

**State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™)
Questions and Answers (Q&As)
Updated March 9, 2012**

[As policies are finalized, these Q&As will be updated. Updates are marked with .]

Note that the Commissioner of Education has deferred the implementation of the 15% grading requirement for STAAR EOC assessments for the 2011–2012 school year.

1. What is STAAR?

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) program beginning in spring 2012. The STAAR program at grades 3–8 will assess the same grades and subjects as are assessed on TAKS. For high school, general subject-area TAKS tests will be replaced with twelve STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments.

2. Why is there a new assessment program for Texas students?

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Texas educators, is developing a new assessment system in response to requirements set forth by the 80th and 81st Texas legislatures. This new system will focus on increasing postsecondary readiness of graduating high school students and helping to ensure that Texas students are competitive with other students both nationally and internationally.

3. In what grades, subjects, and courses will students be assessed under the new STAAR program?

At grades 3–8, students will be tested in mathematics and reading. Students will also be tested in writing at grades 4 and 7, science at grades 5 and 8, and social studies at grade 8. STAAR EOC assessments will be available for Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history.

4. In general, how will the STAAR assessment program be different from the TAKS assessment program?

The most significant changes to the assessment program include

- increasing the rigor of both the assessments and the performance standards for all grades, subjects, and courses;
- changing high school assessments from grade-based to course-based assessments;
- establishing postsecondary-readiness performance standards for Algebra II and English III; and
- using empirical validation studies as part of the standard-setting process to ensure that performance standards are linked from grade to grade and are also linked to external evidence of postsecondary readiness.

5. What are the most significant differences between the STAAR assessments and the TAKS assessments?

- The rigor of items has been increased by assessing skills at a greater depth and level of cognitive complexity. In this way the tests will be better able to measure a greater range of student achievement and establish stronger links to postsecondary readiness.

- The total number of test items for the STAAR assessments has been increased for most grades, subjects, and courses.
- A four-hour time limit has been established for STAAR assessments, as opposed to TAKS, which was untimed.
- STAAR assessments in mathematics and reading will be linked from grade to grade as well as to postsecondary-readiness standards for the Algebra II and English III assessments.
- STAAR assessments have been designed to focus on “readiness” standards, which are defined as those Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) student expectations that are not only essential for success in the current grade or course but also important for preparedness in the next grade or course. By focusing on the student expectations that are most critical to assess, STAAR will better measure the academic performance of students as they progress from elementary to middle school to high school.
- STAAR EOC assessments will differ from the current TAKS high school assessments in that each STAAR EOC assessment will cover only the content from a particular course (e.g., Algebra I will assess only Algebra I content) rather than content from multiple courses (e.g., Algebra I and grade 8 mathematics were assessed on the TAKS grade 9 mathematics tests).
- STAAR writing assessments at grades 4 and 7 will be extended to two days.
- STAAR EOC assessments for English I, II, and III will be administered over two days, with the writing component on day one and the reading component on day two.
- The test designs for STAAR grades 4 and 7 writing and STAAR English I, II, and III will require students to write two essays addressing different purposes for writing rather than one longer personal essay, which TAKS required.
- In reading assessments for STAAR, greater emphasis will be given to critical analysis rather than literal understanding. The test designs for English I, II, and III will allow for the reading and writing components to be equated and scaled separately so that reading and writing scores can be reported separately. This means that a student will need to retake only the portion of the STAAR English I, II, or III assessment (reading or writing) that he or she did not pass.
- Most STAAR mathematics and science assessments will have an increased number of open-ended (griddable) items to allow students the opportunity to derive an answer independently without being influenced by the answer choices provided with the questions.
- STAAR grade 3 assessments will have separate answer documents instead of scorable test booklets.

6. How will student performance be described on STAAR?

There will be two cut scores, which will identify three performance categories. For the general STAAR assessments, STAAR Modified, and STAAR L, the labels for the performance categories are

- Level III: Advanced Academic Performance
- Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance
- Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

For the STAAR Alternate assessments, the performance labels are

- Level III: Accomplished Academic Performance
- Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance
- Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance

7. What is the timeline for establishing student performance standards for the STAAR program?

The timeline for standard-setting activities will differ for STAAR 3–8 and STAAR EOC because of the timing of available assessment data and different legislative requirements. For STAAR EOC, operational assessment data are available from the spring 2011 administrations. Therefore, performance standards will be set in February 2012, prior to the spring administrations. However, operational assessment data for STAAR 3–8 will not be available until after the spring 2012 administrations; for this reason performance standards will be set in October 2012.

Legislation requires a system of performance standards that are linked from grade to grade starting with postsecondary-readiness performance standards down through grade 3. Therefore, STAAR EOC performance standards must be established before standards for STAAR 3–8 can be set. Additionally, districts must be provided with test scores on STAAR EOC assessments so that they can be used as 15% of the students' final course grades for the 2011–2012 school year.

8. What are the Student Success Initiative (SSI) requirements for the 2011–2012 school year?

Because there will be no performance standards in place for grades 3–8 in the 2011–2012 school year, students cannot be held subject to SSI for that year. Therefore, there are no SSI requirements for the 2011–2012 school year.

9. Will there be SSI retest opportunities for grades 5 and 8 reading and mathematics in the 2011–2012 school year?

SSI retest opportunities will not be offered in May or June of 2012 because performance standards for STAAR 3–8 will not be set until October 2012. For the 2011–2012 school year, districts will make promotion/retention decisions based on the same academic information (e.g., the recommendation of the student's teacher and the student's grade in the subject) used to make these decisions in non-SSI grades. As stated in TEC §28.021(a), "a student may be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency of the subject matter of the course or grade level."

10. Which students will be required to take the STAAR EOC assessments?

Students first enrolled in grade 9 or below in the 2011–2012 school year will be required to take the STAAR EOC assessments for courses in which they're enrolled as part of their graduation requirements and will no longer take TAKS. Students enrolled in grade 10 or above in the 2011–2012 school year or who are repeating grade 9 in the 2011–2012 school year will graduate under TAKS requirements and do not have the option of taking STAAR assessments. These students will only take STAAR EOC assessments if their campus has been assigned to participate in the mandatory testing activities.

 11. When is it appropriate for students to take a STAAR EOC assessment?

For students who have STAAR as part of their graduation requirement (first enrolled in grade 9 or below in the 2011–2012 school year), they should take a STAAR EOC assessment during the spring, summer, or fall administration as they are completing the course. Most students will have received instruction in an entire course by the end of the school year so would participate in the spring administration. However, if by the end of the school year students have received instruction in only part of the course (the first half or the second half), then they would not take the STAAR EOC assessment in the spring since they have not received instruction in the entire course. When students complete the course (possibly in the summer or the next fall), they should take the test.

12. What are the testing requirements for a student who first enters grade 9 in the 2011–2012 school year but is reclassified to grade 10 for the spring semester?

TEC §39.025 specifies that STAAR EOC assessments be used as the graduation requirement starting with students first enrolled in grade 9 in the 2011–2012 school year. Regardless of how a student is classified at the end of the year or when he or she is expected to graduate, if the student is first enrolled in grade 9 in the 2011–2012 school year, then STAAR is his or her graduation requirement. If a student is on an accelerated path toward graduation, it is likely that he or she will have already earned some high school credits for graduation and therefore may have fewer assessments to take to meet graduation requirements.

13. What are the testing requirements for students who repeat grade 9 in the 2011–2012 school year?

Repeating grade 9 students in the 2011–2012 school year have TAKS as their graduation requirement. These students will not take the TAKS grade 9 assessments, as these tests are no longer available. However, districts may choose to administer a released TAKS test or a locally developed test to students. Students are eligible to take the TAKS grade 10 assessments as soon as they are reclassified as 10th graders.

 **14. How should a school district determine whether a transfer student from out-of-country is a first-time ninth grader in order to determine whether the student will graduate under the TAKS or STAAR program?**

As with transfer students from other states or Texas nonpublic schools, the school district must ensure that the student's records or transcripts are evaluated and that the student is placed promptly in appropriate classes. The district may use a variety of methods to verify the content of courses for which a transfer student previously earned credit. Each local school district has the authority to determine classification of students as ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth graders based on course credits earned and accepted by the district. A student has TAKS as his or her graduation requirement if he or she would have met requirements to be classified as a ninth grader in a previous school year (had the student been enrolled in a Texas public school). A student has STAAR as his or her graduation requirement if he or she meets requirements to be a ninth grader or below in the 2011–2012 school year and would not have met requirements to be a ninth grader previously.

If a student enrolls shortly before testing and time constraints prevent the school from obtaining or evaluating all necessary information for making the TAKS versus STAAR decision, appropriate campus personnel will need to make the best decision possible using the information they have been able to gather. Documentation of the effort made to obtain complete information and the justification for the assessment decision should be maintained locally. If it becomes clear that the student was tested in error once complete records and transcripts are evaluated, the student's individual results (Confidential Student Report and Confidential Student Label) may be discarded, and the student may take the correct assessment during the next test administration. Documentation of the reason for the change in the graduation requirement (TAKS versus STAAR) should be maintained locally.

Cohort assignment for graduation rate purposes is determined by the grade level submitted by the district in PEIMS submission 3. More detailed information about the graduation cohort assignment of these students may be found in the technical documentation associated with the processing of the longitudinal completion, graduation, and dropout rates, which is available at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/acctres/dropcomp_index.html#documentation.

15. What are the testing requirements for students in grades 3–8 who are also enrolled in a high school course with a STAAR EOC assessment?

Students in grades 3–8 who are also enrolled in a high school course will take that STAAR EOC assessment as required for graduation. Local district policies will determine whether these students are required to take the corresponding STAAR grade-level assessment; however, they must take all other STAAR grade-level assessments. For example, a grade 8 student enrolled in Algebra I will take STAAR grade 8 reading, science, and social studies as well as STAAR Algebra I. Local school district policy will determine whether this grade 8 student will also take the STAAR grade 8 mathematics assessment.

Students in grades 5 and 8 may not be denied promotion based on unsatisfactory performance on STAAR EOC assessments.

Note that this information reflects the language in House Bill 2135, which was passed by the 82nd Legislature, and is different from what was indicated in the April 22, 2011, district communication regarding the implementation of STAAR. Districts should keep in mind that decisions have not yet been made about how test scores for these students will be used in state or federal accountability.

16. What are the testing requirements for students in grades 3–8 who are receiving instruction in subjects above their enrolled grade?

These students will be required to take the STAAR assessment for the subject in which they are receiving instruction if the content covers the entire curriculum for that subject. For example, a student in grade 5 who is receiving instruction in grade 6 mathematics would take STAAR grade 5 reading and science but grade 6 mathematics if the advanced subject matter he or she is being taught covers all the TEKS required for grade 6 mathematics.

Students in grades 5 and 8 may not be denied promotion based on unsatisfactory performance on STAAR assessments above their enrolled grade level.

Districts should keep in mind that decisions have not yet been made about how test scores for these students will be used in state or federal accountability.

17. If a student is enrolled in middle school and concurrently receiving instruction in a middle school course and a corresponding high school course, is the student required to take both of the related tests?

No. A student in grades 3–8 who is concurrently receiving instruction in grade-level curriculum and high school curriculum in the same content area will take the related STAAR EOC assessment as required for graduation. Local district policies will determine whether the student is required to take the corresponding grade-level assessment. For example, a grade 8 student concurrently receiving instruction in grade 8 mathematics and Algebra I will take STAAR Algebra I in addition to STAAR grade 8 reading, science, and social studies. Local school district policy will determine whether the student will also take STAAR grade 8 mathematics.

Note that this information reflects the language in House Bill 2135, which was passed by the 82nd Legislature, and is different from what was indicated in the April 22, 2011, district communication regarding the implementation of STAAR. Districts should keep in mind that decisions have not yet been made about how test scores for these students will be used in state or federal accountability.

18. If a student is in an accelerated program and is concurrently receiving instruction in the entire curriculum for multiple grade levels in the same content area, what are the assessment requirements for this student?

A student in grades 3–8 who is concurrently receiving instruction in the entire curriculum for multiple grade levels in the same content area will take the higher-level STAAR assessment. Local

district policies will determine whether the student is required to take the lower-level assessment. For example, a grade 7 student concurrently receiving instruction in all of the TEKS for grade 7 and 8 mathematics will take STAAR grade 8 mathematics in addition to grade 7 reading and writing. Local school district policy will determine whether the student will also take STAAR grade 7 mathematics.

Note that this information reflects the language in House Bill 2135, which was passed by the 82nd Legislature, and is different from what was indicated in the April 22, 2011, district communication regarding the implementation of STAAR. Districts should keep in mind that decisions have not yet been made about how test scores for these students will be used in state or federal accountability.

19. What are the testing requirements for a student in grades 3–8 who is receiving instruction above his or her enrolled grade in a subject that does not have annual statewide assessments?

A student in grades 3–8 who is receiving accelerated instruction (in a higher grade level or a high school course) in writing, social studies, or science will take the enrolled grade-level assessment if one exists unless they are taking a higher-level assessment.

For example, a grade 7 student who is receiving instruction in all of the TEKS for English I will take STAAR grade 7 mathematics as well as the reading and writing components of STAAR English I. Local school district policy will determine whether the student will also take the grade 7 reading and writing assessments. In this example, STAAR English I will be taken in place of the grade-level assessments based on House Bill 2135, which was passed by the 82nd Legislature.

In contrast to the example above, a grade 7 student who is receiving instruction in all of the TEKS for grade 8 social studies will not take STAAR grade 8 social studies since he or she is not enrolled in grade 8, and there is no assessment requirement for social studies at grade 7 in TEC §39.023(a). The student will take only STAAR grade 7 reading, writing, and mathematics.

Similarly, a grade 8 student who is receiving instruction in all of the TEKS for Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC) will not take a higher-level STAAR science assessment since there is not a STAAR assessment for IPC. Instead, the student will take the four enrolled grade-level assessments (reading, mathematics, science, and social studies) as required in TEC §39.023(a).

Districts should keep in mind that decisions have not yet been made about how test scores for these students will be used in state or federal accountability.

 20. What are the testing requirements for students in kindergarten, grade 1, or grade 2 who are receiving instruction in subjects above their enrolled grade level?

There are no STAAR testing requirements for students enrolled in kindergarten, grade 1, or grade 2, so these students do not test. STAAR testing requirements begin with students enrolled in grade 3.

21. What are the testing requirements for a student who moves into a Texas public high school (i.e., a student who moves from out of state, from a private school, or has migrant status)?

A student who receives high school credit out of the state or country or from a private school for a course assessed by STAAR is not required to take that assessment if the Texas school district accepts the course credit from the school in which the course was taken. As a result, the student's cumulative score will be based on fewer assessments. However, the student could choose to take the assessment and has the option of using the score in his or her cumulative score.

For migrant students who start a course in Texas but complete it in another state, the same regulation will apply. If the student receives credit for the course from another state and the credit is accepted by the Texas school district, the student will not be required to take the STAAR EOC assessment for that course. That test will not be required to be part of the student's cumulative score requirement as indicated above.

In some cases, it is possible that a student will not have to meet an assessment requirement in a specific content area if the student has already received credit for all of the courses in that content area (for example, Algebra I, geometry, and Algebra II). In this example, the student would not be required to take the assessments for Algebra I, geometry, or Algebra II. Therefore, the student would not be required to meet certain performance levels (Level II or III) on the STAAR Algebra II assessment that are required for various graduation plans.

NEW 22. **Are ELLs who are enrolled in an English I or II for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL I or ESOL II) course required to take the STAAR English I or II assessments?**

Yes. In accordance with 19 TAC §101.1007, ELLs enrolled in these courses (or in English I or II courses) are required to take both the reading and writing components of the STAAR English I and II assessments. However, for eligible ELLs the rules do make special allowances regarding the way in which the scores on these tests are used to meet graduation requirements. The rule provisions are outlined in the *STAAR Decision-Making Guide for LPACs*, which is available on the Student Assessment Division's LPAC Resources page at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/ell/lpac/>.

REVISED 23. **What are the testing requirements for a foreign exchange student?**

In the 2011–2012 school year, STAAR will be administered only to entering ninth graders or below. This year's foreign exchange students would typically be in the TAKS cohort because they would have met requirements to be ninth graders in a previous school year.

The foreign exchange student policy for TAKS, which is not a course-based assessment program, allows a foreign exchange student to be excused from taking the TAKS grade 10 or exit level assessments if the student has waived in writing his or her intention to receive a Texas high school diploma.

For the STAAR program, a foreign exchange student is required to take STAAR EOC assessments for courses in which he or she is enrolled. The scores the students receive are required to count for 15% of their final course grades. If the foreign exchange student is an eligible ELL, the special English I/II assessment provisions under TAC §101.1007 apply.

24. How are the STAAR EOC assessments related to course grades?

The score a student receives on a STAAR EOC assessment is required to count for 15% of the student's final grade in the course. Since grading policies are determined locally and TEA lacks statutory authority in this area, districts should establish local policies to implement this statutory requirement. For the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments, which have a separate reading and writing component, districts have discretion over how the scores from each component are used to calculate the 15% grading requirement. TEA is not planning to provide a method by which scale scores can be converted into grading systems because of wide variations in grading policy from district to district.

There is no corresponding requirement for students taking a modified or alternate assessment, so districts are not required to count STAAR Modified or STAAR Alternate EOC assessment scores as 15% of a student's final course grade.

25. If a student has a passing grade in a course before the EOC score is calculated but a failing grade once the EOC score is included, can the student still be given credit for the course?

No. TAC §74.26(c), regarding credit for high school graduation, stipulates that “credit for courses for high school graduation may be earned only if the student received a grade which is the equivalent of 70 on a scale of 100, based upon the essential knowledge and skills for each course.” A student whose final grade for a course is less than the equivalent of a 70 on a scale of 100 may not be given credit for that course, since by law the grade must include the student’s score on the EOC assessment. Districts retain the same options that have always been available: (a) to use summer school or other remediation for purposes of allowing the student to reach a passing grade for the course or (b) to take the EOC assessment in subsequent administrations to increase that portion of the final grade.

26. Does the 15% grading requirement apply to students’ grade-point average (GPA) and/or class rank?

As outlined in statute, the score a student receives on a STAAR EOC assessment is required to count for 15% of the student’s final grade in the course. Districts should establish local policies to implement this statutory requirement. Although this statute does not address GPA or class rank, a relationship should exist between the 15% requirement and these other calculations just as grades in courses and scores on course examinations currently affect GPA and class rank. Calculations of GPA and class rank should be made in accordance with local policies, guidelines, and administrative regulations.

27. Can a district still award credit by semester?

Yes. However, a school district that continues to award credit by semester should keep in mind that the statute requires the score a student receives on a STAAR EOC assessment to count for 15% of the student’s final grade in the course. Since the final grade is based on the entire course, districts need to determine locally how this requirement will be met. For example, a district that continues to award credit for each semester could choose to apply the 15% requirement equally across both semesters or could choose to double-weight the requirement (i.e., 30%) and apply it to the second semester only. It is important to note that these two examples may not yield the same mathematically equivalent final grade.

28. If a student does not receive a score on a STAAR EOC assessment, how is the final course grade calculated based on the 15% requirement?

If a student does not receive a score on a STAAR EOC assessment (absence, testing irregularity, failure to complete due to illness, etc.), then the district has the option of assigning the student an incomplete in the course until the next testing opportunity or factoring a zero into the calculation of the final course grade. It is anticipated that the two-week testing window for EOC assessments will accommodate most student absences.

29. Does the 15% grading requirement apply to students receiving special education services who take the general STAAR EOC assessments?

Yes. For a student receiving special education services, the score he or she receives on a general STAAR EOC assessment must count as 15% of the final course grade. Nevertheless, the student’s admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee determines whether the student has met the course requirements.

The 15% requirement does not apply to students taking STAAR Modified or STAAR Alternate.

30. Does the 15% grading requirement apply to students who receive course credit through correspondence courses?

Yes. The score a student receives on a STAAR EOC assessment is required to count for 15% of the student's final grade in the course even if a student earns credit through a correspondence course.

31. Does the 15% grading requirement apply to students who receive course credit through dual credit?

Yes. A student receiving high school course credit through a dual credit program will take the corresponding STAAR EOC assessment. The score a student receives on the assessment is required to count for 15% of the student's final grade in the high school course. This requirement does not apply to the grade a student receives for college credit. The method and rigor of student evaluation is required to be equivalent for dual credit courses and regular college courses, however it is possible to award separate course grades for dual credit courses at high schools and at colleges.

32. Does the 15% grading requirement apply to students who receive course credit through credit by examination?

No. For credit by examination, TEC §28.023(c) requires a school district to award a student credit on the basis of a successful score on an examination and to enter the examination score on the student's transcript.

33. If a student fails the course but passes the STAAR EOC assessment, is the student required to retest when he or she retakes the course?

Districts are required to use STAAR EOC assessment scores for 15% of a student's final course grade, even when a student repeats a course. If a student is repeating a course, the student is not required to retake the assessment provided that he or she has received a score at or above the minimum score. Districts have the option to use a retest score or the original score in the 15% calculation.

34. How are the STAAR EOC assessments related to graduation requirements?

Depending on their graduation program, students will be required to meet the passing standard, Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance (or at least achieve a predetermined minimum score), on eight to twelve STAAR EOC assessments. In order to graduate, a student must achieve a cumulative score that is at least equal to the product of the number of EOC assessments taken in that content area and a scale score that indicates satisfactory performance (Level II). For example, if the scale score range is 0–1000 and the passing standard, or satisfactory performance, is 700, a student would need to achieve a cumulative score of 2100 (3 assessments \times 700 = 2100) in each of the four foundation content areas. A student must achieve a minimum score on an EOC assessment for the score to count toward his or her cumulative score. A student's cumulative score is determined using his or her highest score on each EOC assessment within a content area.

Cumulative score requirements do not apply to students taking STAAR Modified or STAAR Alternate, as there are no cumulative score requirements planned for these programs.

35. How will the cumulative score be reported?

The Texas Assessment Management System will generate cumulative scores for each student and for each content area based on the assessments students have taken. Districts will need to determine if each student has met the cumulative score requirement in each content area based on that individual student's circumstances. For example, a district will need to determine if a

student who has a score only for the STAAR world history and world geography assessments has met the cumulative score requirement. If the student transferred to Texas from another state and received credit for U.S. history prior to enrolling in a Texas school, for example, then the student is not required to take the STAAR U.S. history assessment. The district would then determine if the student has met the cumulative score for social studies based on only two assessments.

36. What are the STAAR EOC assessment requirements for the different graduation programs?

Students graduating under the Minimum High School Program (MHSP) must take STAAR EOC assessments for all courses in which they are enrolled and for which there is a STAAR EOC assessment available and meet a cumulative score requirement in each of the four foundation content areas. It is possible that some students graduating on the minimum plan will need to perform satisfactorily on as few as eight EOC assessments.

Students graduating under the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) must take all twelve STAAR EOC assessments (Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history) and meet the cumulative score requirement in each of the four foundation content areas. Additionally, these students must achieve Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance on the Algebra II and English III assessments in order to receive a diploma under the RHSP.

Students graduating under the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) must take all twelve EOC assessments and meet the cumulative score requirement in each of the four foundation content areas. In addition, these students must meet Level III: Advanced Academic Performance, the postsecondary-readiness performance standard, on the Algebra II and English III assessments in order to receive a diploma under the DAP.

37. If a student is in the MHSP and takes a course that is not part of the MHSP requirements (e.g., chemistry), does the student have to take the STAAR EOC assessment for this course?

If a student on the MHSP is enrolled in a course that is not specifically required on the MHSP (refer to TAC §74) and there is a STAAR EOC assessment for that course, the student must take the assessment, and the score a student receives must count for 15% of the student's final course grade. However, the student has the option of using the score in his or her cumulative score.

38. What are the STAAR graduation requirements for students receiving special education services who take the general STAAR EOC assessments?

The assessment graduation requirements for students receiving special education services and taking general STAAR assessments are the same as those for general education students. However, the student's admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee determines whether the student has to meet the assessment requirements for graduation. If the ARD committee determines that a student does not have to meet the requirements (e.g., the cumulative score), then that student can graduate only under the Minimum High School Program (MHSP).

Cumulative score requirements do not apply to students taking STAAR Modified or STAAR Alternate.

39. What are the STAAR graduation requirements for students who complete a high school course prior to spring 2012, the first high-stakes administration of STAAR EOC assessments?

A student who has STAAR as his or her graduation requirement and who has completed a high school course prior to spring 2012 (e.g., a grade 8 student who completed Algebra I during the

2010–2011 school year or a freshman who will complete English I in the first semester of the 2011–2012 school year) is not required to take that specific STAAR EOC assessment to fulfill his or her graduation requirement. As a result, the student's cumulative score will be based on fewer assessments. However, the student could choose to take the assessment beginning in spring 2012 and has the option of using the score in his or her cumulative score. Scores on EOC assessments taken prior to spring 2012 will not count towards a student's cumulative score.

 40. What are the STAAR graduation requirements for students who earn course credit through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN)?

The TxVSN is a type of distance learning and is one of many ways students can receive instruction and fulfill their course requirements. Most students that attend TxVSN are public school students, so they are required to take STAAR EOC assessments to fulfill their testing requirements for graduation.

41. What are the STAAR graduation requirements for students who earn course credit by examination?

Students may use credit by examination to fulfill their course requirements; however, they are still required to take STAAR EOC assessments to fulfill their testing requirements.

42. Can STAAR EOC assessments be used for credit by examination?

No. STAAR EOC assessments do not meet the criteria for credit by examination and have not been approved for this purpose.

43. Can STAAR EOC assessments be used as final classroom examinations?

Yes. Districts can use STAAR EOC assessments as their final classroom examinations. However, there is no state requirement for final classroom examinations.

44. Do students who are enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course have to take the corresponding STAAR EOC assessments?

If a student is enrolled in an AP or IB course that is substituting for a TEKS-based course with a STAAR EOC assessment, then the student is required to take the STAAR assessment.

45. What types of substitute assessments can students use to fulfill their STAAR EOC assessment requirements?

TEA will be conducting studies to examine the test results of students who take both the STAAR EOC assessments and other assessments (e.g., AP, IB, and SAT subject tests) to determine if these assessments are at least as rigorous as the STAAR EOC assessments and may be used to meet the cumulative score requirement. If the research supports the validity of substitute assessments, a substitution policy may be implemented as early as the 2013–2014 school year.

46. How do the various testing requirements work with the two components (reading and writing) of the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments?

For the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments, the writing component is administered on day 1 and the reading component is administered on day 2. Because the reading and writing components assess different constructs, the two components will be scored separately (separate raw-score-to-scale-score conversion tables). In order to reduce students' and districts' testing burden, students will retake only the component of the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments they need rather than both components. To facilitate this, each component will be administered in a separate test booklet. In addition, separate test results in reading and writing will allow districts to better target remediation.

Although separate performance standards will be set on each component of the English I, II, and III assessments, the components will have the same performance levels as other STAAR EOC assessments. For a student to meet Level III: Advanced Academic Performance (the postsecondary-readiness performance standard) on the English III assessment, the student must meet the Level III cut on both the reading and writing components. Likewise, for a student to meet Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance, the student must meet the Level II cut on both the reading and writing components. Students are not required to meet the two cut scores in the same test administration.

The cumulative score requirement for the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments will be the same as the cumulative score requirements for the other three content areas. The difference with English is that each component (three each for reading and writing) will be added together to determine the student's cumulative score for the English assessments. A student must achieve at least the minimum score in each component for that component to count toward the student's cumulative score.

The score a student receives on the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments is required to count for 15% of the student's final grade in the course. Since grading policies are determined locally, districts have discretion over how the scores from each component are used to calculate the 15% grading requirement.

47. How will STAAR EOC assessments be used to satisfy the requirements of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI)?

For a student who has graduated under the Recommended High School Program or the Distinguished Achievement Program and who has met Level III: Advanced Academic Performance, the postsecondary-readiness performance standard, on the STAAR Algebra II and English III assessments, TEC §51.3062(g-1) provides an exemption from TSI requirements in that corresponding content area.

48. How many testing opportunities will students have for the STAAR EOC assessments?

All twelve STAAR EOC assessments will be administered at the end of the first semester, at the end of the second semester, and in the summer, giving students three testing opportunities each year. Note that there will not be an administration at the end of the first semester in the 2011–2012 school year as the state makes the transition from TAKS to STAAR.

49. How many times can a student retake a STAAR EOC assessment?

TEC §39.025(b) indicates that a student “may retake an end-of-course assessment instrument for any reason.” Although there is not a limit to the number of times a student can test, districts may want to establish local procedures to ensure that there are sufficient test materials, administrators, and rooms available for the number of students testing. Additionally, TEA will require districts to submit participation counts (enrollment numbers) to ensure that there are adequate testing materials provided to districts for each STAAR administration.

50. How will the STAAR Modified assessments differ from TAKS–Modified (TAKS–M)?

As with TAKS–M, the new STAAR Modified assessments for grades 3–8 and for EOC will reflect the same content as the general assessments (i.e., STAAR). The STAAR Modified assessments will retain several features of the TAKS–M assessments; however, STAAR Modified will reflect the same increased rigor and focus of the general assessments. The tests will differ from the TAKS–M assessments in the following ways:

- New performance standards will be set for STAAR Modified using available empirical data to link performance across specific grades within a subject and across courses. Additional empirical data will be collected and analyzed to provide information for the standards review process in future years.
- The STAAR Modified EOC assessments will differ from the TAKS–M high school assessments in that each STAAR Modified EOC assessment will cover only the content from a particular course (e.g., Algebra I will assess only Algebra I content) rather than content from multiple courses (e.g., Algebra I and grade 8 mathematics were assessed on the grade 9 TAKS–M mathematics tests).
- The number of items on the STAAR Modified assessments will increase from the number of items on the TAKS–M tests. The number of items on the STAAR Modified assessments has been determined by decreasing the number of STAAR Modified blueprint items proportionally from the number of items on the STAAR blueprints—by approximately 20%—for each reporting category.
- Field-test items will be embedded in the modified assessments rather than administered as stand-alone field tests every three years.
- Students will be required to respond to writing tasks focused on different purposes for writing. These purposes include personal narrative, literary, expository, persuasive, and analytical writing.

51. For which courses will STAAR Modified EOC assessments be available?

STAAR Modified assessments will be developed for nine of the twelve EOC assessments: Algebra I, geometry, biology, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history. STAAR Modified assessments will not be developed for Algebra II, chemistry, or physics, as these courses are not required on the Minimum High School Program, the graduation program for students who take STAAR Modified assessments.

52. When will students start taking STAAR Modified?

The first administration of the STAAR Modified assessments will be in spring 2012. STAAR Modified EOC assessments will be administered two times per year (fall and spring) as they become operational. All nine STAAR Modified EOC assessments will be operational in the 2014–2015 school year.

The STAAR Modified implementation plan is described in the table below. Students will not receive scores for the spring 2012 stand-alone field tests in geometry and English II. However, the decision about what types of scores will be reported for the other assessments administered in spring 2012 has not yet been finalized.				
STAAR Modified Implementation Plan				
	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
Grades 3–8	spring administration	operational	operational	operational
Algebra I	spring administration	operational	operational	operational
Geometry	stand-alone field test	operational	operational	operational
Biology	spring administration	operational	operational	operational
English I	spring administration	operational	operational	operational

The STAAR Modified implementation plan is described in the table below. Students will not receive scores for the spring 2012 stand-alone field tests in geometry and English II. However, the decision about what types of scores will be reported for the other assessments administered in spring 2012 has not yet been finalized.

STAAR Modified Implementation Plan				
English II	stand-alone field test	operational	operational	operational
English III	no assessment available	no assessment available	spring administration	operational
World Geography	spring administration	operational	operational	operational
World History	no assessment available	spring administration	operational	operational
U.S. History	no assessment available	no assessment available	spring administration	operational

53. Can a student take a combination of STAAR and STAAR Modified assessments?

Yes. A student can take any combination of STAAR and STAAR Modified assessments with the exception of the two components of the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments. If a student takes the writing component of the STAAR Modified English I assessment, he or she must also take the reading component of the STAAR Modified English I assessment.

54. How will STAAR Alternate assessments differ from TAKS–Alternate (TAKS–Alt)?

The STAAR Alternate assessments will be similar in design to the TAKS–Alt assessments. Students will continue to perform assessment tasks linked to the grade-level TEKS. However, STAAR Alternate will incorporate a vertical alignment in the program’s assessment tasks that will allow scores to be compared across different grades for the same subject and language version. The high school assessments will change from grade-level assessments to course-based assessments. STAAR Alternate assessments will reflect the same increased rigor and focus of the general and modified assessments. STAAR Alternate high school assessments will be developed for Algebra I, geometry, biology, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history.

55. When will STAAR Alternate be implemented?

STAAR Alternate assessments will be implemented in the 2011–2012 school year. STAAR Alternate will replace TAKS–Alt assessments at all grades and subjects.

 **56. If a student does not actually use a predetermined accommodation during testing, should district personnel mark the accommodation on the answer document?**

Yes. District personnel should mark the accommodation type for each accommodation that is documented and made available to a student, even if the student did not use the accommodation during testing.

If a test administrator notices that a student does not use an accommodation during the statewide assessment, the district should note this at the local level and the student’s ARD, LPAC, Section 504 placement, or other campus committee should discuss this when interpreting the assessment results and when making future instructional and accommodation decisions.

57. Will the dyslexia bundled accommodations continue to be offered to eligible students taking the STAAR reading assessments?

Two of the three bundled accommodations will be available for students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities on the STAAR reading assessments in grades 3 through high school—the oral reading of item stems/answer options only and extended testing time, if needed. These accommodations do not need to be offered as a bundle; the needs of the student should be considered when determining which accommodations to use. A proper-nouns list like the one used in the TAKS assessments will no longer be provided.

58. Will dyslexic students be allowed extra time to test?

In most cases, students who are identified with dyslexia by the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee or Section 504 placement committee will meet the eligibility criteria for the extra time accommodation. This accommodation provides students extra time to complete the test until the end of the regular school day.

59. Will versions of STAAR be developed for English language learners (ELLs)?

As with TAKS, Spanish versions of STAAR will be available for eligible ELLs in grades 3–5 in each grade and subject assessed by the English versions. Additionally, linguistically accommodated versions of STAAR called STAAR L will be available for eligible ELLs in grades 3–8 and high school. ELLs not eligible to take the Spanish or STAAR L versions will take the general STAAR tests in English but may be eligible to receive certain limited linguistic accommodations. Both Spanish STAAR and STAAR L are designed to be comparable to STAAR in content, rigor, and academic achievement standards. Following implementation of the STAAR program, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) will be reviewed and adjusted as needed to maintain an appropriate relationship between academic language proficiency as defined by TELPAS and academic achievement as defined by STAAR.

60. Will ELL test participation criteria change for the STAAR program?

Yes. Revisions to ELL test participation criteria will be made through the commissioner of education rulemaking process and posted on the Texas Education Agency website in fall 2011.

61. What will STAAR L be like?

STAAR L will be composed of STAAR test forms in English that have built-in computer-based linguistic accommodations designed for ELLs who are eligible for a significant degree of linguistic accommodation. Two types of accommodations will be built into the STAAR L interface—clarification of unfamiliar English and reading aloud of text. As the students take the tests, they will be able to click on text to obtain English clarification of words and language structures that are likely to be unfamiliar to them. The read-aloud interface functionality will enable students to hear text read aloud. The linguistic accommodation interface will be implemented beginning in spring 2013. Until then, STAAR L tests will be administered in paper mode only, and the clarification and read-aloud accommodations will be provided by the test administrator. Beginning in 2013, these accommodations will be delivered online, and STAAR L will be administered as an online testing program.

62. Will STAAR L be available for all grades, subjects, and courses?

L versions of the STAAR grades 3–8 and EOC assessments in mathematics, science, and social studies will be developed. STAAR L reading, writing, and English I–III assessments will not be developed. Like all Texas students, ELLs in grade 6 and above will be given access to dictionaries when taking STAAR reading, writing, and English I–III tests. ELLs in grades 3–5 may be eligible to use dictionaries as a linguistic accommodation when taking reading and writing tests. STAAR L versions will be administered on the same schedule as STAAR assessments.

63. Will Spanish or STAAR L versions of STAAR Modified be developed?

No. The small number of ELLs with disabilities who meet STAAR Modified participation criteria will take the STAAR Modified test forms in English but may qualify for allowable linguistic accommodations.

64. When will more information about allowable linguistic accommodations for the STAAR program be available?

More information will be available in fall 2011 on the TEA Student Assessment website.

65. For which assessments will make-up testing be available?

For the STAAR program, make-up testing opportunities for students who are absent will be available for all grades, subjects, and courses. Make-up testing opportunities will also be available for all administrations, including the summer administrations.

66. Will STAAR administrations be available online?

The STAAR grades 3–8 administrations will be available only in paper format. Paper and online administrations will be available for STAAR EOC assessments.

STAAR L and STAAR Modified will be administered on paper only in 2012. STAAR L will become an online testing program in 2013. Online administration plans for STAAR Modified for 2013 and beyond have not yet been finalized.

67. If districts administer STAAR EOC assessments online, can they get their results more quickly than if they test on paper?

Yes. Based on the time it takes to ship, process, and score paper tests, it is likely that districts who administer all the STAAR EOC assessments online will receive results before districts that administer some paper tests. However, no results will be available until after the testing window has closed.

68. If districts administer STAAR EOC assessments earlier in the testing window, can they get their results more quickly than if they test later in the window?

Yes. Based on the time it takes to process and score tests, it is likely that districts who administer STAAR EOC assessments earlier in the testing window will receive results sooner than those who test later in the window. However, no results will be available until after the testing window has closed.

69. Will there be a time limit for tests in the STAAR program?

All tests in the STAAR program will have a four-hour time limit. The test will start when students are directed to turn to the first question. TEA will review the four-hour time limit after the first STAAR administration in spring 2012 to determine if the policy needs to be reconsidered or adjusted for specific grades, subjects, or courses.

Accommodations for extra time or an extra day will be available for students who meet eligibility criteria for their use.

 **70. Do STAAR assessments that are designed to be administered over two days have a four-hour time limit each day?**

Yes. STAAR grades 4 and 7 writing are designed to be administered over two days. Students will have a four-hour time limit each day. For the STAAR English I, II, and III assessments, the writing

component is administered on day 1, and the reading component is administered on day 2. Students will have a four-hour time limit each day.

71. Can districts offer multiple test sessions in the same day?

Districts may administer multiple test sessions in the same day. If necessary, they may decide on early start times or extending testing beyond the typical school day, particularly at the high school level.

72. What happens to students who arrive late or after testing has begun?

All students must be given the maximum of four hours to complete the tests. Districts will need to determine if the student can test on that day or on a make-up day.

73. Are breaks allowed during STAAR assessments?

Breaks are allowed during STAAR assessments; however the following breaks must be included in the four-hour time limit.

- Breaks for water or snacks
- Bathroom breaks
- Breaks for physical activity (e.g., standing up and stretching)
- Routine medical breaks (e.g., to take medicine)

Breaks for lunch are not included in the four-hour time limit; however it is recommended that lunch be scheduled outside of the testing time.

 **74. What type of flexibility do districts have in scheduling the STAAR grades 3–8 assessments?**

Districts should administer the STAAR grades 3–8 assessments on the state-assigned days. However, TEA recognizes that sometimes districts have conflicts with the state testing schedule. If conflicts exist, districts can arrange their testing schedules to best meet their local needs as long as they administer all of the scheduled assessments in the time frame provided. For example, if during the late April testing week a district is closed on Friday, it could choose to administer all of the subject-area tests for STAAR grades 3–8 one day earlier (mathematics on Monday, reading on Tuesday, science on Wednesday, and social studies on Thursday). A district no longer has to complete the Request for Alternate Dates form to change testing dates within the state-assigned dates.

75. Are there any released tests available for STAAR?

In fall 2011, selected test questions from all grades, subjects, and courses will be released. The first full release of spring test forms of STAAR will occur in summer 2014.

 **76. Will TEA release item analyses and report student expectations tested for the STAAR assessments?**

Yes. TEA will report the TEKS student expectations tested for the first spring administration of each general STAAR assessment. For each test question, the report will include the student expectation assessed. In social studies, science, and grades 3–8 mathematics, a process student expectation will also be reported if the test question incorporates a process skill. In addition, TEA will provide a student-level data file for all general STAAR administrations that includes student-response information for each question—“1” for a correct response and “0” for an incorrect response.

77. Will there be printed educator booklets that describe the STAAR program like the TAKS Information Booklets?

No. STAAR resources for educators will be posted online only so that educators can more easily access the most current information, such as released test questions and writing rubrics. Many educator resources for the STAAR program are already available online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/>. However, as decisions are finalized, we will continue to clarify and update information about the program. In this way, the STAAR resources page will function as a dynamic resource that can provide educators and other stakeholders with the most up-to-date information available.

78. Are districts required to provide accelerated instruction to students who do not pass the STAAR assessments?

Yes. TEC §39.025(b-1) requires school districts to provide accelerated instruction to each student who fails to perform satisfactorily on an EOC assessment (i.e., who does not achieve Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance). Likewise, TEC §28.0211(a-1) requires districts to provide accelerated instruction in the applicable subject area each time a student fails to perform satisfactorily (Level II) on an assessment administered in grades 3–8.

79. Will TEA produce summer study guides for STAAR?

No. TEC §39.0241(c) states that “the agency may develop study guides” for the STAAR assessments. However, no funds have been appropriated for the development of these guides.

80. How will reporting change when STAAR is implemented?

The implementation of STAAR will bring some key changes to the way information is reported.

For TAKS all reports were provided in hard-copy format with the option to receive online reports for a fee. With the new STAAR program, all reports will be provided online. One copy of each of the Confidential Student Reports (CSRs) and labels will be provided in hard-copy format.

Because standards for STAAR EOC will not be set until February 2012, current EOC reports provide raw scores only. With the implementation of STAAR EOC assessments, results for students for the spring administrations will be delivered online shortly after the May test administration is complete, followed by the delivery of results on paper. For specific reporting dates, please refer to the 2011–2012 testing calendar, which is posted on the Student Assessment website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/calendars/>.

Alternate methods of reporting assessment results will be used with STAAR, which will provide opportunities to examine data in a variety of ways. Online tools for students, teachers, and campus and district personnel will provide the ability to track progress toward graduation, compare results across years and groups, and look at growth patterns for various groups of students.

 **81. What are the reporting requirements for the STAAR spring 2012 administrations?**

For STAAR EOC assessments, performance standards will be set in spring 2012 prior to the administrations. In early June 2012 TEA will provide Confidential Student Reports (CSRs), Confidential Student Labels, Confidential Campus Rosters, Campus and District Summary Reports, and data files to districts. Districts are required to report individual results to parents by the timeline indicated on the calendar of events. Districts are also required to provide overall assessment results to their local school board at a regularly scheduled meeting.

For STAAR grades 3–8 assessments, reporting will occur in three phases since performance standards will not be set until fall 2012. The first phase will occur in early June 2012 and will

include Confidential Campus Rosters, Campus and District Summary Reports, and data files with raw score information. The second phase will occur in late June 2012 and will include updated data files and information pertaining to AYP reports. The final phase will occur in January 2013 after performance standards are set; reports will include CSRs and Confidential Student Labels. Confidential Campus Rosters, Campus and District Summary Reports, and data files will be updated at this time. Districts are required to report individual results to parents after receiving the final phase of performance reports. Once this information is available, districts are also required to provide overall assessment results to their local school board at a regularly scheduled meeting.

82. How will the student and teacher data portals and the Texas Assessment Management System, delivered through PearsonAccess, be used with STAAR?

As with TAKS, there will be no charge for students, parents, or school districts to use the data portals of the Assessment Management System.

The student portal will continue to be used with STAAR, and beginning in 2012, students will be able to see their past TAKS and TELPAS results along with their STAAR results. Students first entering grade 9 and below in 2011–2012 will graduate under the STAAR graduation requirements. Students will be able to track their progress toward graduation within the student portal. Student results will continue to be available in the student portal at the same time that school districts receive their results online.

The teacher portal will continue to provide results at the class level for teachers. Districts will be able to upload information to create class groups and the assessment results for those students. This can be done at any time of the year so that teachers can see the past results of their current students. In addition, classroom linking information will be received from districts in the summer of each year. This information, the list of teachers, the classes they taught, and the students that were in those classes, will be provided to the assessment contractor, allowing class groups to be created to show the previous year assessment results.

Beginning in the 2011–2012 school year, districts will also have access to an analytic reporting tool in the Assessment Management System. Analytic reporting will allow users to analyze results in order to compare current and historical data. They can perform comparisons of campuses to campuses, campuses to districts, districts to districts, and districts to the state. Campus and district personnel will also be able to organize the data to examine different demographic and program information groups, enabling easy access to cross-section analysis of the assessment data.

83. In 2012, which assessments will be used in federal accountability for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Unlike the state accountability rating, the 2012 AYP status must be evaluated based on tests administered during the 2011–2012 school year. The 2012 AYP evaluations are required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), including School Improvement Program (SIP) intervention stages for the 2012–2013 school year.

The initial Texas AYP Workbook amendments submitted in December 2010 included a request to carry forward the 2011 AYP status for all campuses and districts for the 2012 AYP evaluations and maintain SIP intervention stages for the 2012–2013 school year. In discussions during spring 2011, the USDE indicated that Texas must evaluate AYP based on test results available for the 2011–2012 school year.

The 2012 amendment was resubmitted in April 2011 to request the evaluation of 2012 AYP and SIP statuses based on the following 2011–2012 test results.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

- TAKS grade 11 results will not be used for 2012 AYP evaluations
- Of the students who remain in the TAKS program during the 2011–2012 school year, TAKS grade 10 results

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

- STAAR results for students enrolled in grade 9 will not be used for 2012 AYP evaluations
- Of the students who will transition to the STAAR program in 2011–2012, grades 3–8 at the TAKS proficiency standard

For more information on possible 2012 AYP calculations, see <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147503684>.

Subsequently, USDE requested that Texas redact all references to the 2012 AYP evaluations from the 2011 Texas AYP Workbook and recommended that Texas submit 2012 AYP amendment requests in a separate submission prior to February 15, 2012. TEA plans to resubmit 2012 AYP amendment requests in late fall 2011.

As in past years, TEA guidance regarding Title I School Improvement Requirements during the 2012–2013 school year will be provided to districts in late spring 2012.

84. Starting in 2013, which STAAR EOC assessments will be used in federal accountability for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

A new federal accountability system based on the STAAR assessments will be developed during the 2011–2012 school year and implemented in 2013. Information about the new accountability system will be posted at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/> as it becomes available.

85. Where can I go to find more information about the STAAR program?

For more information about the STAAR program, visit the TEA Student Assessment website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/>.