

Virginia
Standards of Learning (SOL) End-of-Course Exams

Part I: Policy Trends

Type of test	End-of-course
Purpose	<p>The purpose of the end-of-course assessments is to measure the achievement of students on the Standards of Learning adopted by the Virginia Board of Education for specific high school courses, and to ensure that students graduating from Virginia schools have attained certain knowledge and skills. In Virginia, students must acquire a certain number of verified credits to earn a standard or advanced studies diploma. Students who pass a class and associated SOL end-of-course test are said to have earned a “verified” credit. For more specific information on graduation requirements and diploma options, visit:</p> <p>http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/soa.pdf http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/index.shtml</p> <p>In addition, end-of-course assessments in reading, mathematics, and science are used to meet the assessment and accountability requirements of NCLB.</p>
Status of state’s decision regarding the Common Core State Standards and impact of that decision on exit exam policies	The state has decided NOT to adopt either set of Common Core State Standards.
Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?	No
Year first administered	1998
Year diplomas first withheld	2004
Subjects tested	English: reading, English: writing, Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, biology, earth science, chemistry, world history and geography to 1500 A.D., world history and geography: 1500 A.D. to the present, Virginia and United States History, and world geography

Types of questions	Multiple-choice, plus a writing prompt on the English: writing test
Grade first administered	Varies. Tests are administered whenever students complete the associated course. For example, a student who takes Algebra I in middle school would take the Algebra I end-of-course test at that time.
Grade(s) exam aligned to	The SOL tests are aligned to content standards for specific tested courses.
Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12	At least three retake opportunities are available each year. In addition, students who fail the exam with a score of 375-399 do not need to wait for the next regularly scheduled retest but may retake the test immediately using an alternate form (expedited retake policy). For additional information on the expedited retake policy, visit http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/soa-guidance-provisions.pdf
Retakes after grade 12	Students who have completed all graduation requirements except passing the exit exam may continue to retake the exams as many times as they are offered per test administration, as long as they are no older than 20 for general education students, and 21 for students with disabilities and English language learners.
Does the state have reciprocity with other states?	<p>Yes. Virginia accepts content-based high school end-of-course tests administered as a part of another state's accountability system for the purpose of awarding verified credit to students who transfer to Virginia public schools. When students transfer to a Virginia public school from a state that requires such high school end-of-course tests, the local school district may automatically accept the student's passing score on the test and the corresponding course for the purposes of awarding verified credit.</p> <p>When students transfer to a Virginia public school from a state that requires a comprehensive subject area examination as a prerequisite for graduation from high school, the Virginia Department of Education, at the request of the local district superintendent, will review the examination to determine its suitability for use to award verified credit. In order for a test to be deemed suitable for use, the test must be approved as part of another state's accountability system and approved through</p>

the federal standards and assessment peer review process.

More information is available at

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/soa.pdf>

Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind?

Scores from the SOL end-of-course tests in English: reading, Algebra I, geometry, and Algebra II are used to meet the testing requirements of NCLB. Graduation rate is used for NCLB purposes as the other academic indicator for current NCLB ratings.

Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?

Yes

Evaluations of the state exit exam

In fall 2006, staff from the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University conducted an external alignment study of Virginia's mathematics and reading assessments. As a result of a recent change to the state Web site this document is no longer posted.

In fall 2008 an alignment study of Virginia's science assessments was conducted.

State test contractor

Pearson Educational Measurement, with Education Testing Service (ETS) as the subcontractor for test development, is responsible for the entire Virginia testing program.

Does the state provide students with alternate paths to graduation?

The state does not have a process for students to request a waiver or appeal the exit exams; however, students may earn verified credits by taking substitute tests. The substitute tests include the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, SAT II, TOEFL, APIEL, Cambridge International Examination, ACT, and CLEP tests. More information is available at

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/substitute_tests/substitute_tests_verified_credit.pdf

Typically, less than 1% of end-of-course tests are substitute tests.

Students who do not meet the requirements for a standard diploma, advanced diploma, or a modified standard diploma may receive a certificate of program completion, a general achievement diploma (GAD), or earn a GED.

All students are expected to demonstrate attainment of the

content of a course in order to earn a verified credit for graduation.

For the 2008-09 school year, the following percentages of students received alternate types of graduation credentials:

Advanced Diploma: 49.54%

Certificate of Completion: .44%

GED: 1%

GED/ISAEP: 2.78%

Modified Standard Diploma: 2.23%

Special Diploma: 2.8%

Standard Diploma: 41.21%

(Data retrieved from state Web site at

<https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/> on July 13, 2010)

Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners

No. Students who do not meet the requirements for a standard diploma, advanced diploma, or a modified standard diploma may receive a certificate of program completion, a general achievement diploma, or earn a GED.

There are, however, accommodations for English language learners taking the exit exams. For more information visit http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/participation/lep_guidelines.pdf

In the 2008-09 school year, 68 students (2.3% of total English language learner graduates) earned a Certificate of Program Completion.

In the 2009-10 school year, 48 students (1.6% of total English language learner graduates) earned a Certificate of Program Completion.

Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities

Students with disabilities who do not meet the requirements for a standard or advanced diploma but meet the credit and literacy and numeracy requirements established by the state board of education may receive a modified standard diploma.

Students with disabilities who do not meet the requirements for other diplomas but have completed the requirements of their individualized education program (IEP) may receive a special diploma.

Accommodations are available for students with disabilities taking the exit exam. For more information visit:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/participation/participation_va_accountability_system.pdf

In the 2008-09 school year, 1,953 students with disabilities (18.7% of total students with disabilities graduates) earned a Modified Standard Diploma; 2, 454 students with disabilities (23.5% of total students with disabilities graduates) earned a Special Diploma.

In the 2009-10 school year, 1,662 students with disabilities (17.6% of total students with disabilities graduates) earned a Modified Standard Diploma; 2, 451 students with disabilities (25.9% of total students with disabilities graduates) earned a Special Diploma.

Who makes decisions on whether a student is eligible to use alternate paths?

Decisions as to what type of diploma a student with disabilities will pursue are made by the IEP team.

How are students identified as eligible for alternate paths to graduate?

Not applicable. Local school districts determine if a student with a disability has met the credit and testing requirements for a modified standard diploma.

When calculating the graduation rate for adequate yearly progress (AYP) purposes, does the state count students taking alternate paths together with graduates who passed the high school exit exams?

No. Under the rules provided by USED, students with disabilities who earn a modified standard diploma are counted as non-graduates in calculating the graduation rate.

How many full-time equivalent staff in the state department of education are involved in implementing alternate paths?

None

Types of assistance the state provides for 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, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance;

- Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and grants to districts;
- Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and grants to districts;
- Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and grants to districts;
- Districts improve in the formative uses of assessment, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency and train-the-trainer workshops;
- Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency.

The state also provides released test items from prior years and sample lesson plans that may be used by teachers.

The state provides:

- 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

Types of assistance or remediation the state provides for all districts to help students who have failed to pass the exit exam

Does the state provide funding for remediation?

Yes. General funds support summer remedial programs and other programs of intervention, prevention, and remediation. Based on the percentage of students eligible for the federal free lunch program, one hour of additional instruction per day with a pupil-teacher ratio range of 18:1 to 10:1, depending upon a school division's combined failure rate on the English and math SOLs, is included in remedial education payments.

Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?

Yes. The Code of Virginia at § [22.1-253.13:1](#). Standard 1. Instructional programs supporting the Standards of Learning and other educational objectives. C. states:

“Local school boards shall also develop and implement programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation for students who are educationally at risk including, but not limited to, those who fail to achieve a passing score on any Standards of Learning assessment in grades three through eight or who fail an end-of-course test required for the award of a verified unit of credit. Such programs shall include components that are research-based.”

Are students required to participate in remediation?

Yes. The Code of Virginia at § [22.1-253.13:1](#). Standard 1. Instructional programs supporting the Standards of Learning and other educational objectives. C. states:

“Any student who achieves a passing score on one or more, but not all, of the Standards of Learning assessments for the relevant grade level in grades three through eight may be required to attend a remediation program.

Any student who fails to achieve a passing score on all of the Standards of Learning assessments for the relevant grade level in grades three through eight or who fails an end-of-course test required for the award of a verified unit of credit shall be required to attend a remediation program or to participate in another form of remediation. Division superintendents shall require such students to take special programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation, which may include attendance in public summer school programs, in accordance with clause (ii) of subsection A of § [22.1-254](#) and § [22.1-254.01](#).”

Part II: Student Performance**Initial pass rates, 2008-09**

Percentage of Students Passing Exit Exam on First Attempt, 2008-09							
Student Group	English: Reading	English: Writing	Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry	Earth Science	
All students	95%	92%	94%	91%	87%	87%	
White	97%	95%	95%	93%	92%	93%	
African American	91%	86%	90%	84%	75%	76%	
Latino	93%	88%	90%	86%	82%	79%	
Asian	97%	95%	98%	96%	94%	92%	
Native American	96%	95%	95%	91%	90%	92%	
English language learners	88%	80%	91%	88%	80%	69%	
Migrant	72%	58%	85%	83%	86%	58%	
Students with disabilities	79%	68%	79%	79%	66%	65%	
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	90%	85%	89%	85%	78%	76%	
Passing score (scale of 0-600)	400	400	400	400	400	400	
<i>(continued)</i>							
Student Group	Biology	Chemistry	World History I	World History II	VA and US History	World Geography	All
All students	88%	93%	93%	93%	95%	86%	
White	94%	95%	96%	96%	97%	91%	

African American	78%	87%	85%	87%	90%	74%	
Latino	78%	83%	89%	87%	92%	81%	
Asian	93%	95%	97%	97%	97%	95%	
Native American	90%	92%	96%	92%	96%	86%	
English language learners	72%	80%	88%	86%	87%	72%	
Migrant	72%	67%	83%	75%	82%	<	
Students with disabilities	64%	74%	77%	77%	81%	59%	
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	77%	85%	85%	85%	89%	75%	
Passing score (scale of 0-600)	400	400	400	400	400	400	

Note: Data retrieved from state Web site at <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/> on July 13, 2010.

Denominator used when calculating these rates: Number of students tested

Initial pass rates, 2009-10

Percentage of Students Passing Exit Exam on First Attempt, 2009-10							
Student Group	English: Reading	English: Writing	Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry	Earth Science	
All students	94%	92%	94%	91%	88%	88%	
White	96%	95%	96%	93%	93%	94%	
African American	89%	86%	90%	86%	76%	77%	
Latino	90%	87%	92%	87%	81%	82%	
Asian	96%	96%	98%	96%	94%	92%	
Native American	96%	95%	96%	91%	91%	91%	
English language learners	84%	81%	92%	86%	79%	72%	
Migrant	82%	69%	89%	92%	92%	73%	
Students with disabilities	75%	67%	81%	78%	67%	66%	
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	88%	85%	90%	86%	79%	78%	
Passing score (scale of 0-600)	400	400	400	400	400	400	
<i>(continued)</i>							
Student Group	Biology	Chemistry	World History I	World History II	VA and US History	World Geography	All
All students	89%	93%	93%	92%	95%	86%	
White	94%	96%	96%	95%	97%	91%	
African American	80%	88%	86%	83%	90%	75%	
Latino	80%	85%	90%	86%	91%	81%	
Asian	94%	95%	98%	97%	97%	92%	
Native American	95%	92%	95%	94%	96%	85%	
English language learners	76%	83%	89%	84%	87%	70%	
Migrant	72%	85%	90%	83%	91%	57%	
Students with disabilities	66%	77%	79%	73%	81%	60%	
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	80%	87%	87%	83%	89%	76%	
Passing score (scale of 0-600)	400	400	400	400	400	400	

Note: Data provided by the state department of education and retrieved from:

<https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/>

Denominator used when calculating these rates: Number of students tested

State Graduation Rates		
Student Group	2008-09	2009-10
All students	81%	86%
White	85%	89%
African American	73%	79%
Latino	71%	76%
Asian	NA	94%
Native American	NA	82%
English language learners	65%	76%
Migrant	NA	68%
Students with disabilities	47%	83%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	71%	78%

Note: Data retrieved from state Web site at <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/> on July 13, 2010 and from the accountability workbook at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/graduation_completion/cohort_reports/indexs.html on November 16, 2010.

Current state graduation rate calculation formula for AYP purposes

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/applications/consolidated/consolidated_app_account_wkbk/accountability_workbook.pdf