



The Maryland Testing Requirement for Graduation & the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation

What is the Maryland testing requirement?

For a student who entered the 9th grade in or after the 2005-06 school year to graduate from high school with a Maryland High School Diploma, he/she must meet the testing requirement as well as meet the State course and service learning requirements, and local graduation requirements.

How can a student meet the testing requirement?

There are three options to meeting the testing requirement.

1. **Pass each of the four High School Assessment (HSA) tests** – algebra/data analysis, English, biology, and government. These tests are generally taken in the 9th or 10th grade. Below are the potential substitutions for the HSAs:
 - **Advanced Placement (AP)** – Students who have earned a score of 3 or above on the state-approved, HSA-related AP test will have met the testing requirement for that content area.
 - **International Baccalaureate (IB)** – Students who have earned a score of 5 or above on the state-approved, HSA-related IB test will have met the testing requirement for that content area.
 - **Modified-HSA** – An alternative test for students with disabilities who meet the specific participation criteria based on their IEP process. (More information about the Mod-HSA can be found on the next page.)
2. **Combined-Score Option** – A student who earns a combined total of 1602 points across the four HSA tests meets the testing requirement. This option allows students to offset lower performance on one test with higher performance on another.
3. **The Bridge Plan for Academic Validation** – The Bridge Plan is an instructional intervention strategy which provides students who are having difficulty passing one or more HSA an alternative means to meet the testing requirement.

What criteria will a student have to meet to be eligible for the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation?

A student would be eligible for the Bridge Plan if he/she:

- passed the HSA-related course;
- did not pass an HSA test after two attempts;
- participated in locally-administered or approved assistance;
- is making satisfactory progress toward graduation; and
- has demonstrated satisfactory attendance as determined by the local school system.

When can a student begin the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation?

Local school systems determine when a student may begin work on a Bridge Plan.

Will the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation be easier than taking an HSA test?

No. The Bridge Plan is a series of challenging projects linked to the Core Learning Goals tested by each HSA. Once a student is deemed eligible by the local school system to participate in the Bridge Plan, he/she must complete one or more projects as determined by the student's highest HSA score in a specific content area.



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What happens once a student is eligible for the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation?

A designated school staff member will meet with the student and parent/guardian to design an Academic Validation Project Package. The Academic Validation Project Package includes a number of forms that indicate which project(s) the student must complete, the assigned work period, and the assigned Project Monitor. The forms also verify that the student's Academic Validation Project Package will meet the core values of academic integrity.

How many projects will a student have to complete?

The number of projects a student will have to complete is based on the student's highest HSA score in the specific content area. The student and parent/guardian will meet with an appropriate school staff member to review the Bridge Plan process and what the student must do to successfully complete his/her work.

What do the Bridge Plan projects cover?

Each HSA content area - algebra/data analysis, English, biology, and government - has Core Learning Goals that detail the information and skills a student is expected to know after passing the HSA-related course. The project(s) assigned to the student are based on these goals.

How long does a Bridge Plan project take?

A student may take anywhere from 10-20 hours to complete a project, depending on the content area and the student's mastery of the content.

Who will review and approve completed student projects?

A local review panel, established by the local school system, will review a student's completed Academic Validation Project Package and provide a recommendation to the local superintendent. The local superintendent will conduct a final review for approval or refusal of the student's work.

How does the local superintendent's decision on the Academic Validation Project Package affect the student?

- Upon approval, the student will have met the testing requirement for the specific HSA content area.
- Upon refusal, written feedback will be provided to the student so he/she can continue work on the Project Package and resubmit at a later date.
 - A student can submit an appeal of the local superintendent's refusal, in writing, to the State Superintendent.

Can a student continue to take the HSAs while working on an Academic Validation Project Package?

Yes. In fact, the student is encouraged to retake an HSA in order to earn a passing score or a score that would allow him/her to use the Combined-Score Option to meet the testing requirement.

Are there alternative paths to meeting the testing requirement for graduation?

Yes. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) recognizes that Maryland has a diverse population of students with diverse needs. The Modified HSAs (Mod-HSAs) have been developed for a small portion of students with disabilities. The Mod-HSAs are based on the same course content as the HSAs, but the question format is altered.