

Some Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination?

In 1997, the Alaska Legislature enacted a law that requires all Alaska high school students to pass an examination in reading, writing, and mathematics before they can receive a high school diploma. Students must pass the High School Qualifying Examination, in addition to completing all course requirements, to earn a high school diploma. Students who do not pass the examination will receive a certificate of attendance.

2. When do students have to start taking the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination?

Beginning with the graduating class of 2004, all students must pass the High School Qualifying Examination. The freshman class of 2000-2001 will be the first class required to pass the examination before their high schools can award them a diploma.

3. What will be measured on the examination?

The High School Qualifying Examination will consist of three tests: reading, writing and mathematics. The test questions will be based on the Alaska Student Performance Standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

4. Who is going to develop the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination?

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development will contract with a highly qualified commercial test publisher to develop the examination and test questions.

5. How will Alaskans know whether the examination is appropriate for our state?

During the development of the examination, the State Board of Education will appoint several committees of Alaskans to oversee the work of the test publisher that will be contracted to develop the test. The committees will make sure the examinations are fair for all students in Alaska and that they measure the things that Alaskans expect their young people to know by the time they graduate from high school. The committees will also look at such issues as test bias.

6. When will the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination be administered?

The examination will be administered twice each school year, once in the fall and once in the spring.

7. When can students first take the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination?

Students can take the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination for the first time in the spring of the 10th grade.

8. How long will students spend taking the examination?

A time limit will not be set for finishing the examination. Students will have as long as they need to complete it. However, most students can expect to spend about two to three hours to complete each of the three tests.

9. How will students find out about their examination results?

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development will coordinate the administration, scoring and reporting of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination. Following the administration and scoring of the examinations, the department will send individual results to students, their parents, and to the schools and school districts. The reports will show the parts of the examination each student passed and failed. The reports also will show when the next examination will be given.

10. What happens if a student fails the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination?

Students can retake the parts of the examination they do not pass the first time. They can retake parts of the examination as many times as necessary to pass for up to three years after they have left high school.

11. How will students be helped if they fail a portion of the examination?

High schools across the state will develop courses and alternate instructional programs for students who fail a portion of the examination. The courses will be designed to make sure students learn the essential knowledge measured on the examination.

12. Will special accommodations be made for special education or limited English speaking students?

Yes.

13. Will there be any financial cost to parents or students for taking the examination?

No.

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