

## Credit by Exam Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. What is credit by examination?

Credit by examination (CBE) is one method for students to demonstrate proficiency in grade-level or course content. Students in elementary schools may be accelerated in subjects or grade levels based on results on a CBE assessment(s). Likewise, secondary students may be accelerated or earn course credit towards graduation requirements. Approved CBEs must cover all assessable Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the subject area or course.

### 2. Where can I find the laws and rules that govern credit by examination?

The state law that governs credit by examination is Texas Education Code (TEC), §§ [25.007](#) and [28.023](#). The State Board of Education rules concerning credit by examination can be found in Texas Administrative Code (TAC) [§74.24](#).

### 3. Does a school district have to offer credit-by-examination assessments (CBEs)?

Yes. TEC §28.023(a) requires a school district to provide students with the opportunity to take CBEs.

### 4. What CBEs are available for acceleration in elementary grades?

This can vary from district to district.

Any credit by examination approved for use by the school district must meet all the requirements in TEC §28.023 and TAC §74.24(b)(2), including thoroughly testing the TEKS for the applicable subject and grade level. CBEs for elementary grade levels may include those developed by Texas Tech University, The University of Texas at Austin, the school district, or another entity. A school district must have the approval of the school district board of trustees to develop its own tests or to purchase examinations.

### 5. What exams does a student need to take in order to skip an elementary grade level?

TAC §74.24(b)(1) requires a school district to develop procedures for kindergarten acceleration that are approved by the school district board of trustees.

For grades 1-5, TAC §74.24(b)(2) states that a student must be accelerated one grade if the student meets the following requirements:

- the student scores 80% on a criterion-referenced test for the grade level he or she wants to skip in each of the following areas: language arts and reading, mathematics, science, and social studies;
- a school district representative recommends that the student be accelerated; and
- the student's parent or guardian gives written approval for the acceleration.

## **6. What CBEs are available for courses in Grades 6-12?**

This can vary from district to district.

TAC §74.24(c)(1) requires the school district board of trustees to approve for each high school course, to the extent available, at least four examinations. The school district or the provider of the assessment must certify that the CBE meets all the requirements in TEC §28.023 and TAC §74.24(c)(2)-(4).

These must include College Board advanced placement (AP) exams and College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams. Additional CBEs may include those developed by Texas Tech University, The University of Texas at Austin, the school district, or another entity. A school district must have the approval of the school district board of trustees to develop its own tests or to purchase examinations.

## **7. Can the STAAR assessment count as credit by examination?**

No. A STAAR assessment cannot be used for purposes of credit by examination or award of credit ([TAC §101.3021\(c\)](#)). STAAR assessments do not cover all assessable standards as required by credit by examination rules.

## **8. Is there a cost associated with taking a CBE?**

In accordance with [TEC §11.158](#) and TAC §74.24(a)(3), a school district may not charge a student or parent for the administration of a CBE. However, if a parent requests an alternative examination not provided by the district, then the parent may pay for the exam which the district may administer and may choose to accept the results.

## **9. When are CBEs administered to students?**

A school district must annually provide at least four testing opportunities as follows:

- one window to test between January 1 and March 31;
- one window to test between April 1 and June 30;
- one window to test between July 1 and September 30; and
- one window to test between October 1 and December 31.

Each examination for acceleration for each elementary grade level and for credit for secondary school academic subjects must be made available during each window unless the examination has an administration date that is established by an entity other than the school district (for example, AP tests administered by the College Board).

A student may take a specific examination only once during each window. The testing window must be designed to meet the needs of all students. The dates must be publicized to the community.

A school district must provide opportunities for a student who is homeless or in substitute care who transfers to the district after the start of the school year to be administered credit by examination at any point during the school year.

#### **10. When does my district offer credit by exam?**

Within the windows established by rule, the district may develop its own schedule for administering credit by examination as it fits their resources. The testing window must be designed to meet the needs of all students. The dates must be publicized in the community. If you have questions regarding the testing dates, times, and location, contact your local school district directly.

#### **11. How can a student study for a CBE?**

CBEs are not state-developed tests, and TEA does not provide specific study resources for any given test.

CBEs are required to test all assessable TEKS for a grade-level subject or course. Therefore, a student may choose to study using the [TEKS standards](#) for a course. For the two providers approved in rule, the University of Texas and Texas Tech University, study guides are available online (linked below.)

[University of Texas CBE Study Guides](#)

[Texas Tech University CBE Review Sheets](#)

Other third-party providers of a CBE assessment may offer study materials for their individual assessments. For other assessment providers, contact your school district to determine which CBEs are approved for use in your district.

#### **12. Are there any limitations on administering or taking credit by examination?**

In accordance with TAC §74.24(a), a student may only attempt credit by examination once during each of the required windows.

TAC §74.24(c)(9)-(10) states that a student may not attempt to earn credit by examination for a specific high school course more than two times. Additionally, if a student fails to earn credit by examination for a specific high school course before the beginning of the school year in which the student would ordinarily be required to enroll in that course in accordance with the school district's prescribed course sequence, the student must satisfactorily complete the course to receive credit.

A school district may allow a student to attempt a credit by examination at a time outside of their published testing dates/windows. This is a local decision.

#### **13. If a district chooses to develop its own CBE or purchase from a provider, what are the criteria for the assessment?**

In accordance with TAC §74.24(c)(2), and prior to the first administration of the assessment, the district must ensure that a CBE:

- covers all assessable Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course;
- has not been published or made publicly available;
- will only be administered in a secure environment under standardized conditions by a school district or institution of higher education;
- has been evaluated to ensure test scores can be interpreted as indicators of what the test is intended to measure; and
- has been evaluated to ensure consistency of test results across testing conditions.

**14. What additional criteria apply to a CBE for a course that has an end-of-course (EOC) assessment (e.g., Algebra I)?**

In accordance with §TAC 74.24(c)(4), the school district or the provider of the assessment must certify, prior to the first administration, that the examination meets the criteria listed in #14 and has been externally validated and determined to

- align to and appropriately address all assessable TEKS for the course;
- assess the appropriate level of rigor for each student expectation; and
- yield comparable distribution of results across tested subgroups.

**15. What is the audit requirement for credit by examinations?**

Texas Tech University and The University of Texas at Austin shall arrange for a third party to conduct an audit, on a rotating basis annually, of at least 20% of the assessments they provide (TAC §74.24(a)(3)(B)).

In accordance with §TAC 74.24(c)(1), A school district board of trustees must approve an audit process to be completed for CBEs developed by the district or another provider. If the district is using assessments by an outside entity, the district may choose to accept the audit of the provider or conduct its own audit.

**16. A school district or provider of a CBE must make public an annual report. What information must be included in this annual credit by examination report?**

In accordance with §TAC 74.24(c)(3), the annual report must include

- the test development process;
- a statement certifying that the examination meets the criteria above;
- the number of students who took each examination;
- the number of students who scored 70% or above on each examination;
- the number of students who scored 80% or above on each examination; and
- the average score for all students who took the examination for each examination.

**17. What additional annual reporting is required for a CBE for a course that has an end-of-course (EOC) assessment (e.g., Algebra I)?**

For a CBE for a course that has an EOC assessment, and in accordance with TAC §74.24(c)(6), a school district or the provider of the CBE must also make public:

- all relevant test development specifications;
- a statement certifying that the examination meets all the required criteria; and
- results for all tested subgroups disaggregated by students who receive prior instruction and students with no prior instruction and including descriptive data for small subgroups.

**18. What should a district enter on the student's transcript if the student makes a 3 or higher on an AP exam?**

AP exams do not return scores on a scale of 100. Some test vendors have published score crosswalks for the purpose of determining the test score equivalent on a 100-point scale that districts may use as guidance. The district must make the determination as to how a given CBE score equates to the required scale in order to document the score appropriately on the transcript.

**19. How do parents or students obtain results for CBE?**

Unlike the statewide assessments (STAAR), credit by examination is administered at the local district level using assessments approved by the individual school district. The TEA does not score nor keep records of credit by examination for individual students. To learn the results of a student's exam, parents or students will need to contact your local school district or the test vendor directly.

**20. Are the grades earned by CBE counted in a student's grade point average (GPA) or class rank?**

[TEC §28.0216](#) grants decision-making concerning the calculation of GPA and class rank to the local board of trustees. For students who earn credit in a subject based on an examination on which the student scored 80% or higher, the school district must enter the examination score on the student's transcript.

**21. If a student takes and passes an Algebra I CBE, does the student also have to take the Algebra I EOC?**

In accordance with TAC §74.24(c)(11), if a student is given credit in a subject based on a CBE on which the student scored 80% or higher without prior instruction, then the student is not required to take an applicable end-of-course assessment for the course. The score must also be documented on the student's transcript (also refer to #19).

If the student has had prior instruction in the course and is taking the CBE for credit recovery in accordance with local policy, the student is still obligated to satisfy the STAAR EOC requirements for graduation.



**22. Is CBE an option for a student to earn credit if the student took a high school course but did not pass?**

In accordance with local school district policy, and TAC §74.24(c)(12), a student in any secondary grade may be given credit for an academic subject in which he or she had some prior instruction if the student scores 70% on a criterion-referenced test approved by the school district board of trustees for the applicable course.