements may receive a certificate of attendance.</p> <p>In addition, there is a variance process that allows an alternate means of demonstrating academic proficiency for students who are not rendered incapable of passing a section of the GHSGT or the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT). The state board of education may, by majority vote, grant a variance to students who have satisfied all of the following requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Passed any three of the five graduation tests (four content sections of the GHSGT and the GHSWT) 2) Met state attendance and course unit requirements for graduation 3) Attained a 90% or better attendance record, excluding excused absences, while enrolled in grades 9-12 4) Obtained a scaled score that falls within one standard error of measurement of the passing score for the relevant sections of the tests 5) Passed (where applicable) each of the state’s end-of-course tests related to the sections of the graduation tests for which the variance is being sought <p>In 2007, 2,569 variance requests and 21 waiver requests were granted (less than 1% of all tests) by the state board of education. These figures represent tests, not students; one student could receive multiple waivers or variances. Also, students can apply for waivers or variances at different times, so these figures are not matched to a specific grade cohort. Therefore, 1% is only an approximation.</p>

<p>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities</p>	<p>No. However, students with disabilities may apply for the general waiver described above. A special education diploma is also available for students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their individualized education program.</p>
<p>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners</p>	<p>No. However, English language learners may apply for the general waiver or variance described.</p>
<p>Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?</p>	<p>The first administration of the exam in spring of 11th grade is used to meet NCLB requirements.</p>
<p>Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?</p>	<p>No. The tests have been enhanced for NCLB accountability purposes. Additional items have been added to better address the depth and breadth of the curriculum. The enhanced tests also have two additional cut scores for the “proficient” and “advanced” levels. These performance levels are used to calculate AYP for NCLB purposes but do not affect a student’s chance of earning a diploma.</p> <p>Students must achieve a score of 500 to graduate and a score of 516 in mathematics and 511 in English language arts to be counted as proficient for AYP under NCLB.</p> <p>The new GPS-based ELA and science tests have the same performance standard for NCLB proficiency determinations and diploma eligibility. This standard, first applied in spring 2008, is “Basic Proficiency,” which matches a scale score of 200 or higher. The spring 2007 tests are as described above.</p>
<p>Types of assistance provided by the state to all districts to raise <i>initial</i> pass rates for all students on the high school exit exam</p>	<p>The state offers technical assistance to help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers administer the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops. • All teachers prepare students for the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, a graduation coach in each high school who helps identify students who may not graduate and subsequently provides counseling and guides students in the direction of assistance. • Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, field-based specialists, and train-the-trainer workshops. • Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, graduation coaches, Graduation Counts guide, and data utilization guide. • Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, and grants to districts. • Districts improve formative uses of assessment, which includes online assistance, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, a data utilization guide, and a balanced assessment module. • Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, and additional professional development opportunities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All districts improve the instructional leadership provided by administrators, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, and GPS training for administrators and sessions on how to raise standards. <p>The state also provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-developed benchmark/formative assessments Note: Georgia implements formative assessments through an application called the Online Assessment System (OAS), a Web-based resource that contains an item bank from which schools and systems can build customized assessments in all the grade/content areas covered by the state assessment system. This facilitates formative assessments at the school and system level. At the state level, the state also provides “pre-built” formative assessments within the OAS that systems and schools are able to use. • Test items from prior year • Exam preparation materials for students and teachers
<p>Types of assistance or remediation provided by the state to all districts to help students who have failed their initial attempt to pass the exit exam</p>	<p>The state provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted remediation programs for students • Additional professional development for teachers in their content area • Additional professional development for teachers in meeting the specific needs of students at risk of academic failure • Additional professional development for teachers in the formative uses of assessment • Graduation coaches, leadership quality initiatives, and secondary leadership facilitators dedicated to supporting high schools and helping them increase graduation rates, in part by counseling students to enroll in more rigorous courses so they are better prepared for the GHS GT
<p>Does the state provide funding for remediation?</p>	<p>There is not a specific fund directed to schools for GHS GT remediation, but many of the initiatives described above are funded by the state. The OAS, for example, offers a bank of items available for formative assessment and remediation.</p>
<p>Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?</p>	<p>No, although all school districts offer some form of remediation to students who fail the exam.</p>
<p>Does the state have reciprocity with other states?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Evaluations of the state exit exam</p>	<p>The enhanced GHS GTs in English language arts and mathematics were externally evaluated in spring 2006 by Norman Webb. This evaluation is available from the GaDOE upon request.</p>
<p>State test contractor</p>	<p>Beginning in 2007, Pearson Educational Measurement is the primary contractor.</p>

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Initial pass rates, 2007

Percentage of Students Passing on the First Try, 2007					
Student Group	English Language Arts	Writing	Math	Science	Social Studies
All students	96%	91%	93%	75%	87%
White	98%	95%	96%	85%	93%
African American	95%	86%	86%	60%	80%
Latino	92%	82%	90%	64%	81%
Asian	96%	92%	98%	85%	93%
Native American	98%	91%	94%	82%	92%
Multiracial	98%	93%	93%	77%	91%
English language learners	74%	54%	79%	42%	58%
Migrant	73%	46%	80%	46%	62%
Students with disabilities	76%	57%	57%	37%	53%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	93%	84%	86%	61%	78%
Passing score (scale of 400-600) (Writing is 100 to 350)	500	200	500	500	500

Note: Pass rates were gathered from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement 2006-07 State Report Card at <http://gaosa.org/Report.aspx>

Cumulative pass rates, 2007

This information is not available.