

**KEYSTONE PROJECT BASED ASSESSMENTS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Introduction

Keystone Exams are state-developed end-of-course assessments. Based upon Chapter 4 regulations, each Keystone Exam is designed in modules that reflect distinct, related academic content common to the traditional progression of coursework. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has developed a project based assessment system (PBA) that is aligned with the modules for each Algebra I, Biology, and Literature Keystone Exam for students who are unable to demonstrate proficiency on a Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module. Successful completion of a project based assessment (PBA) aligned to the Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module on which a student did not demonstrate proficiency shall satisfy the Chapter 4 Keystone Exam graduation requirements.

A student who did not score proficient on a Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module shall be provided supplemental instruction consistent with the student's educational program by the student's school district, AVTS or charter school, including a cyber charter school, until the student can demonstrate proficiency in the subject area via the Keystone Exam or the student begins a project based assessment.

The project based assessment system shall be administered by schools and scored by statewide panels composed of teachers, principals, and curriculum specialists assembled by PDE. The statewide review panels shall score student projects according to scoring protocols and rubrics developed by PDE.

A student in grade 12 who has not demonstrated proficiency on a Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module may qualify to participate in one or more project based assessments if the student has met all of the following conditions:

- Has taken the course.
- Has met the attendance requirements of the school district, AVTS, or charter school, including a cyber charter school.
- Has participated in a satisfactory manner in supplemental instructional services consistent with the student's educational program provided by the school district, AVTS, or charter school, including cyber charter school.

A student below grade 12 who has not demonstrated proficiency on a Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module after at least two attempts on the exam may qualify to participate in one or more project based assessments if the student has met all of the following conditions:

- Has taken the course.
- Was unsuccessful in achieving a score of proficient on the Keystone Exam after at least two attempts.
- Has met the attendance requirements of the school district, AVTS or charter school, including a cyber charter school.
- Has participated in a satisfactory manner in supplemental instructional services consistent

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with the student's educational program provided by the school district, AVTS, or charter school, including a cyber charter school.

A student enrolled in a department-approved career and technical education program who has not demonstrated proficiency after one attempt on a Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module in Biology may qualify to participate in a Project Based Assessment in Biology if the student has met all of the following conditions:

- Has taken the course.
 - Has met the attendance requirements of the school district, AVTS or charter school, including a cyber charter school.
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1. What is Project Based Assessment and how is it different from project-based learning?

While project based learning is designed as an actual learning activity typically implemented in a classroom setting, Project Based Assessments are designed as a set of activities a student completes independently of classroom instruction in order to demonstrate proficiency in the content area and meet state graduation requirements.

2. Who developed the projects?

Groups of Pennsylvania educators convened to create the Project Based Assessments. Content area teachers represented a range of demographics: urban, suburban, and rural experience; experience with a wide range of student ability levels; and backgrounds in education, special education and English Language Learner students.

3. Who must demonstrate proficiency on Keystone Exams or a Keystone project based alternative?

The graduating class of 2017 is the first graduating class that must demonstrate proficiency in Algebra I, Biology, and Literature in order to meet state graduation requirements.

4. What roles and responsibilities are required at the school level in order to implement the Project Based Assessment process?

There are several key roles necessary to implement the project work:

- *LEA/School Assessment Coordinator - registers students for projects, assigns a Tutor to each student, assigns test administrators, and monitors student progress.*
- *Tutor - provides remediation on the Eligible Content as necessary, assesses work at each checkpoint, and approves the project for submission to the statewide review panel.*
- *Test Administrator - assigned by the School Assessment Coordinator to supervise students working on the projects.*

Note that a Test Administrator and Tutor may be the same individual.

5. What is a school's responsibility in terms of oversight of the students' PBA work?

When a student begins a Project Based Assessment, s/he is assigned a Tutor by the School Assessment Coordinator. The Tutor provides content area support (instruction on the Eligible

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Content of the module) as the student is progressing through the project. The Tutor should be a teacher certified in the content area of the Keystone Exam.

6. What is the project work flow?

Each project is broken into manageable tasks. A task may have one or more activities within it. At the end of each task, there is a checkpoint. Thus, when a task is completed, the student submits the task to the Tutor electronically. If the Tutor deems the work to be satisfactory, the student may move forward on the project. If the work is unsatisfactory, the Tutor provides remediation so the student can redo the activity and resubmit.

7. If a student moves to the project mode, how many projects per module will the student be required to complete?

One Project Based Assessment will be required for each module on which the student did not score proficient.

8. How are projects assigned to students?

School Assessment Coordinators will be directed to an online registration site where they register students, assign appropriate projects, and designate Tutors.

9. How will students access and work on the projects?

A secure, online portal will be available for students to access the projects and work on them. Test Administrators log students onto the portal and must be present when students are working on their projects.

10. How are the projects related to the Keystone Exams?

Project Based Assessments are module specific and the activities/tasks are framed around the Eligible Content of the specific Keystone Exam module.

11. If a student is required to do more than one module at a time, should the student do it concurrently or sequentially?

The number of modules in which a student is working at any point in time is a decision that should be made based upon the student and his/her individual circumstance.

12. If a student does not pass a module and is assigned a Project Based Assessment for that module, what is the number of hours, on average, the project will require for completion?

Projects were designed to be completed in 5-7 hours; however, students will be afforded the time necessary for completion. Actual time required for completion may vary based upon individual student needs and remediation. Field testing responses indicated that average time to complete a project was 8 – 10 hours.

13. What direction will LEAs have in terms of a timeline for student completion of projects?

LEAs should develop a reasonable timeline for students to reach project completion, keeping in mind that for seniors, the PBA is a graduation requirement. For seniors, projects must be submitted no later than January 15 of the senior year. This will allow for resubmission if the project is deemed unsatisfactory.

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14. Is the expectation for students to work on projects during school hours or independently either at home or school?

Schools must provide a supervised environment in which students work independently before, during, or after school. The project portal is password protected, and the student must be logged on by an assigned Test Administrator who must be continually present when students are working on their projects.

15. Who scores the Project Based Assessments?

Once submitted electronically, the Project Based Assessments will be scored by statewide review panels composed of teachers, principals, and curriculum specialists. Projects will be submitted and scored according to scoring protocols and a rubric developed by PDE.

16. What is the process to submit a project?

After a student has completed a project and applied the scoring guide via a self-assessment, the Tutor also applies the scoring guide to the project. If the Tutor determines that the completed project meets the scoring criteria, the Tutor submits it for evaluation by the statewide review panel for scoring. If the Tutor determines that the project does not appear to meet the scoring criteria, it does not move forward; rather, the student should receive tutoring/instruction on the Eligible Content of the project in order to independently make improvements before submittal.

17. What grade or score does a student receive from the evaluators?

All projects are reviewed by a statewide review panel consisting of three independent evaluators. Evaluators are not provided any information identifying the student, school, or LEA from which the project originated, nor are the evaluators identified to each other. Each evaluator assesses a project using a predefined set of evaluative criteria that is aligned to the Eligible Content. In order for a project to be considered satisfactory, all evaluative criteria must be marked as satisfactory by at least two evaluators. If and only if all evaluative criteria are marked as satisfactory by at least two evaluators, then the project will be considered to be satisfactory.

Any project for which one or more evaluative criteria have not been marked as satisfactory by two evaluators will be returned to the Tutor and the student with appropriate feedback from the evaluators. Once project remediation has been completed by the student, the project can be resubmitted for evaluation by the same three evaluators. The evaluators will determine if each evaluative criterion is now satisfactory. Evaluators will not be permitted to change a previously evaluated satisfactory criterion to unsatisfactory.

18. If a student's project is deemed unsatisfactory by the review panel, what is the next step?

If a project is deemed to be unsatisfactory, the project is returned to the Tutor who will direct the student to redo the part of the project deemed unsatisfactory and re-submit to the Tutor for submission to the statewide review panel.

The scoring guide will indicate which of the Eligible Content criteria have not been met. An annotation will detail the deficiency. The student may redo and resubmit the portion of the project deemed to be unsatisfactory.

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19. Is there a direct path for special needs students to go directly to the project?

A student's IEP is the guide for student participation in the Keystone Exams and Project Based Assessments. Students may move to the project after one attempt of the Keystone Exam if the IEP so states. (See Pennsylvania Code reference below.) As written in the IEP, all test accommodations apply.

22 Pa Code 4.24(g) *Special education students.* Children with disabilities who satisfactorily complete a special education program developed by an Individualized Education Program team under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and this part shall be granted and issued a regular high school diploma by the school district of residence, a charter school (including cyber charter school) and AVTS, if applicable. This subsection applies if the special education program of a child with a disability does not otherwise meet the requirements of this chapter.

20. Will projects be offered in other languages and will students be able to complete them in their native language?

Under consideration and subject to funding, math and science projects may be available in Spanish. No translated versions are available at this time.

21. What if a student uses the Internet or other resources while working on a project? Is this allowable?

It is acceptable for a student to use the Internet and SAS resource links included in the project or other reference sources to help in completing the project; however, this is a test and while working on projects, there should be no conversation with other students or adults and no ability to print/save the projects to another location. Keeping the projects secure is critical.

22. What is the ratio of Tutor to students?

The ratio of students to Tutors is a local decision.

23. Are there deadlines for submission of PBAs?

While projects may be submitted at any time, there are four defined submission dates: November 15, January 15, March 15, and May 15. Projects received by these dates will be sent to statewide panel members for review. Estimated turnaround time is 8-10 weeks.

24. When must seniors submit PBAs in order to meet state graduation requirements?

For seniors, projects must be submitted no later than January 15 of the senior year. (Reminder: The state graduation requirement is effective with the graduating class of 2017.)

25. Who qualifies as a Tutor? Must the Tutor be an LEA employee?

It is recommended that Tutors be certified in the content area for which they are providing help. Tutors must be employees or independent contractors approved by the LEA.

26. How does the Tutor provide assistance to the student?

The Tutor serves three major functions:

- *When queued by student, provides remediation on skills (Eligible Content) embedded in project*

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- *Reviews student work at defined checkpoints*
- *Submits project for statewide panel review*

27. If a student's project is deemed unsatisfactory, what next?

A project determined to be unsatisfactory will be returned to the student. The student may redo the project and resubmit, via the Tutor, for another review.

28. How does the PBA impact school accountability?

The PBA is a state graduation requirement and does not impact Keystone Exam performance for accountability.

29. If a student scores an overall Proficient on the Keystone Exam but less than proficient on a module, is the PBA required?

If a student earns an overall score of proficient or advanced, the PBA is not required.

30. What resources are available to support the Eligible Content of the Keystone Exams?

Links to SAS resources for each Eligible Content statement are embedded in the projects.

31. Is there a way for schools to share how they will implement and track PBAs?

PDE will create a Professional Learning Community in SAS. The PLC will be open to all users, and schools are welcome to share their approaches to scheduling, remediation strategies, and other key PBA-related initiatives.

32. How many times can a student take the Keystone Exam?

There is no limit as to how many times a student can take a Keystone Exam. Students may retake the exam at any time it is offered, even if working on a PBA.

33. Will there be technical support for the online PBA portal?

A direct link in the PBA portal allows students to access the SAS Help Desk whenever necessary. Online technical manuals will also be posted on the site for easy access.

34. Is there a religious opt out for the Project Based Assessment?

The religious opt out applies only to state assessments. Chapter 4 defines a state assessment as "a valid and reliable measurement of student performance on a set of academic standards as measured by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment or the Keystone Exams." Thus, the religious opt out does not apply to PBAs.

35. If a student qualifies for the PBA but the school determines the student should retake the Keystone Exam, can the student request the PBA?

This is a local decision. Keep in mind that while enrolled in the PBA, the student may retake the Keystone Exam.

36. How will PBA data be tracked as students move both within and outside the LEA?

As students move from one school to another, PBAs may be accessed by PA Student Secure ID. The receiving School Assessment Coordinator can then reassign Tutors.

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37. What must the student transcript display as related to the PBA?

Based upon proposed Chapter 4 regulations, the information presented on a transcript shall include the highest performance level demonstrated by a student on the associated Keystone Exam, validated local assessment or project-based assessment at the time the transcript is produced.

38. How many different projects at any given time are available for each module of each Keystone Exam?

One project per module will be available.

39. How will PBA evaluators be selected?

Evaluators will be invited to apply to become evaluators. Factors in selecting evaluators include certification in the Keystone Exam content area and teaching experience in the content area.