

Kentucky's High School End-of-Course Assessments: Answers to Parents' Most Frequently Asked Questions

Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), enacted in the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly, requires a new public school assessment program beginning in the 2011-12 school year. The legislation allowed, with approval by the Kentucky Board of Education, an end-of-course (EOC) assessment program at the high school level.

Q: What are end-of-course assessments?

A: End-of-course assessments, or EOCs, are simply tests that are given to students when they complete a course to assess their knowledge of important course concepts. They are similar to a final exam, except that they are created and scored by an outside testing company, ensuring that the tests are both rigorous and aligned with state and national college readiness standards.

Q: What testing company is Kentucky using as the EOC provider?

A: ACT, Inc. has been awarded the contract to provide EOC assessments for the 2011-2012 school year. The name of the EOC program is ACT *QualityCore*®. This program has been developed based on research in high-performing classrooms that focus on the essential standards for college and career readiness.

Q: Do students have to take EOC assessments at the end of every high school course? If not, which courses are assessed with EOCs?

A: No. Currently, only four courses will be assessed through EOCs during the 2011-2012 school year. These courses are English II, Algebra II, Biology and U.S. History. These courses were chosen because they are part of state graduation requirements for all students. In future years, Kentucky is considering adding EOC assessments for other courses, but no final decisions have been made at this time about which additional courses or how many total courses will be assessed.

Q: How often do students have to take an EOC assessment?

A: If a student is enrolled in one of the 4 EOC assessed courses, typically they will take the EOC assessment during the last few weeks of their enrollment in the course. For students who are enrolled in online or other alternative credit-recovery programs, they will work with their instructor to schedule the EOC as soon as possible following completion of the course work.

Q: What is the format of the test?

A: There are three sections to each test: 2 multiple-choice sections and 1 written constructed-response section. Each section is 45 minutes in length.

Q: Are the tests taken on a computer or are they paper-pencil?

A: The choice is up to each school. The multiple choice sections can be taken either with a computer or paper-pencil. Each school is deciding whether to test with computer or paper-pencil based on their available resources and timelines. The constructed-response section must be taken on paper; there are no computer versions of the written test sections.

Q: Will the EOC assessment take the place of a final exam?

A: It could. This decision is ultimately up to the teacher and school. It is possible that teachers may choose to give a separate final exam in addition to the EOC to ensure that students demonstrate mastery of the entire course content, which may go above and beyond what is assessed by the EOCs.

Q: Will the material assessed on the EOC be taught in the course?

A: Yes. ACT *QualityCore*® provides instructional resources, standards documents and curriculum materials to all Kentucky teachers. Content specialists in the Fayette County school district have been working with teachers on curriculum development to ensure that the EOC standards are incorporated in the lessons and units of study for the course.

Q: If a student is repeating a course, does he/she have to take the EOC assessment?

A: Yes. Any student enrolled in one of the 4 EOC courses must take the EOC assessment at the end of the course.

Q: If a student withdraws before completing the course, does he/she have to take the EOC assessment?

A: It depends on how much of the course the student has completed. Kentucky requires that any student who completes 55% or more of the course must take the EOC assessment.

Q: If a student has an IEP, 504 Plan, or PSP that includes testing accommodations, will these accommodations be permitted for the EOC assessment?

A: Yes. Testing accommodations that are listed on the student's plan and are consistent with Kentucky state regulations are allowable on the EOC assessments as long as the student has been using the accommodations regularly throughout the year.

Q: Will the EOC score count in the final course grade? How much will it count?

A: Each school's Site-Based Decision Making Council makes this decision. Each school will share the final decision with parents and students. Typically, the EOC assessment will count anywhere from 10% to 20% of the final course grade.

Q: If a student does not pass the EOC assessment, does this mean he/she will fail the course?

A: Not necessarily, but it is a possibility. Since the EOC score counts for only a portion of the student's final grade, they may do poorly on the EOC assessment and still earn a passing grade for the course. The EOC score may also help boost a low grade if the student performs extremely well on the EOC assessment.

Q: If a student does not score well on the EOC assessment, can he/she retake it for a better grade?

A: No. Since this is a purchased assessment that is part of our state assessment and accountability system, the exam can only be taken one time per student per course. However, each school and teacher may allow the student to take a different but comparable exam, redo other incomplete or incorrect course work, or complete additional assignments to improve the grade. These decisions must follow existing school policies governing make-up work and tests.

Q: If a student is absent on the day of a scheduled EOC assessment, will he/she be allowed to make up the test?

A: Yes. Schools schedule a window of time to complete the EOC assessments, including time for make up tests. The state of Kentucky requires that all students who are enrolled in an EOC course take the EOC assessment, so if the student is absent, the school's Building Assessment Coordinator will contact the student about scheduling a time to make up the missed assessment.

Q: When will the schedule for the EOC assessments be posted?

A: Each school determines their own schedule for administering the EOC assessments. Each school will post and communicate their EOC schedule once the schedule has been finalized. Although there are opportunities for students to complete the EOC assessment throughout the year if they finish coursework early through alternative means, most students in a traditional course can expect to take the test in April or early May. Please contact your child's teacher or the school's Building Assessment Coordinator for specific information about the EOC testing schedule.

Q: Will students still take the state KCCT or CATS tests in the spring like they have in the past?

A: No. The EOC assessments replace the former KCCT tests. Students in 10th and 11th grades will also be required to take an on-demand writing test at the end of the school year. These on-demand writing tests, the ACT and PLAN tests, and the EOC assessments are the tests that comprise the new state testing requirements for high schoolers.

The following links provide additional information about End of Course assessments.

<http://www.act.org/qualitycore/>

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Testing+and+Reporting+/District+Support/End-of-Course+Information/>

If you have additional questions about End of Course assessments, please contact your child's teacher, the Building Assessment Coordinator at your child's school, or the Fayette County Office of Student Assessment at (859)381-4761.