

Grade 10-12 Provincial Exams Frequently Asked Questions

Under the 2004 Graduation Program, students must write provincial exams in a Language Arts 10, a Math 10 and a Science 10. Students must also write a Social Studies 11/12 and a Language Arts 12 provincial exam.

Q: Are students required to pass these exams in order to graduate?

A: These are not pass/fail exams.

Students can fail the provincial exam and still pass the course. The exams will count for 20 per cent of a student's final mark in these courses.

Class work will count for 80 per cent of the final mark. The 20 per cent weighting of the new exams is similar to the weighting of many teachers' end-of-year exams.

Q: Are the exam marks recorded on a student's final transcript?

A: The Grade 10 exam marks will not appear separately on students' transcripts. Only the final blend of the classroom mark plus the exam mark will be included.

Q: What happens if a student fails a course?

A: Students have a number of options if they fail a course.

Students may show they have met the learning outcomes for a course by completing missing assignments, repeating a unit or topic or upgrading a mark in summer school. Students also have the option of re-taking a course or an exam.

Q: How were these exams developed?

A: The new exams, like provincial Grade 12 exams, are developed by teams of B.C. teachers who work with Ministry of Education coordinators. The teachers have current or recent experience in the subject and grade level. The exam questions are all based on what students are expected to learn in these courses.

The new graduation program and exams were developed after a series of public consultations held between 2001 and 2003. Every school board – as well as parents, teachers, students, principals and the general public – had the opportunity to provide feedback on the new requirements and their implementation.

Q: One government goal is to improve graduation rates. Won't the exams cause more students to drop out of school?

A: The goal is to improve graduation rates and student achievement. It is true that B.C. sets high expectations for students. The vast majority of students take on the challenge of meeting these expectations.

The answer is to help struggling students as they move through secondary school so they are successful in their courses, including Grade 8 and 9 courses as well as Grade 10 – 12 courses, and including those with exams. Lowering expectations is not the answer to improving graduation rates.

After blending classroom marks with provincial exam results for Grade 10 students who wrote the exams in January 2005, overall pass rates were higher than they would have been if final letter grades were determined by classroom marks alone.

Q: What supports are in place for vulnerable students or students with special needs when writing these exams?

A: There are a number of supports in place for vulnerable students or students with special needs who are taking these exams. These supports include:

- o Deferring a Grade 10 course - and the exam - until the Grade 11 or 12 year.
- o Take the course in Grade 10 but defer the exam up to the point of graduation.
- o The exams will be offered five times a year; students may write when they are ready, even if it is beyond the time the course work is completed.
- o Students with special needs have access to all of the exam-writing adaptations now available for Grade 12 students, depending on their individual needs. These adaptations include using a computer, extra time, a private administration space, large print or Braille, etc.

Grade 10 provincial exams count for only 20 per cent of the final course mark. There is flexibility in the exam program. Schools may exercise flexibility as they meet the needs of individual students. There is also flexibility in how schools support students in their classroom work.

Q: Do these exams cost the Ministry more money?

A: The budget from the former Grade 10 Foundation Skills Assessment has been allocated to the new Grade 10 examinations. The Assessment Branch's test development and marking budget has not increased.

Q: Do these exams create extra work for teachers?

A: Marking these exams is not expected to create extra work for teachers. Math and science exams will be marked provincially. Teachers are only required to mark the long answers for language arts and social studies.

The provincial Grade 10 and 11 exams can replace the existing year-end final exams that teachers are already marking.

Q: How will the ministry ensure marking is consistent across the province?

A: There is a very clear and consistent approach to local marking of the open response sections of the exams. Teachers receive training materials to mark the open response section of the language arts exams to a provincial standard.

School districts receive funds to train teachers to mark, using the provincial standards. The Ministry monitors marking results, on a sample basis. Training sessions have been held in school districts across the province, and the monitoring process has already been piloted.

Q: Won't Grade 10 exams force teachers to "teach to the test", leaving out other important things students should be learning?

A: The new provincial exams are based on B.C. curriculum. Teachers who cover the provincial curriculum are preparing their students for the test.

Q: How often does the ministry report provincial exam results?

A: Provincial exams are offered five times a year. The ministry reports the results to the general public annually, after all exam sessions have been completed.

Q: What about school district and individual school results?

A: The ministry reports the results for school districts and individual schools to the general public annually, with the provincial results, after all exam sessions have been completed.

