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**TO:** Local Education Agency Superintendents

**FROM:** Chandra Haislet, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Assessment, Accountability and Performance Reporting

**DATE:** October 19, 2023

**SUBJECT:** American Government and Life Science End of Course Exam Grade Conversion

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform local education agencies (LEAs) of the Grade Conversion Scale (GCS) for the American Government and Life Science End of Course (EOC) exams.

### **Background of the EOC Exam and COMAR Adoption**

The Maryland State Board of Education adopted *COMAR 13A.03.02 Graduation Requirements for Public High Schools in Maryland* and *13A.03.04 Test Administration and Data Reporting Policies and Procedures* on July 25, 2023.

- Beginning in school year (SY) 2023-2024, first-time ninth grade students who take a **high school-level life science course** are required to take the **Life Science Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (LS MISA)** EOC exam, which will count for 20% of their final course grade.
- Students entering ninth grade in SY 2023-2024 who take a **high school-level American government course** are also required to take the **American Government** EOC exam, which will count for 20% of their final course grade.
- The update to COMAR removes the EOC exam requirement for the mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments in high school.

An EOC exam is a state-administered high school assessment, incorporated into LEA courses as a final exam with a percentage counting towards the students' final course grade. The EOC exam is different from a high-stakes exit assessment. Students no longer must earn a passing score as an assessment graduation requirement for high school.

For more information and guidance regarding the EOC exams, please refer to the FAQ document [End of Course Assessment FAQ \(September 2023\)](#).

### **Grade Conversion Score (GCS) Model Analysis**

MSDE convened a grading policy workgroup with 60 LEA representatives, including educators, school administrators, and special education specialists. The workgroup met five times from January 2022 to February

2022 to solicit input on defining and communicating grading scales and policies that support student achievement without having a disproportionate negative impact on student group performance. This work, which was part of a four-part series of workgroup engagement from October 2021 to August 2022 to support EOC transition planning provided the following guiding principles and recommendations:

- The distribution of GCS should mirror the distribution of teacher-determined course grades in LEAs.
- The GCS should align with LEA letter-grade descriptions in local grading policies.
- The resultant method should not negatively impact students, and in particular historically underserved students.
- The resultant method should provide flexibility for LEAs to use with existing grading policies while maintaining a standardized assessment across the State.
- The method should encourage and incentivize students to perform well on a rigorous assessment.

MSDE conducted policy scans, outreach to other state education agencies, and multiple types of analyses to support the model options and determination of the approved method for converting a score on the LS MISA and Government EOC exams to a grade.

- **Survey:** A survey was distributed to LEAs to determine how each LEA scales and calculates grades.
- **Alignment study:** The MCAP LS MISA and American Government Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) were compared to LEA grade descriptors. **All 24 LEA grading policies were reviewed.**
- **Comparative analysis:** MSDE conducted a comparative analysis of state grading policies and EOC policy considerations for student groups and students taking advanced coursework.
- **Outreach:** MSDE conducted outreach with other states, specifically Georgia, about GCS model development and implementation.
- **Impact analysis:** Several analyses were performed to determine the effect of applying the LS MISA and American Government assessments as 20% of student final course grades using SY 2021-2022 assessment performance. Correlations between assessment scale scores and course grades were analyzed, with results aggregated by student group (race/ethnicity and service group) to examine the equity of model implementation.

### Overview of Approved Grade Conversion Score (GCS) Model

The approved GCS model provides a rigorous assessment of student standards mastery and limits the negative impact on student grades. In the GCS model, **the lowest grade conversion score on the EOC exam has been set at 50%**. The output from the GCS model distributes grades comparably to the ways in which LEAs distribute A-D letter grades as student final course grades. The GCS model also allows students to maintain or increase their final course grade through performing well on the EOC exam and provides a rigorous test for high-achieving students.

### Grade Conversion Score (GCS) Table

Letter Grade	GCS Range	LS MISA Scale Score Range	American Government Scale Score Range
A	90 – 100	757 – 850	466 – 650
B	80 – 89	744 – 756	442 – 465

<b>C</b>	70 – 79	737 – 743	419 – 441
<b>D</b>	60 – 69	731 – 736	394 – 418
<b>F</b>	50 – 59	650 – 730	240 – 393

**LS MISA EOC Exam:**

- Ceiling: Scale scores at or above 789 receive a GCS of 100 and a letter grade of A.
- Floor: Scale scores at or below 699 receive a GCS of 50 and a letter grade of F.

**American Government EOC Exam:**

- Ceiling: Scale scores at or above 551 receive a GCS of 100 and a letter grade of A.
- Floor: Scale scores at or below 334 receive a GCS of 50 and a letter grade of F.

**EOC Technical Assistance and Office Hours**

MSDE will continue to provide ongoing technical assistance to LEAs to support the successful implementation of EOC exams as required in the recently adopted COMAR 13A.03.02 Graduation Requirements for Public High Schools in Maryland *and* 13A.03.04 Test Administration and Data Reporting Policies and Procedures. MSDE will continue providing ongoing updates at the monthly Assistant Superintendent meetings. As noted in the August 18<sup>th</sup> weekly superintendent memo, MSDE provided office hours on August 21<sup>st</sup> and has scheduled Additional Monthly Office Hours for Content Supervisors and Local Accountability Coordinators (LACs) to ask EOC and GCS focused questions are scheduled on the dates listed below:

- October 30, 2023: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. [Join with Google Meet](#)
- November 20, 2023: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. [Join with Google Meet](#)
- December 18, 2023: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. [Join with Google Meet](#)
- January 8, 2024: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. [Join with Google Meet](#)
- January 31, 2024: 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. [Join with Google Meet](#)

MSDE will continue providing ongoing updates at every scheduled Assistant Superintendent meeting. Additionally, MSDE will be releasing EOC guidance for LEAs including information for content supervisors, LACs, caregivers, and students prior to the December 4, 2023 - January 19, 2024 [testing window](#) for LS MISA and American Government.

For questions on engagement opportunities or the Grade Conversion Scale (GCS) for the Government and Life Science End of Course (EOC) exams, please contact Chandra Haislet, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Assessment, Accountability and Performance Reporting at [chandra.haislet@maryland.gov](mailto:chandra.haislet@maryland.gov) or by phone at (410) 767-0025.