

MASSACHUSETTS
Profile of State High School Exit Exam Policies

<i>State exit exam policy</i>	All students must pass Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests in English language arts and mathematics, and an end-of-course test in one of four subjects: biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering in order to receive a high school diploma.
Type of test	Comprehensive, standards-based (English language arts and mathematics) and end-of-course tests in biology, chemistry, introductory physics, and technology/engineering.
Purpose	The purpose of MCAS is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and improve classroom instruction • Evaluate student, school, and district performance according to Massachusetts curriculum framework content standards and MCAS performance levels • Determine eligibility for a competency determination (CD), which is the term used in Massachusetts law for the state standard students must meet in order to receive a high school diploma.
Major changes in exit exam policy since the 2009-10 school year for financial reasons	In May 2011, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to delay implementation of the U.S. History exit exam.
Major changes in exit exam policy since the 2009-10 school year for <i>other</i> reasons	In December 2010, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework in English language arts and literacy and the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework in mathematics. These new frameworks merge the common core standards with additional state standards.
Year first administered	1998
Year diplomas first withheld	2003
Subjects tested on exam	English language arts, mathematics, and four science and technology/engineering (STE) subjects. Students take the STE test that corresponds to the course they have completed.

Subjects required for graduation	English language arts, mathematics, and an end-of-course test in biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering.
Grade exam first administered	Grade 10 for ELA and mathematics. Students may take one of the four end-of-course science and technology/engineering tests in grade 9, but must take an STE test by the end of grade 10.
Grade(s) exam aligned to	Grade 10/high school standards
Number of retakes allowed <i>before</i> the end of grade 12	<p>Four retest opportunities are available for ELA and mathematics (six for students who are retained in grade 10, 11, or 12)</p> <p>In STE, testing opportunities are offered in February (biology only) and spring (all four content areas – biology, chemistry, introductory physics, and technology/engineering). Depending on when a student first took the test (i.e., grade 9 or 10) and the choice of course sequence, students have between two and six additional testing opportunities in STE.</p>
Number of retakes allowed <i>after</i> grade 12	A student who has failed the exit exam but has met all local graduation requirements may retake the exit exam an unlimited number of times after grade 12. A student who has passed the retest and met all local requirements may receive a high school diploma.
Is the exit exam used for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability purposes?	Yes. Results from students taking grade 10 MCAS tests in ELA and mathematics are used to fulfill NCLB accountability requirements governing participation, performance, and improvement for the purpose of rendering Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations for schools and districts. (Science and technology/engineering results are currently not factored into AYP determinations.)
Is the same cut score used for graduation and NCLB accountability purposes?	No. NCLB requires all students to attain grade-level proficiency in ELA and mathematics by the 2013-14 school year, which is equivalent to a scaled score of 240 or higher. Students must complete the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan if they do not earn a scaled score of at least 240.
Considerations given to changing the cut score	No

<p>needed to pass the exam for graduation purposes in the past year</p>	
<p>Alternate paths to graduation for students other than English language learners (ELLs) or students with disabilities</p>	<p>The state provides the following alternate paths to graduation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCAS Performance Appeals (portfolio, cohort, and transcript) • The MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) Competency Portfolio
<p>Determination of eligibility to pursue these alternate paths to graduation</p>	<p>In order for an appeal to be granted, the student must demonstrate through course work that he or she meets or exceeds the ELA, mathematics, and STE passing standard of 220 on high school MCAS tests.</p> <p>To qualify for a performance appeal, a student must have met all of the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the student has taken the grade 10 MCAS test or retest in the subject area of the appeal at least three times (ELA and mathematics) • Evidence that the student has taken at least one STE test (biology, chemistry, introductory physics, or technology/engineering) and is currently enrolled in an STE class or has completed grade 12 • Evidence that the student has participated in the MCAS-Alt in the subject area of the appeal at least twice; once for STE • Evidence that the student has maintained at least a 95% attendance level during the school year prior to and during the year of the appeal • Evidence that the student has participated in school-sponsored tutoring or other academic support services in the content area of the appeal.
<p>Number and percentage of students who used alternate paths in 2010-11 school year</p>	<p>In 2010-11, 750 appeals were submitted; 562 appeals were granted; 385 appeals were submitted for students with disabilities; 270 appeals were granted.</p> <p>(Note: The above figures are for grades 10-12. The numbers are not broken down by grade.)</p>
<p>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners</p>	<p>No, but English language learners (ELLs) may use the MCAS performance appeals process available for general education students.</p> <p>Any student who currently is limited English proficient or has been identified as LEP in the</p>

	<p>past may use an authorized bilingual word-to-word dictionary on all MCAS tests. In addition, ELLs may use authorized bilingual glossaries, which are available in some languages, for mathematics and science tests.</p>
<p>Number and percentage of ELL students using alternate paths in 2010-11 school year</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
<p>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities</p>	<p>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking the standard MCAS test with accommodations • Participating in the MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) <p>Accommodations may be provided to students with disabilities who have an IEP or 504 plan. A list of more than 30 accommodations is available in <i>Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS</i> at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/participation/sped.doc.</p> <p>A school can submit an MCAS Alternate Assessment (MCAS-Alt) Competency Portfolio for a student with a disability. In order to become eligible for a high school diploma through participation in the MCAS-Alt, the student’s portfolio must include evidence that demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and skills at grade-level expectations for a student in grade 10 • A high degree of accurate and independent performance in the work samples that address all required learning standards and strands in the subject being assessed <p>Guidelines for compiling and submitting MCAS-Alt portfolios to meet the state’s competency determination are available in the <i>Educator’s Manual for the MCAS-Alt</i> at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/edmanual.doc.</p> <p>In addition, a student with a disability may have a performance appeal filed on his or her behalf if he or she meets eligibility requirements. For further information, see http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals.</p>
<p>Number and percentage of students with</p>	<p>43 students with disabilities submitted MCAS-Alt portfolios in an attempt to earn a</p>

disabilities using alternate paths in 2010-11 school year	competency determination. 14 met the CD requirement in one or more areas. Note that these figures are for students in grades 10-12 and beyond.
Is the exit exam used by postsecondary institutions for undergraduate admission purposes?	No
Is the exit exam used by postsecondary institutions for placement purposes?	No
Are students who meet a certain standard on the state exit exam granted exemptions on college placement exams?	No
Can students receive any form of postsecondary education course credit for their performance on the exit exam?	No
Access to initial and cumulative pass rates on high school exit exams	www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/results.html (2011) http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/results.html?yr=2010 (2010)
State participation in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)	Massachusetts has adopted the CCSS in both English language arts and math.
CCSS testing consortia membership	Massachusetts is a governing state in the PARCC consortium.
Impact of adoption of the CCSS on high school exit exam policies	We do not anticipate a change.
Plans to replace or realign current exit exam in English language arts with a new assessment aligned to the CCSS	2012-13 – near full implementation of CCSS 2013-14 – full implementation of CCSS

<p>Plans to replace or realign current exit exam in math with a new assessment aligned to the CCSS</p>	<p>The transition plan for the grade 10 MCAS Mathematics test is under development and will be released as soon as it is completed.</p>
<p>Plans to maintain current exit exams in subjects other than English language arts and math once the Common Core State Standards are fully implemented</p>	<p>Exit exams in STE will still be required.</p>
<p>Will changes in state exit exams mentioned above make the exams more rigorous, less rigorous, or about the same?</p>	<p>The intention is for a more rigorous assessment that is aligned to the Common Core standards in ELA and Mathematics.</p>
<p>Preparation for students and teachers to transition to new exam</p>	<p>The Department is conducting a number of workshops on the common core standards and inviting staff from all districts to attend. We are working intensively with approximately 250 K-12 teachers from Race To The Top districts in the development of curriculum units and performance assessments to reflect the rigor of the common core standards.</p> <p>The Department has posted initial assessment transition plans on the Department’s Web site at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/transition/. The Department will continue to update them throughout the transition period. Department staff will further inform the field of plans to transition to the Common Core and PARCC assessments through workshops, meetings, and professional development activities.</p> <p>Through Race to the Top state initiatives, the Department is creating a teaching and learning system that will include online formative and interim assessments, and curriculum model units with curriculum-embedded performance assessments, which will prepare teachers and students for the assessments aligned to the Common Core state standards and the new PARCC assessment..</p>