Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What grades are tested for the WCAS?
A: Grade 5, Grade 8, Grade 11

Q: What learning standards are assessed by the WCAS?

The WCAS assesses all three dimensions of the learning standards (Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, Crosscutting Concepts).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards Assessed</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Grade 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-5 band of NGSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle school band of NGSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school band of NGSS</td>
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Q: What are the test windows for spring 2019?
A: Test Windows

- Grade 5 and 8 online testing is April 15 through June 7. Paper/pencil testing is available only to support large print, Braille, and standard print forms for students whose IEP or 504 plan states paper is the appropriate testing mode. The paper/pencil window is April 15 through May 24.
- Grade 11 online testing is May 6 through June 7. Paper/pencil testing is available only to support large print, Braille, and standard print forms for students whose IEP or 504 plan states paper is the appropriate testing mode. The paper/pencil window is May 3 through May 24.

Q: How much time is needed for the tests?
A: The WCAS tests were designed to take approximately as long as the former MSP and Biology EOC tests. This information is for scheduling purposes only, as the tests are not timed.

- Grade 5: 90 minutes
- Grade 8: 105 minutes
- Grade 11: 120 minutes

Q: Does the WCAS have to be completed in one sitting?
A: The WCAS may be given in multiple sittings like the Smarter Balanced ELA and Math assessments. One to three sessions are recommended.
Q: How do I access the WCAS Training Tests?
A: The WCAS Training Tests are available on the Washington State Testing Portal. Additional training test resources include the Online Training Test Support document and a recording of the “How to Work with the WCAS Training Tests” webinar.

To experience the greatest variety of question types and test functionalities, students in 5th, 8th, and 11th grade should interact with the training tests at all three grade levels.

Q: How do I access the Test Design and Item Specifications be available?
A: The DRAFT Test Design and Item Specifications documents are available and are posted on the science assessment webpage. The documents include a small sample of specifications for each grade. The sample will continue to expand through the 2018–19 school year until full Performance Expectation coverage is achieved.

Q: What science test do high school students take this spring?
A: House Bill 2224 postponed the high school science assessment graduation requirement until the Class of 2021. This means that students in the classes of 2019 and 2020 do not need to pass a science assessment in order to graduate. The table below details the federal accountability (ESSA) and assessment graduation requirements (HB 2224) for the classes of 2018 through 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade in 2018-29</th>
<th>Class of...</th>
<th>Science Assessment Spring 2019</th>
<th>Science Assessment Spring 2020 and beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>WCAS for federal accountability</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>WCAS for graduation and federal/state accountability in 11th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>WCAS for graduation and federal/state accountability in 11th grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduation alternatives will become available after the Class of 2021 takes the high school WCAS.
Q: Will WCAS student test scores be available 3 weeks after testing like Smarter Balanced scores are?
A: No, WCAS scores will not be available that quickly. The WCAS is not an adaptive test, so it takes longer to finalize student scores. Scores from the WCAS will likely be available in the Online Reporting System in late July.

Q: What do the tests look like?
A: WCAS features:
- Consist of several item clusters (items associated to common stimuli) and standalone items.
- Require approximately the same testing times as previous state science assessments.
- Use the same online engine as the Smarter Balanced assessments. For item clusters, stimuli will appear on left side of screen, with associated items on the right side. Standalone items will occupy the entire screen.
- Have some clusters with more than one stimulus. The first stimulus is collapsed when the second stimulus is provided. Once a stimulus is presented it is available to the student throughout the assessment.
- Have some locking items where the student cannot change their answer once they have moved on to the next item. This allows subsequent items to update the student with correct information. An “attention” box warns the student that they will not be able to change their answer once they move on, and will give the student a chance to return to the item and change their answer.
- Include a variety of item types:
  - Selected Response—multiple choice, multiple select
  - Technology Enhanced—ex: drag and drop, drop-down choices, simulations, graphing
  - Constructed Response—short answer
  - Will include multi-part items:
    - Parts labeled with letters A, B, and C.
    - May have a mix of item types. May ask for evidence to support an answer from a previous part of the item.

Q: What formative assessment resources are available that can help me and my students measure progress toward learning the Washington State 2013 K-12 Science Learning Standards (NGSS) as assessed on the WCAS?
A: The STEM Teaching Tools website has tools that can help teach science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and is currently focused on supporting the teaching of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Each tool is focused on a specific issue and leverages the best knowledge from research and practice.
Recommended tools:
- Prompts for Integrating Crosscutting Concepts Into Assessment and Instruction
- Integrating Science Practices Into Assessment Tasks
- Equity Assessment Instruction Practices:
  How can formative assessment support culturally responsive argumentation in a classroom community?
- Assessment Practices:
  How can assessments be designed to engage students in the range of science and engineering practices?
- Steps to Designing a Three Dimensional Assessment
Q: How can I get involved in science assessment development?
A: Please consider applying for one or more science assessment events this year. Science assessment work groups that are convened every year include. Visit the Professional Development Opportunities webpage for more information.

Please sign up to receive email/text updates from the science assessment team:
Go to the Subscribe page for GovDelivery. Choose a subscription type. Enter your email address/wireless number. On the Subscriptions page, select Content Areas > Science, then select the grade band(s) for which you would like to receive information. If you are interested in receiving updates from other OSPI departments, you can select those areas as well. Follow the directions until you have completed registration.

Check out our additional FAQs from previous webinars:

Answers to Questions from the How to Work with the WCAS Training Test webinar January 10, 2018
Answers to Questions from the Science Test and Item Specifications Release webinar January 24, 2018
Answers to Questions from the Understanding WCAS Score Reports webinar September 20, 2018