



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent

**June 4, 2013**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** System Test Coordinators

**FROM:** Melissa Fincher, Ph.D., Associate Superintendent

**SUBJECT:** Guidance Letter – Subject Area Competency (“Testing Out”) to Receive Course Credit Using the End of Course Tests (EOCT)

The purpose of this guidance letter is to provide you information regarding the opportunity for students to receive course credit by demonstrating subject area competency through the End of Course Tests (EOCT).

As provided for in amendments to State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.15 (AWARDING UNITS OF CREDIT AND ACCEPTANCE OF TRANSFER CREDIT AND/OR GRADES) adopted by the Board in April 2013, the opportunity exists for students to “test-out” of any course for which there is an associated EOCT and earn credit for the course through that process.

Under the provisions of the amended rule and guidelines published by the Georgia Department of Education’s (GaDOE) Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, local boards of education shall award course credit to students who reach the performance level of Exceeds on an EOCT taken prior to taking the course. For example, a student may attempt the Biology EOCT prior to taking the course. If the student reaches the performance level of Exceeds, the local board of education shall award the student the Biology course credit. A student may test-out of any course that has an associated EOCT. As stated in the Rule, students may earn no more than three units of credit by demonstrating subject area competency in this fashion.

**Student Eligibility:**

Students must meet the following requirements to exercise this option:

1. Not currently or previously enrolled in the course;
2. Have earned a grade of B or better in the most recent course that is the same content area of the course for which the student is attempting the EOCT;
3. Received a teacher recommendation from the teacher of the most recent course in the same content area (or, if not available, a teacher in the same content area with knowledge of the student’s academic achievement) for which the student is attempting the EOCT; and
4. Received parent/guardian permission if the student is less than 18 years of age.

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**Guidance Letter – Subject Area Competency (“Testing Out”) To Receive Course Credit Using the EOCT  
June 4, 2013**

Schools should carefully consider which students would benefit from such an opportunity and advise accordingly. As part of the advisement process, schools should consider the likelihood for success in future courses that may require knowledge and skills that are inherent within the course. In addition, the student’s post-secondary plans and needs must be considered. The test-out option should not be exercised for students without deliberation and clear evidence of the likelihood of student success both on the test itself and in future coursework/endeavors. Students who do not meet the eligibility criteria above must not be assessed for this purpose.

**Test Administration Guidelines**

When allowing students to attempt to earn course credit through testing out, districts and schools shall:

1. Allow eligible students **only one opportunity per course** to demonstrate subject area competency.
2. Systems must utilize only the GaDOE designated administration windows for this purpose and all administrations must be conducted online.
3. Systems must NOT use Retest Administration forms for this purpose. Doing so may result in additional fees being invoiced to the district.
4. **Local systems will be required to identify individual students who are testing for this purpose when the student is registered in the online platform.** This is critical to ensure the proper designation of the test for scoring and reporting purposes. Failure to do so may result in additional fees being invoiced to the district to correct data file/report errors.
5. Require students who do not reach the performance level of Exceeds when attempting to test-out to enroll in and complete the associated course when applicable. The student would again take the EOCT at the conclusion of that course experience regardless of their score during their attempt to test-out. As outlined in long-standing guidance for the EOCT (Guidance letters issued: 6/9/2004, 6/23/2004 and 12/6/2006), EOCT scores may not be banked.
6. As stipulated in the Guidelines previously issued for this Board rule, districts/schools shall not allow students who are currently enrolled, or who have previously been enrolled, in a higher-level course to attempt to earn credit by testing out. For example, a student taking AP Physics may not earn credit for Physical Science through this process.
7. **The administration of all EOCTs for this purpose must adhere to the system’s local EOCT testing calendar. This stipulation is critical to ensure test security.** For example, students taking the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature & Composition EOCT for the purposes of testing out must be administered the test on the same day or consecutive days that the system is administering the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature & Composition EOCT to all other students.
8. Districts should develop a local policy to address instances where a student has opted to test-out and has achieved the Exceeds performance level, but then decides that they prefer to take the course instead. Should districts permit students to do this, they must notify the GaDOE Assessment Division and incur the costs for the student’s test-out administration.

**Costs**

Systems and schools will incur no charge for students who meet the eligibility criteria and achieve the Exceeds performance level. Systems and schools will incur a charge for students who fail to achieve the Exceeds performance level. The established fee is currently \$50.00 per test. The EOCT contractor will invoice systems for these associated costs.

As stipulated in the previously issued Guidelines related to this rule, local boards of education may develop policies related to the collection of these costs from parents or students, provided that such policies require school or school district personnel to inform the parent or student of potential costs prior to the EOCT administration.

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June 4, 2013**

**Availability**

The opportunity for students to test-out may be offered by local school systems during specified EOCT Mid-Month windows. The first EOCT window during which this option becomes available will be the August 2013 Mid-Month Administration. Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, the opportunity for students to test-out will be offered in the specific Mid-Month Administration windows of August, September, and March. Beginning in summer 2014, the Summer Administration window may also be utilized for this purpose.

This option is not available during the Winter or Spring Main Administrations and only in the specific Mid-Month windows above. Systems and schools should plan accordingly.

All test administrations for this purpose must be conducted online. The designated Mid-Month test form must be used for this purpose. Assigning the wrong form to a student will result in invalidation and may result in a charge to the district/school. Systems may request paper/pencil materials for a student with a disability that prevents the student from accessing the assessment in an online format. Braille and Large Print will be available for students who require these formats. A request for such forms must be made a minimum of three weeks prior to the planned test administration. Please note that the online test has the ability to deliver a large print version.

If you have any questions, you may contact Melissa Fincher at (404) 651-9405; [mfincher@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:mfincher@doe.k12.ga.us) or Anthony Eitel at (404) 656-0478; [aeitel@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:aeitel@doe.k12.ga.us).

cc: System Superintendents  
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Dr. Mike Buck, Chief Academic Officer  
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