

## **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

### **Keystone Exams Program Overview**

#### **KEYSTONE EXAMS**

##### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

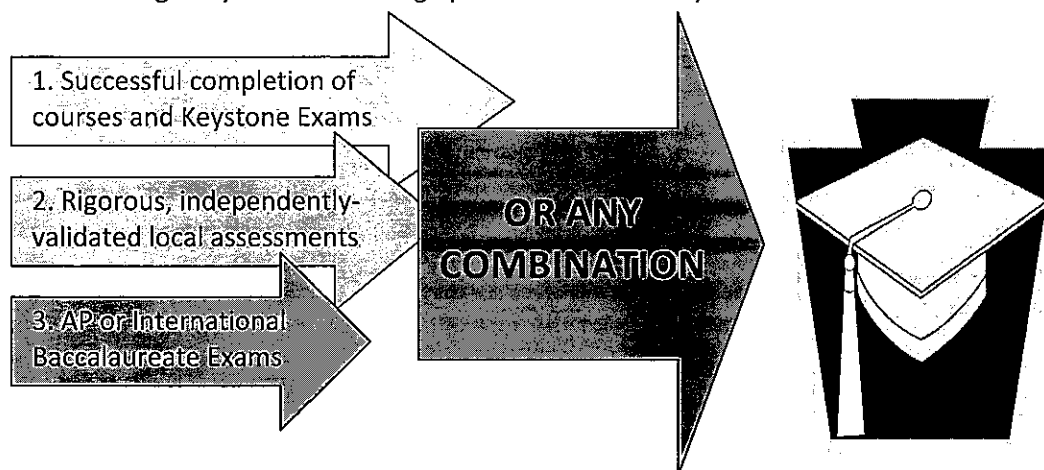
The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to assess proficiency in the subject areas of Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Civics and Government, English Composition, Geometry, Literature, U.S. History, and World History. They will be offered in both paper/pencil and online formats.

The Keystone Exams are one component of Pennsylvania's new system of high school graduation requirements. To receive a diploma, students must also meet local district credit and attendance requirements, complete a culminating project, and pass any additional district requirements.

For the graduating classes of 2015 and 2016, students must demonstrate successful completion of secondary level course work in Algebra I, Biology, English Composition, and Literature for which the Keystone Exams serve as the final course exams. Students' Keystone Exam scores shall count for at least one-third of the final course grade.

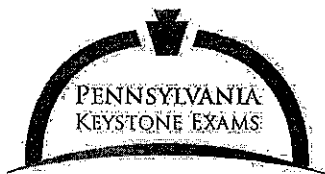
#### **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Under the new regulation and beginning with the class of 2015, students can meet graduation requirements through any of the following options determined by the district.



In addition to taking the Keystone Exams, students must also successfully complete the courses needed for high school graduation. No student will be denied a high school diploma based on test scores alone as teacher assigned grades will constitute a majority (about 67%) of the course grade.

The regulation also responds to calls for reduced testing in Pennsylvania's high schools. Pending approval from the U.S. Department of Education (for the 2012–13 school year), the Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams will replace the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests. This change will reduce annual testing time by approximately 18 hours, which is equivalent to three school days. The PSSA will be retained for use in the elementary and middle school grades.



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#### **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)**

##### **OPTION 1 - DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY IN CORE SUBJECTS**

Students in the classes of 2015 and 2016 will demonstrate proficiency in Algebra I, Biology, Literature, and English Composition with a Keystone Exam. The Keystone Exam will count for one-third of the final course grade.

For the classes of 2017 and beyond, requirements under this option will be expanded to include the following.

- Passing 2 English courses (Composition and Literature)\*;
- Passing 2 Mathematics courses (Algebra I, Algebra II, or Geometry);
- Passing 1 Science course (Biology or Chemistry); and
- Passing 1 Social Studies course (Civics and Government, U.S. History, or World History).

\*PDE recommends administering the English Composition exam at the end of English 9 and Literature at the end of English 10.

##### **OPTION 2 - PASS LOCAL ASSESSMENTS**

Districts may choose to use locally designed and independently validated assessments. This regulation preserves local control but sets consistent standards for locally developed measures to ensure rigorous assessments, fair administration, and reliable results. The state will share validation costs with local districts.

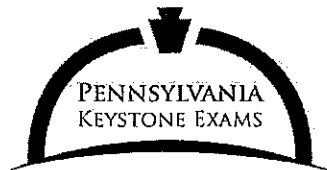
On September 16, 2010, the State Board of Education voted to allow districts to make the local policy decision to use a Keystone Exam as a stand-alone graduation requirement in a given content area; this local assessment option would be "deemed approved" for validation requirements in that content if students are required to score proficient or above.

##### **OPTION 3 - PASS RIGOROUS NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS**

National assessments are the Advanced Placement (AP) Exams and International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams. Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will issue policy guidance regarding the minimum score required on an AP or IB Exam to satisfy graduation requirements.

##### **ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS**

A student who does not score "proficient" on a Keystone Exam after two attempts will be eligible to complete a project-based assessment. The student must also have taken the course and met local attendance and supplemental instruction requirements. The project-based assessment is designed expressly to help students supplement a Keystone Exam score in order to meet the graduation requirement of proficiency. A project-based assessment can raise a student's Keystone score to the "proficient" cut score but not beyond it.



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#### **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)**

The regulation also includes a waiver provision. The Secretary of Education is allowed to exempt individual students from the new graduation requirements based on personal crisis, family crisis, or other extenuating circumstances. The waiver must be accompanied by an endorsement from the student's local superintendent.

#### **TESTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

All students with special needs and English Language Learners are entitled to accommodations during instruction and testing. Accommodations are indicated in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan. Specific questions about a student's program of study and participation on state tests should be directed to the student's teacher or IEP team.

#### **KEYSTONE EXAMS SCHEDULE**

The table below lists the dates when the different Keystone Exams will be available.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Field Test</b>	<b>Available For All Schools</b>
Algebra I, Biology, Literature	Fall 2010	Spring 2011
Algebra II, Geometry, English Composition	Spring 2011	January 2012
U.S. History	Fall 2012	Spring 2013
Chemistry, Civics & Government, World History	Spring 2015	TBD

#### **KEYSTONE ASSESSMENT ANCHORS/ELIGIBLE CONTENT**

The Keystone Exams are aligned to the Pennsylvania Keystone Course Standards, Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content, and the Curriculum Frameworks. All were developed by Pennsylvania educators. The Pennsylvania Keystone Course Standards, Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content, and Curriculum Frameworks are available on the Standards Aligned System website at [www.pdesas.org](http://www.pdesas.org).

#### **CONTENT AREAS**

For the 2010–2011 school year, the Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams will be available. Each Keystone Exam will assess material from specific topic areas listed in the Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content documents.