Georgia
Profile of State High School Exit Exam Policies
2012

**State exit exam policy**

Prior to the 2011-12 school year, the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) and the Georgia High School Writing Test were required for diploma eligibility. Beginning in 1998, the state board put into effect a waiver/variance policy. In 2006, this policy was more codified specifying criteria for student eligibility and allowing an alternate way of demonstrating subject area competency if a student was failing the GHSGT. This variance policy allowed students to demonstrate competency via end-of-course assessments in the same content area if the student met certain eligibility criteria. In July 2011, the State Board of Education adopted new/revised graduation requirements (see Board Rule 160-4-2-.48).

Beginning with the freshman class of 2011-12, the Georgia High School Graduation Tests are no longer required for diploma eligibility. The end-of-course assessments (EOCT) are given in 10 courses and will count for 20% of a student’s final grade in each course. For students who enrolled in grade 9 for the first time between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2011, the EOCT will still count for 15% of a student’s final grade.

The GHSGT are still available. However, students in this cohort are able to substitute a passing score on their EOCT for the corresponding content section of the GHSGT. While the GHSGT are available for those who need to demonstrate competency in one or more of the content areas, the number of participants in future administrations is expected to be very small because many students will have demonstrated competency via EOCT.

All students are still required to take and pass the Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT).

Also under this new graduation rule, students with significant cognitive disabilities may graduate and receive a regular high school diploma when the student’s IEP team determines that the student has met the following criteria: (a) completed an integrated curriculum based on the GPS that includes instruction in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies as well as career preparation, self determination, independent living and personal care to equal a minimum of 23 units of instruction, and (b) participated in the GAA during middle school and high school and earned a proficient score on the high school GAA in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies, and (c) reached the 22nd birthday OR has transitioned to an employment/education/training setting in which the supports needed
are provided by an entity other than the local school system. They are not required to pass the GHSWT.

| Type of test | The Georgia High School Graduation Tests are comprehensive, standards-based assessments in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. A writing test (GHSWT) is also required. Beginning with the freshman class entering for the first time in the fall of the 2011-12 school year, the GHSGT will no longer be a requirement for diploma eligibility. Students are still required to pass the GHSWT. Students who were already in high school prior to fall of the 2011-12 school year may demonstrate competency by passing one of the end-of-course tests in a content area in lieu of passing that component of the GHSGT. Students are still required to pass the GHSWT. |
| Purpose | The purposes of the GHSGT and GHSWT are to:  
- Ensure that students qualifying for a diploma have mastered essential core academic content and skills. All students seeking a Georgia high school diploma must pass the Georgia High School Graduation Tests in four content areas as well as the Georgia High School Writing Assessment.  
- 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 and a state board of education rule  

The purpose of the EOCT program is to improve teaching and learning. The EOCTs align with the Georgia Performance Standards (state-mandated) and include assessments of specific content knowledge and skills. The assessments provide diagnostic information to help students identify strengths and areas of need in learning, therefore improving performance in all high school courses and on other assessments, such as the GHSGT. The EOCTs also provide data to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction at the school and system levels. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major changes in exit exam policy since the 2010-11 school year for financial reasons</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major changes in exit exam policy since the 2010-11 school year for other reasons</td>
<td>None</td>
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| Year first administered | GHSGT- 1991  
    GHSWT - 1991  
    EOCTs- Implemented as operational test during 2003-04 school year. |
| Year diplomas first withheld | GHSGT- class of 1995 (spring 1994 administration to 11th graders was first opportunity to take test)  
    GHSWT – class of 1995 (fall of 1993 administration to 11th graders was first opportunity to take test)  
    EOCTs are not a requirement for diploma eligibility. EOCTs will count for 20% of a student’s grade beginning with the freshman class enrolling in fall of 2011-12. For students who enrolled in grade 9 for the first time between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2011, the EOCTs may serve in lieu of the GHSGT for diploma eligibility and will continue to be used as the final exam and count for 15% of a student’s final course grade. |
| Subjects tested on exam | English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing  
    The EOCT can be an alternate way of demonstrating competency. An EOCT that corresponds to a GHSGT content test may be used to fulfill that assessment requirement for diploma eligibility. EOCTs are available in the following courses:  
    - English language arts: 9th grade literature and American literature  
    - Mathematics: Math 1 and 2 OR Systems may offer mathematics standards via discrete model courses Georiga Performance Standards (GPS) algebra and GPS geometry beginning winter 2011 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subjects required for graduation</th>
<th>English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grade exam first administered</td>
<td>GHSGT and GHSWT-11th; The main administration for the GHSWT takes place in the fall, and the main administration for the GHSGT in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies occurs in the spring of 11th grade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade(s) exam aligned to</td>
<td>GHSGT and GHSWT include subject area content from courses that a student may encounter in 9th-11th grades. Most students who are on track will encounter the bulk of test content on the GHSGT and GHSWT in grades 9 and 10. The GHSGT in ELA reflects the American Literature and Composition course that most districts usually offer in 11th grade, and the GHSGT in social studies reflects some U.S. history that some districts offer to either 10th or 11th graders. All depend on the course-taking pattern of the student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of retakes allowed before the end of grade 12</td>
<td>Students who do not pass the GHSGT or GHSWT on the first attempt have multiple opportunities (5) to receive additional instruction, retest, and qualify for graduation before the spring of 12th grade. Beginning with the winter 2011 administration of the EOCT, students are allowed one retest opportunity while enrolled in the course. This policy is being introduced now that the EOCT will serve as the assessment measure for school accountability (i.e., Georgia’s waiver to adequate yearly progress, the new College and Career Ready Performance Index - CCRPI). As an alternate way of demonstrating competency, these EOCT retests provide students who are not succeeding on the GHSGT another opportunity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of retakes allowed after grade 12</td>
<td>GHSGT and GHSWT- Students who have met all other graduation requirements (i.e., exited school with a certificate of attendance) are allowed to retake the exit exam as many times as they need to after 12th grade to receive a regular diploma.</td>
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</table>
| **Is the exit exam used for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability purposes?** | To exit with a certificate of attendance, a student has met all course requirements but has not satisfied all assessment requirements for diploma eligibility.  

Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, the NCLB-AYP calculations include any student who is a first-time GHSGT test-taker regardless of grade. Students in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade can count as first-time test-takers.  

Beginning with the 2011-12 school year, the EOCT replaces the GHSGT as an indicator for under Georgia’s waiver to adequate yearly progress, the new College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). |
| **Is the same cut score used for graduation and NCLB accountability purposes?** | GHSGT- For the 2010-11 school year, the cut scores for ELA and mathematics were based on Georgia’s Performance Standards and used for both student (diploma) and school accountability (AYP).  

EOCT – For the 2011-12 school year, the cut scores on the EOCT will be used for both student (pass the test) and school accountability (Georgia’s new College and Career Ready Performance Index). Again, students do not have to pass the EOCT to pass the course, but the EOCT grade-equivalent score is factored into the student’s final course grade as either 15% or 20% depending upon entry into high school. |
| **Considerations given to changing the cut score needed to pass the exam for graduation purposes in the past year** | None |
| **Alternate paths to graduation for students other than English language learners (ELLs) or students with disabilities** | The Georgia State Board Rule 160-1-3-.09 Waivers and Variances of High School Graduation Assessments defines variance and waiver as:  

“(f) Variance – a decision to grant a modification to all or part of the literal requirements of a rule in lieu of the standard application of the rule.  

(g) Waiver – a decision not to apply all or part of a rule to a person who is subject.”  

The state has a process for students seeking a waiver of the GHSGT. Any student experiencing a substantial hardship may request a waiver if either one or both of the following minimum eligibility requirements are met: a student who, due to disability, is rendered incapable of passing a section of the course. |
GHSGT, or 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 diploma from the local school district. See Board Rule 160-1-3-.09.

In addition, there is a variance process that allows a student to demonstrate academic proficiency on a GHSGT using other academic assessments. The Georgia State Board of Education (SBOE) may, by majority vote, grant a variance to students who have satisfied all of the following requirements:

1. The student has attempted the relevant section(s) of the high school graduation assessment four or more times without passing; and
2. The student has successfully completed a structured remedial class(es) after each unsuccessful attempt
3. The student has passed any three of the five high school graduation assessments
4. The student has obtained a scale score that falls within one standard error of measurement for passing the relevant section of the high school graduation assessment
5. The student has met the attendance requirements as described in SBOE rule
6. The student has a 90% or better attendance record, excluding excused absences, while enrolled in grades 9-12
7. The student has met the course unit requirements for graduation as described in the applicable SBOE high school graduation requirements rule; and
8. The student has met one of the following requirements:
   a) Where applicable, the student has successfully passed each of the end-of-course tests related to the sections of the high school graduation assessment in which the variance is being sought, or
   b) Where applicable, the student has attained the minimum required score on another qualified academic achievement test as defined by the SBOE and the Georgia Department of Education.

Beginning in 2011-12 in accordance with new graduation rule (see Board Rule 160-4-2-.48), students who are still required to take the GHSGT are allowed to substitute a passing grade on an EOCT in each of the four content areas for the equivalent content section of the GHSGT in the core subject areas of English language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Determination of eligibility to

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<tr>
<th>Determination of eligibility to</th>
<th>See eligibility response above.</th>
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| Number and percentage of students who used alternate paths in 2010-11 school year | Waivers 254*  
Variances 495  
*Beginning in 2010-11, a single waiver containing multiple subject requests was split into separate cases. In previous years, waivers containing multiple subject requests were counted as a single case. For this reason, results between years are not comparable. |
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<td>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners</td>
<td>None. However, English language learners may apply for the waiver or variance described if they meet any of the above criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percentage of ELL students using alternate paths in 2010-11 school year</td>
<td>These data are not collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities</td>
<td>None. Georgia does not have alternate paths to graduation (i.e., eligibility for a regular diploma) specifically for students with disabilities. However, students with disabilities may apply for the waiver described above. A special education diploma is also available for students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their individualized education program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Number and percentage of students with disabilities using alternate paths in 2010-11 school year | Waivers 167*  
Variances**  
*Beginning in 2010-11, a single waiver containing multiple subject requests was split into separate cases. In previous years, waivers containing multiple subject requests were counted as a single case. For this reason, results between years are not comparable. |
<p>| Access to initial and cumulative pass rates on high school exit exams | The report card and the GHSGT reports focus on the test results. The report card does report graduation rates that are affected by whether students are passing the GHSGT. In addition, the graduation rates may include students who received waivers. Cumulative pass rates are not reported annually. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reports of the spring administrations may be located in statewide scores for GHSGT here:</th>
<th><a href="http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GHSGT-Statewide-Scores.aspx">http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GHSGT-Statewide-Scores.aspx</a></th>
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<td>Report card information on GHSGT is located here:</td>
<td><a href="http://reportcard2011.gaosa.org/%5B(S(tw4lntjb5cloki45xmatpk55))/k12/reports.asp?ID=ALL:ALL&amp;TestKey=HS&amp;TestType=qcc">http://reportcard2011.gaosa.org/[(S(tw4lntjb5cloki45xmatpk55))/k12/reports.asp?ID=ALL:ALL&amp;TestKey=HS&amp;TestType=qcc</a>]</td>
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<td>Report card information on GHSWT is located here:</td>
<td><a href="http://reportcard2011.gaosa.org/%5B(S(tw4lntjb5cloki45xmatpk55))/k12/reports.asp?ID=ALL:ALL&amp;TestKey=HS_11&amp;TestType=qcc">http://reportcard2011.gaosa.org/[(S(tw4lntjb5cloki45xmatpk55))/k12/reports.asp?ID=ALL:ALL&amp;TestKey=HS_11&amp;TestType=qcc</a>]</td>
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<td>Report card information on graduation rates is located here:</td>
<td><a href="http://reportcard2011.gaosa.org/%5B(S(tw4lntjb5cloki45xmatpk55))/k12/Indicators.asp?ID=ALL:ALL&amp;TestKey=GradCred&amp;TestType=indicators">http://reportcard2011.gaosa.org/[(S(tw4lntjb5cloki45xmatpk55))/k12/Indicators.asp?ID=ALL:ALL&amp;TestKey=GradCred&amp;TestType=indicators</a>]</td>
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