Keystone Project Based Assessments
Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

Keystone Exams are state-developed end-of-course assessments. Pursuant to 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 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. (Note: This requirement applies to students in the class of 2017 and beyond.)

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, Area Vocational Technical School 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 PBA.

The PBA 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 <u>in grade 12</u> who has not demonstrated proficiency on a Keystone Exam or Keystone Exam module may qualify to participate in one or more PBAs if the student has met all of the following conditions:
- Is in the graduating class of 2017 or beyond
- 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 <u>below grade 12</u> 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:
- Is in the graduating class of 2017 or beyond
- 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 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 PDE-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:
- Is in the graduating class of 2017 or beyond
- Has taken the course.
- Has met the attendance requirements of the school district, AVTS or charter school, including a cyber charter school.

If upon inspection, parents or guardians find the Keystone Exam (or portion of) to be in conflict with their religious beliefs and wish their students to be excused from the assessment, the right of the parents or guardians will not be denied upon written request that states the objection to the applicable school district superintendent, charter school chief executive officer or AVTS director. In this instance, students may move directly to the applicable PBA if the student has met the following conditions:
- Is in the graduating class of 2017 or beyond
- Has taken the course
- Has met the attendance requirements of the school district, AVTS or charter school, including a cyber charter school.

General Questions

1. **What are Project Based Assessments and how are they different from project-based learning?**
   While project based learning is designed as an actual learning activity typically implemented in a classroom setting, PBA*s 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 PBAs*. 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. **How are the projects related to the Keystone Exams?**
   PBAs are module specific and the activities/tasks are framed around the Eligible Content of the specific Keystone Exam module.

4. **How many different projects at any given time are available for each module of each Keystone Exam?**
   One project per module will be available each year. Once assigned a PBA, the student continues with it until completion regardless of time frame.

5. **Will there be technical support for the online PBA portal?**
   A direct link in the PBA portal allows Tutors and Test Administrators to access the SAS Help Desk whenever necessary. Online Getting Started and technical manuals are posted on the SAS site (http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/Keystone.aspx#) for easy access.

6. **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.

7. **When enrolling new students, how do I determine whether or not they are actively enrolled in a PBA?**
   If an error message appears when enrolling a student, the School Assessment Coordinator should contact the Help Desk to track down the problem.

8. **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 Secure ID. The receiving School Assessment Coordinator can then reassign Tutors and the student may resume work on the PBA.

9. **Will projects be offered in other languages and will students be able to complete them in their native language?**
   Subject to future funding, math and science projects may be available in Spanish. No translated versions are available at this time.

10. **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.

11. **May a student retake the Keystone Exam while working on PBA?**
    Once students qualify for the PBA, they may begin work on the PBA and may take the Keystone Exam at any time. Keep in mind that it is a matter of student choice whether or not to retake an exam while working on a PBA. If successful on the Keystone Exam, project work ends.

12. **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.*

13. **What is a school's responsibility in terms of oversight of the students' PBA work?**
    When a student begins a PBA, s/he is assigned a Tutor by the School Assessment Coordinator. The Tutor provides content area support (instruction on the Eligible Content of the module) as the student is progressing through the project. For test security purposes, a Test Administrator (or Tutor) must be present when students are working on their PBAs.

14. **If not proficient, how many times can a student retake the Keystone Exam?**
    For students who score less than Proficient, there is no limit as to how many times a student can retake a Keystone Exam. Students may retake the exam at any time it is offered, even if working on a PBA. Once a student has scored at the Proficient level on a Keystone Exam, they may not retake the exam.

15. **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, s/he has met state graduation requirements; thus, the student does not participate in the PBA. The PBA is only an option for those who have not met the state graduation requirement.

16. **Are there deadlines for submission of PBAs?**
    While projects may be submitted for review by a statewide panel at any time, there are currently no defined submission dates at this time. As projects are received, they are sent to panel members for review. Estimated turnaround time is 8-10 weeks.

17. **Will there be a deadline in the 2016-17 school year for submission of PBAs by seniors?**
    Effective with the 2016-17 school year, seniors' projects must be submitted no later than January 15 of the senior year.

18. **How do student results on the PBA impact a school's PA School Performance Profile (SPP)?**
    Calculations for Academic Performance do not include performance results on the Project Based Assessment.

Students and the Project Based Assessment

19. What are the system requirements for PBA?
To use the advanced features found in PBA, your computer should meet the following requirements:

Windows XP or higher
- *Mozilla Firefox 20.0 or higher*
- *Safari 5.0 or higher*
- *Opera 9.0 or higher*
- *Google Chrome 27.0 or higher*
- *Internet Explorer 8.0 or higher*

Mac OS 10.4 or higher
- *Safari 5.0 or higher*
- *Mozilla Firefox 20.0 or higher*
- *Opera 9.0 or higher*
- *Google Chrome 27.0 or higher*

Mobile Browsers
- *Safari 6.0 or higher*
- *Android 4.0 or higher*
- *Mozilla Firefox 3.5 or higher*

20. If a student moves to the project mode, how many projects per module will the student be required to complete?
One PBA will be required for each related Keystone Exam module on which the student did not achieve proficiency.

21. 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 appropriate remediation so the student can redo the activity and resubmit.

22. 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.

23. 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 or Tutors generate and provide an access code for students to access their projects.

24. **If a student is required to do more than one module at a time, should the student work on them concurrently or sequentially?**
The number of modules in which a student is working at any point in time is a local decision that should be made based upon the student and his/her individual circumstance.

25. **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 eight to 10 hours.

26. **The student receives a one-hour code to work on the PBA. Is there an auto-save function prior to the expiration of the one-hour time frame?**
Yes, there is an auto-save function. A student continuously working on the PBA is not required to enter a new 60-minute code. A code is only required for re-entry if there is a pause in the online activity after the 60-minute time frame.

27. **Can the readings and resources for the modules be printed for use while working on the project or must they be retrieved electronically as the student works through the PBA?**
Readings and associated resources may be printed for student use while the student is working online. They may not be removed from the test site by the student; if however, they are held by the Test Administrator or Tutor until the next session, they may be retrieved.

28. **May a student bring a textbook to a PBA work session?**
Students may not bring any texts or materials to the site; however, a school may provide resources on site for students and may include textbooks.

29. **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.

30. **Since the project may be downloaded as a pdf document, may the Tutors/Test Administrators provide a print copy and allow students to work in a paper and pencil format?**

Students may work in a paper and pencil format but must then enter their responses onto the online PBA. The pdf document must be collected by the Test Administrator/Tutor at the end of each session and may be returned to the students to continue working on in subsequent sessions.

31. If a PBA is evaluated as unsatisfactory and returned to the student, how many times can it be resubmitted to the evaluator?
PBAs may be submitted until the student earns a satisfactory mark. Tutors are advised to make the best effort to ensure that submitted projects are completed in a satisfactory manner.

32. If the PBA isn't approved by the end of the school year and there is a new PBA in each of the three Keystone tested areas, will the student continue with the current PBA or is s/he assigned a new PBA in the new school year?
Once engaged in a specific PBA, the students stay with the assigned PBA until they achieve proficiency. Since there is no time frame for completion set by PDE, students may continue working until the PBA has been evaluated as Proficient.

33. What direction will LEAs have in terms of a timeline for student completion of projects?
Local Education Agencie*s should develop a reasonable timeline for students to reach project completion, keeping in mind that for seniors, the PBA is a graduation requirement. For students in their senior year (graduating class of 2017 and beyond), projects must be submitted no later than January 15 of the senior year. This will allow for resubmission if the project is deemed unsatisfactory.*

34. 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.

Special Education and the Project Based Assessment

35. What is the most current information on PBAs as related to students with Individual Education Programs IEP)? More specifically, when students are taking the PBA, do they continue to have access to all Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) in their IEP or will they be limited to the "allowable accommodations?"
Accommodations and SDI included in the student's IEP are allowable accommodations when providing tutoring in the PBA process.

36. Are IEP teams able to waive student participation in the PBAs? Does this impact the 10 percent waiver allowance, and if so, how?

If an IEP specifies graduation requirements other than the Keystone Exam or PBA, then those students are not counted as part of the 10 percent waiver.

37. Can an IEP team determine that students move directly to PBA?
*As required under 34 CFR 300.160, the State must ensure that **all students are included in statewide assessments or an alternate assessment, if appropriate**. For federal accountability purposes, in PA a student with a disability must participate in the Keystone Exams by eleventh grade. The only exceptions to that requirement is if the student is participating in the alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities, the Pennsylvania Alternate State Assessment (PASA), or if the student has been excused from participation due to a religious exemption filed by the parent as required under Pa Code Chapter 4.*

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. As written in the IEP, all SDI included in the student's IEP applies.

38. Who makes the determination as the requirements for graduation for students with disabilities?
The IEP team determines the criteria the student will meet regarding graduation requirements. IEP teams may elect both credits and other activities to meet graduation requirements; it is not limited to an either/or choice.

Tutor Role in the Project Based Assessment

39. It is recommended that the tutor is a "certified teacher in the content area of the PBA." Special education teachers may not be certified in the content area. Can they serve as Tutors?
*This is an LEA decision. PDE recommends a certified teacher in the content area. Keep in mind that if the tutoring is delivered via a credit bearing course, the teacher **must** be certified in the content area for which the instruction is being delivered.*

The Bureau of Special Education strongly recommends that the Tutor work collaboratively with the student's special education teacher throughout the PBA process.

40. Must the Tutor be an LEA employee?
Tutors must be employees or independent contractors approved by the LEA.

41. *How does the Tutor provide assistance to the student?*
The Tutor serves three major functions:
- *When sent a message by the student, Tutor provides remediation on skills (Eligible Content) embedded in project.*
- *Tutor evaluates student work at defined checkpoints.*

- *Tutor submits PBA for statewide panel review.*

42. What is the ratio of Tutor to students?
The ratio of students to Tutors is a local decision.

43. Can virtual environments be used for tutoring for the PBAs?
Tutoring may be delivered virtually; however, a Test Administrator must be present when students are working on the project.

Evaluator Role

44. 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.

45. 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. PBAs sent to evaluators do not include any identifying information as to the student or district.

46. How will PBA evaluators be selected?
Educators 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.

47. What grade or score does a student receive from the evaluators?
Projects are scored as either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. A Satisfactory is recorded as Proficient for state graduation purposes.

48. 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.

Projects may be submitted/resubmitted until scored Satisfactory by the Evaluators.

Transcripts/Chapter 4 Graduation Requirements

49. What must the student transcript display as related to the PBA?
Based upon 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.   If a student receives a satisfactory mark on the PBA, the transcript reflects a proficient performance level. Note: This requirement takes effect with the 2016-2017 graduating class.

50. What is indicated on the transcript if there is a religious opt out?
Students who opt out for religious reasons must participate in the PBA; thus, the transcript will reflect the earned score on the PBA.

51. If a high school has more than 10 percent of its graduation class unsuccessful in completing a project based assessment, they must apply for a waiver. Are IEP students counted as part of the 10 percent if a waiver is used?
If an IEP specifies graduation requirements other than the Keystone Exam or PBA, then those students are not counted as part of the 10 percent.