Maryland
Maryland High School Assessment (HSA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of test</th>
<th>End-of-course exams tied to content standards</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>The purpose of the exam is to:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Determine prospective high school graduates’ knowledge and skill levels relative to those needed for entry-level employment.*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Determine prospective high school graduates’ knowledge and skill levels relative to those needed for postsecondary education.*</td>
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<td>- Determine prospective high school graduates’ mastery of the state curriculum.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform educational policy decisions.</td>
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<td>- Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Meet a state mandate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Provide schools with student academic diagnostic information.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* These tests are approximately on a 10th-grade level, and their purpose is to determine whether students are on proper trajectory to be ready by the end of grade 12 for work and postsecondary education. Skills tested are not end-of-grade-12 knowledge skills.

In November 2007, the state school board approved the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. This plan will allow students who repeatedly fail the High School Assessments (HSAs) and meet certain academic criteria to complete project modules in the subject tests they have failed. More details are provided below.

Also, beginning in 2008, Maryland will administer a modified high school assessment under federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) rules for students with disabilities whose individualized education programs (IEPs) specify this alternate test. School officials anticipate that about 2% of students will use this assessment. Additional special education students whose IEPs indicate that they can take the modified assessment if they fail the regular High School Assessments will use the assessment for retake purposes.

Starting with the spring 2009 administration, the tests will only have multiple-choice items. This change was made to expedite scoring and improve turnaround time.

The combined-score option has been altered. A minimum score on each of the four tests was previously required. As of November 2007 there is no minimum individual test score. The only requirement is that a total combined score of 1602 is reached.

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### Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?

No

### Year first administered

2001

### Year diplomas first withheld

The HSA end-of-course exams replaced the Maryland Functional Test, a minimum-competency test students were required to pass to receive a diploma between 1989 and 2004.

Beginning in 2009, Maryland will require all students to meet the HSA requirement to graduate. This requirement applies to students who entered grade 9 for the first time in 2005-06.

### Subjects tested

English 2, algebra/data analysis, biology, and government

### Types of questions

Multiple-choice, short-answer, writing prompt/essay

### Grade first administered

Students must take each exam in the year in which they complete the course in the subject being tested.

### Grade(s) exam aligned to

Approximately 10th

### Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12

There are four testing opportunities every year beginning in the year the student first takes the course—January, May, August, and October. A fifth administration is offered for seniors in April.

### Retakes after grade 12

Students enrolled in a Maryland public school can continue to retake the HSA until they are 21.

### Alternate paths to graduation for general education students

The state offers alternatives to passing each of the high school assessments. These alternatives include the Maryland Adult External High School Diploma (must be 18 or older) and the GED. The GED and the External High School Diploma are available for students who have exited the regular high school program and are not counted as high school graduates. Specific Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate course exams are acceptable substitutes for specific HSAs provided students receive the specified MSDE-approved scores on the exams.

Maryland convened a statewide task force for two years to examine alternative high school testing. Based on recommendations made by the task force, the state implemented a plan that includes:

a) A combined-score option of 1602 points without a required minimum score for individual assessments

b) The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

c) A modified High School Assessment

On November 2007 the state school board approved the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation, which allows students who repeatedly fail the HSAs to instead complete assigned projects for the assessments that they are unable to pass. It is expected that the Bridge Plan will have particular implications for students with disabilities, students with 504 plans, and English language
learners by allowing them an alternate method to demonstrate content mastery. For a student to participate in the Bridge Plan, he or she must:

a) Be firmly on the path to completing graduation requirements
b) Have taken an HSA exam twice without passing or meeting the combined-score option
c) Have participated in locally administered or approved assistance

Students qualifying for the Bridge Plan will be assigned appropriate project modules, be given an opportunity to complete the project modules assigned, and be subject to a careful review of their work based on detailed state guidelines and scoring rubrics. (Further details of the Bridge Plan can be found at HSAexam.org and at MDBridgePlan.org.)

### Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities

A modified HSA, known as the “Mod-HSA” is currently under development and will be available to students with disabilities who fall outside the NCLB 2% exemption. The Mod-HSA will cover the same content as the HSA and is intended to be at the same difficulty level, but the questions will be written in simplified vocabulary and will include three instead of the traditional four choices for multiple-choice items. It is primarily designed to be more accessible for students for whom information processing poses significant challenges, in accordance with Department of Education guidelines for Modified Academic Achievement Standards.

Also, students with disabilities who do not pass the HSA and cannot meet the requirements for a diploma may receive the Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion instead. To qualify, these students must have completed four years of high school past grade 8 and must meet one of the following conditions:

- The student’s parents and IEP team reach an agreement that the student has developed the appropriate skills to enter the world of work, act responsibly as a citizen, and enjoy a fulfilling life.
- The student will have turned 21 by the end of the current school year.

### Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners

No, but English language learners (ELLs) are eligible for the alternate paths available to general education students.

### Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind?

The exams in algebra/data analysis and English 2 are used to satisfy NCLB accountability for mathematics and reading/language arts. Maryland will use the state’s HSA in biology to satisfy the NCLB requirement for a test in science.

### Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?

Yes

### Types of assistance provided by the state to all districts to raise initial pass rates for all students on the high school exit exam

The state offers technical assistance to help:

- 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, train-the-trainer workshops, and grants to districts.

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- Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance.
- Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency.
- Districts improve formative uses of assessment, which includes online workshops.
- Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, and grants to districts.
- Districts improve the instructional leadership provided by administrators, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, train-the-trainer workshops, the Principals' Academy, and a variety of workshops on instructional leadership required to be successful on assessments.

The state also provides:
- State-developed benchmark/formative assessments
- State-developed courses specifically designed to prepare students for the exam (online courses and highly detailed curricular materials available online)
- Test items from prior years
- Exam preparation materials for teachers available online

### 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

The state provides:
- 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
- Additional professional development for administrators
- Online courses configured to permit the use of appropriate modules, pending the student’s needs

### Does the state provide funding for remediation?

Maryland does not provide specific funding for remediation, but the state school systems received significant increases in funding as the High School Assessments were first implemented, with the expectation that the funds would be used for student performance improvement in all grades. This new funding approach has eliminated most of the traditional discretionary funding streams and consolidated them into one fund with accountability requirements.

### Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?

Yes. The state or district must offer remediation to students who fail the exit exam to help prepare them for future administration of the test. The student may decide not to accept remediation.

### Does the state have reciprocity with other states?

Transfer students may be exempted from taking the HSA if they previously passed a course equivalent to one of the courses tested and are granted credit for the respective course by their new school when they transfer into a Maryland school.
Evaluations of the state exit exam

Achieve Inc. conducted alignment studies of the HSAs and released the results in June 2004. This report is available from the Maryland Department of Education upon request.

Maryland is also participating in the American Diploma Project with Achieve, and the state’s standards in math and English are currently being reviewed for alignment with standards for college and for work.

State test contractor

ETS and Pearson

Initial pass rates, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>English 2</th>
<th>Algebra</th>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learners</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free or reduced-price lunch eligible</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Passing score (scale of 240-800) | 396 | 412 | 400 | 394

Note: Data include multiple results for the same student and content if the student tested during more than one administration in the school year.

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Cumulative pass rates, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>English 2</th>
<th>Algebra</th>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>All Subjects *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learners</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free or reduced-price lunch eligible</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data include the January 2008 test administration and represent students who have completed the course and test and who are enrolled in Grade 11 as of September 30, 2007 (class of 2009).

* "All Subjects" is the percentage of students who have completed all four courses and met the HSA requirement either by passing all four tests or by using the combined score option. For example, as of the January 2008 administration, 88% of all students who have taken all four of the assessments to date have met the assessment requirement. This includes both students passing all four of the assessments and students achieving the 1602 combined score option.