

SECTION ONE

GENERAL INFORMATION

Purposes of the Exams

Regents Exams are achievement tests that are aligned with New York State's Learning Standards. Prepared by teacher examination committees and Department subject and testing specialists, Regents Exams provide schools with a basis for evaluating the quality of instruction and learning that have taken place. They are used by school personnel to identify major learning goals, offering both teachers and students a guide to important understandings, skills, and concepts. The exams also provide students, parents, counselors, administrators, college admissions officers, and employers with objective and easily understood achievement information for use in making sound educational and vocational decisions. Passing scores on the Regents Exams in English, mathematics, science, and social studies satisfy the State testing requirements for a high school diploma.

Regents Competency Tests (RCTs) are achievement tests designed to assess basic proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. General education students are not eligible to take RCTs. The RCTs are available only for students with disabilities who first enter Grade 9 prior to the September 2011–12 school year, as part of a safety net for such students.

Required Use of Exams

Regents Exams

Section 3.35 of the Rules of the Board of Regents relating to apportionment provides in part that schools receiving State aid shall make general use of Regents Exams in the senior high school grades. Nothing in this section, however, prohibits State aid to any school that administers approved alternative assessments in lieu of Regents Exams. (See the listing of Department-approved alternatives available on the Department web site at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/hsgen/archive/list.pdf>.)

Section 100.2(e) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1002.html#e>) requires public school districts to offer Regents courses of study and exams to all students who wish to earn a Regents diploma. Students shall have the opportunity to take Regents courses and Regents Exams in Grades 9 through 12 and, when appropriate, in Grade 8.

Regents Exams are designed to measure the achievement of students who have had instruction based on curriculum aligned with the commencement-level learning standards. Students are entitled to take Regents Exams no earlier than their completion of high school-level coursework deemed appropriate by the school.

State Testing Requirements for Graduation

Section 100.5(a)(5) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#a>) requires that all public school students earn passing scores on State exams in the areas of English; mathematics; United States history and government; science; and global history and geography to obtain a high school diploma.

General education students in public schools who first entered Grade 9 in September 1999 and thereafter, excepting students with disabilities who are eligible for the RCT Safety Net, must earn passing scores on the Regents Examinations in English, Global History and Geography, United States History and Government, one of the Regents Exams in the sciences, and one of the Regents Exams in mathematics. They are not eligible to take any RCTs. Additional information regarding graduation requirements is available at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/intro.html>.

RCT Safety Net and 55–64 Passing Score for a Local Diploma for Students with Disabilities. Students with disabilities are required to take the same Regents Exams as general education students. However, students with disabilities who first enter Grade 9 in September 2005 and thereafter may meet the exam requirements for a local diploma by earning scores between 55 and 64 on the five Regents Exams required for high school graduation. In addition, students with disabilities first entering Grade 9 prior to September 2011 who take the required Regents Exam but do not achieve a passing score on that exam may fulfill the exam requirement for a local diploma by passing the corresponding RCT(s) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/safetynetbrochure.htm>).

Students who are eligible to take the RCTs may also satisfy the State testing requirements for a local diploma by earning the minimum acceptable scores on the Department-approved alternative assessments. The list of approved alternatives that are acceptable for meeting competency requirements for a local high school diploma are available on the Department's web site at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/hsgen/#add-info>. For additional information on local diploma safety net options for students with disabilities, see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/localdiplomaoptions-may2011.pdf>.

Transfer Students. Students transferring into New York State schools must satisfy the State testing requirements in English, mathematics, and United States history and government. Depending on the grade to which the student is assigned upon such entry, the passing of the Regents Examination in Global History and Geography and a Regents exam in science may also be required to earn a high school diploma. More specific information on this topic may be found in Section 100.5(d)(5) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#d>).

Exam Centers

Regents Exams and RCTs may be administered only at official centers within New York State. The official centers include all registered secondary schools and other educational institutions that have been given specific approval to administer secondary-level State exams. Pursuant to Section 102.3 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the school principal or chief administrative officer of the exam center is responsible for the school's compliance with all regulations and Department policies governing the administration of these exams.

Subjects

The Department offers the following secondary-level exams:

Regents Examinations

English

Comprehensive English

Mathematics

Integrated Algebra

Geometry

Algebra 2/Trigonometry

Science

Living Environment

Physical Setting/Chemistry

Physical Setting/Earth Science

Physical Setting/Physics

Social Studies

Global History and Geography

United States History and Government

RCTs

Global Studies

Mathematics

Reading

Science

United States History and Government

Writing

Dates of Administration

The Department provides schools with exam schedules for the school year. Regents Exams in all subjects listed above are offered each year in June while a limited number of Regents Exams are offered each January and August. The RCTs are offered in all subjects in January, June, and August.

In general, the exam periods are scheduled in accordance with the following principles:

1. **January.** The four-day Regents Exam period is scheduled to occur during the last full week in January.
2. **June.** The eight-day Regents Exam period is scheduled to provide at least two, but no more than six, weekdays in the period that begins the day after the Regents Exam period and ends the last day of June.
3. **August.** The two-day Regents Exam period is scheduled to follow a summer school session of approximately 30 days.

Announcements concerning the dates and schedules for future Regents Exam periods are available on the Department's web site at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/schedules/>.

Exams Not Administered Due to Inclement Weather

During the January Regents Exam period, superintendents must follow normal procedures in determining whether school should be closed due to inclement weather. Schools may not administer State exams when weather conditions are severe enough to warrant closing school and canceling normal bus transportation.

If a school is closed and unable to administer State exams in January due to inclement weather, the superintendent, excepting those of the five large cities, must notify the BOCES district superintendent of the date(s) of closing and any exam(s) that were canceled.

Attendance Records

For purposes of meeting the 180-day requirement for calculation of State aid allocations, days on which secondary-level State exams are administered are counted. Schools are permitted to excuse students not taking a secondary-level State exam who are located in the same building as students taking a State exam; the day will count toward fulfilling the requirement that school districts provide at least 180 days of session during the school year, if such excusal is necessary to provide adequate staff and space for the administration of State exams.

Regents Exam days may also be claimed for the administration of local final exams, provided that the exams are administered during the regularly scheduled January and June Regents Exam periods. Regents Exam days may not be claimed for the administration of local final exams administered at times other than during the January and June Regents Exam periods.

If students in Grades 7 and/or 8 are located in the same building as students in Grades 9 through 12 who are taking State exams in January and June, the Grade 7 and/or 8 students may be excused from attending school, if doing so is necessary to provide adequate staff and space for the administration of exams.

Schools are expected to continue regular instruction during the January and June Regents Exam periods to the fullest extent possible. Classes may be canceled only when the number of students taking exams is so large that normal instruction cannot be carried on effectively.

Admission Requirements

Regents Exams

In accordance with Section 8.2 of the Rules of the Board of Regents, all students who have completed the course of study leading to a Regents Exam have the right to be admitted to that exam. **Students may not be barred from an exam for disciplinary reasons or because their achievement in a subject is considered unsatisfactory.** In the case of a science Regents Exam, only students who have also met the laboratory requirement, which includes 1200 minutes of hands-on laboratory experience with satisfactory laboratory reports, may be admitted. (See also *Credit by Exam* later in this section.)

RCTs

In public schools, only students with disabilities who first enter Grade 9 prior to September 2011 are eligible to take the RCTs. Additional information on eligibility for the RCT safety net option is available on the Department web site at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/localdiplomaoptions-may2011.pdf>. RCTs are administered to eligible students who have completed the unit of study requirements as follows:

- RCT in Mathematics — one unit of mathematics in Grades 9 through 12;
- RCT in Science — only after studying the science 7, 8, and 9 curriculum;
- RCT in Global Studies — two units of global studies in Grades 9 through 12;
- RCT in United States History and Government — one unit of United States history and government in Grades 9 through 12; and
- RCTs in Reading and Writing — students enrolled in Grades 11 and 12 may be admitted and are permitted to take these tests initially no earlier than January of Grade 11.

Eligible students may not be barred from any of these tests because their achievement in a course is considered unsatisfactory.

Credit by Exam

In accordance with Section 100.5(d)(1) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, students who have not completed the generally expected units of study may be admitted to a Regents Exam for the purpose of demonstrating academic proficiency acquired through independent, out of school, or other study (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#d>). Such students may be admitted to an exam only upon the determination by the superintendent of a public school district or the chief administrative officer of a nonpublic or charter school, or his or her designee, that based on the student's past academic performance, the student will benefit academically by exercising this option. School administrators are expected to develop local criteria, consistent with Section 100.5(d), for determining which students may attempt to earn credit without completing the course of study. Up to 6½ units of credit may be earned in this manner.

Pursuant to Section 8.2(c) of the Rules of the Board of Regents, in the case of the science Regents Exams, the student must meet the laboratory requirement before admission to the exam. With documentation, this requirement can be met through industrial and commercial experiences or by completing the necessary number of minutes of school laboratory exercises.

Testing Students Enrolled in Other Schools

Students enrolled in a high school other than the school in which an exam is to be administered must provide the test site administrator with written permission from their home school principal before being admitted to a State exam. The test site administrator must retain the written permission from the home school administrator for a minimum of one year from the date of testing. The school administering the exam must require that students from other schools provide adequate prior notice and present satisfactory personal identification. The school may establish its own policy with regard to charging nonresident students a reasonable fee to cover administrative and rating costs.

Use of Alternative Assessments

In accordance with Section 100.2(f) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1002.html#f>), the *Department may authorize* the use of alternative exams in lieu of Regents Exams. To be approved as substitutes for Regents Exams, the proposed alternative assessments must:

- be aligned with New York State's learning standards for that subject and be at least as rigorous as the corresponding required Regents Exam;
- meet technical criteria for validity, reliability, and freedom from bias. At a minimum, the assessment under consideration must document relationship to domain or learning standards; document reliability and interrater reliability, as appropriate; have standard rubrics, as appropriate; document the test development process; document procedures for establishing test performance standards, as appropriate; and document equating procedures or methods to ensure comparability of forms;
- be externally developed and administered under secure conditions; i.e., the assessment cannot be developed exclusively by the teachers in the school nor can the teachers have previous knowledge of the specific exam questions; and
- be available for use by any school or school district in New York State.

A list of the assessments which have been approved for use in lieu of Regents Exams is available on the Department's web site at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/hsgen/archive/list.pdf>.