



***Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent***  
***“Making Education Work for All Georgians”***

**General Guidance for State Board of Education Rule  
160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS**

**VERSION 1.1**



# Georgia Department of Education

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### Document Version History

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Version 1	July 8, 2010	Initial final document release
Version 1.1	January 23, 2012	Updated state seal, and footers; updated references to Express program hosted by the Department; clarified waiver and variance steps and timelines.

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## **General Guidance for State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS**

### **Introduction**

This guidance document is a companion to Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS. The contents of this document include additional clarification of the requirements set forth in rule as well as providing best practices and answers to commonly asked questions. Guidance documents are not considered to have the same effect and requirement as a rule promulgated by the Georgia State Board of Education.

Inquiries concerning this guidance document should be directed to the Policy Division at the Georgia Department of Education by email at [policy@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:policy@doe.k12.ga.us) or by telephone at 404-657-2965.

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## Part 1: Definitions and Acronyms

**Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)** – the state agency charged with the fiscal and administrative management of certain aspects of K-12 public education, including the implementation of federal and state mandates. Such management is subject to supervision and oversight by the State Board of Education.

**Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT)** – a set of four curriculum based assessments that students must pass in accordance with State Board Rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessment in order to earn a regular Georgia high school diploma. The tests are normally taken for the first time in spring of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and cover English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

**Georgia High School Writing Test (GHSWT)** – a performance-based writing assessment that is taken for the first time in fall of the 11th grade. Students must pass this test in order to earn a regular Georgia high school diploma.

**Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)** – the current state curriculum for use in Georgia public schools. The GPS set forth what students should know and be able to do within specific subjects and courses.

**High school graduation assessment** – a test or tests that students must pass in order to receive a Georgia high school diploma as defined and established in State Board of Education rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessment. The current high school graduation assessments include the GHSGT and the GHSWT. The definition further includes the former high school graduation assessment administered in Georgia public schools known as the Basic Skills Test (BST). The BST were administered until the 1990-91 ninth graders graduated in June 1994. Students who entered ninth grade before July 1, 1991, and who completed all high school diploma requirements in effect at that time, except the graduation assessment, can return to attempt the BST they have not passed. However, students who entered ninth grade before July 1, 1991 and dropped out of school for a year or more, without having completed all required assessments and other graduation requirements in effect when they left school, must pass the GHSGT that are required of the class in which they re-enrolled.

**Local Educational Agency (LEA)** – local school system pursuant to local board of education control and management.

**Quality Core Curriculum (QCC)** – the previous state curriculum used in Georgia public schools that was the predecessor to the Georgia Performance Standards.

**State Board of Education (SBOE)** – constitutional authority which defines education policy for public K-12 education agencies in Georgia.

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**Substantial hardship** - a significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of deprivation to the individual requesting a waiver.

**Variance** – a decision to grant a modification to all or part of the literal requirements of a rule in lieu of the standard application of the rule.

**Waiver** – a decision not to apply all or part of a rule to a person who is subject.

## Part 1: LEA Notification of Parents and Students Regarding the Waiver and Variance Process

State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS sets forth several provisions, in section (2)(a), which LEAs are required to perform concerning student notification of the waiver and variance process. These include the following:

- Each LEA is required to develop a process for notifying students and parents or guardians of the procedures related to the application and granting of waivers and variances.
  - The GaDOE will make available guidelines, guidance and application forms to aid LEAs in administering the waiver and variance process.
  - Notifying students and parents of this process could include publishing the necessary information in the student handbook, information published on the LEA website, and providing notification with individual score reports of the high school graduation assessments provided to students and parents.
- Each LEA is required to provide information regarding waivers, variances and specific remedial opportunities available for students and must be included with all high school graduation assessment score reports sent to students and parents.
  - After each administration of the high school graduation assessments, the LEA must include, with each individual score report from the testing vendor, a notification to the student and parent of possible opportunities for a waiver, variance and remediation.
  - The GaDOE has provided a sample document that can be used for this purpose in Appendix A.
- Each LEA is required to notify parents or guardians or the student, if age 18 or greater, that meeting the eligibility criteria does not ensure that a waiver or variance will be granted.
  - Complying with requirement could include publishing the necessary information in the student handbook, information published on the LEA website, and any other communications provided to applicants concerning waivers by the LEA.
  - The GaDOE will also include this information on application forms for waivers to assist LEAs in this requirement.

## Part 2: Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian and Student

Section (2)(b) and (2)(c) of State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS requires that requests for a waiver or variance be submitted to the LEA by the student and parent/guardian or by the student if such student is at least 18 years of age or older. Additionally the request shall contain the information as established by the GaDOE. The bulleted items below express the requirement as stated in the rule and

- (2)(b) Requests for a waiver or variance of a high school graduation assessment(s) shall be filed with the local school superintendent, or his or her designee, by the student and parent/guardian or by the student if such student is at least 18 years of age or older.
  - Requests for waivers and variances shall be filed by the student and parent, guardian or other person who has the authority to make educational decisions on behalf of the student.
  - Students aged 18 years or older, or students legally emancipated shall submit the request for waiver or variance unless such student has provided written permission for the parent, guardian or other person to make application and educational decisions on their behalf.
- (2)(c) The request submitted to the LEA by the student and parent/guardian or by the student if such student is at least 18 years of age or older, shall contain the information as established by the GaDOE. Requests for a waiver or variance submitted to an LEA and found to be missing substantial information, as established by the GaDOE, may be returned to the requestor.
  - Requests for waiver or variance by the student or parent/guardian must include:
    - Whether the student is seeking a waiver or variance
    - The specific facts that would justify the waiver or variance.
    - The reason why the variance or waiver requested would serve the purpose of the underlying requirement. These reasons must be in accordance with the purposes for waivers and variances as established in the rule and guidelines.
    - Written permission for the GaDOE staff to receive all records that pertain to the request.
  - Students requesting a variance also have the responsibility of ensuring that they have taken advantage of every re-testing opportunity for the relevant section of the high school graduation assessment. While students must have attempted the relevant sections of the high school graduation assessment a minimum of four times prior too submitting a variance request, research shows a strong indication that student pass rates for the tests increase with the number of re-testing opportunities. For this reason, students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of each of the five re-testing sessions before submitting a variance request. Students also have the responsibility of providing documentation of having received remediation in the sections for which the variance is being sought.

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- It is important that a request for a waiver or variance fully and completely answer all required information. Failure to supply all the required information will delay processing of the waiver or variance application. Additionally, each LEA reserves the right to return the request for waiver or variance to the individual filing the request if information is incomplete or unanswered.

### Part 3: Waivers

Section (2)(d) of State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS sets forth the minimum criteria for a waiver. Further, this provision requires each local superintendent to certify that the request meets one or both of the minimum criteria for a waiver. A local superintendent, or his or her designee, should not certify and submit to the GaDOE a waiver request that:

1. Does not contain all the required information as specified in rule, guidelines and guidance established by GaDOE,
2. Contains only identical information as a waiver request previously submitted to and considered by the State Board of Education, or
3. Clearly fails to establish the student had a disability that directly related to his or her ability to pass a particular section of the high school graduation assessment or the student did not have a reasonable opportunity to pass a particular section of the high school graduation assessment due to a substantial hardship beyond the student's control.

By their very nature, each waiver request is as unique as the individual for whom they are filed. Because of this, it is very important that individuals completing a waiver request and application are as thorough and detailed as possible. It is important to note that all the GaDOE and the State Board of Education know about an individual case and the specific details are what is communicated in the request for a waiver and the supporting information supplied by the student, parent/guardian and the LEA.

Waiver minimum eligibility criteria fall into one of two broad categories: disability or hardship. An applicant may base their waiver request on one or both of these minimum eligibility categories. Because each case is unique, the waiver is judged by the State Board of Education based on the facts that are included in the waiver request and the supporting information supplied by the student, parent/guardian and the LEA. Below are supporting details and suggestions that may assist applicants in fully explaining their case based on the requirements set forth in the rule. An applicant addressing some or all of the supporting details and suggestions cited below does not guarantee or ensure that the waiver will be approved by the State Board of Education.

A Disability Waiver is defined in rule as a student disability that is directly related to his or her ability to pass a particular section of the high school graduation assessment. When creating a waiver request, applicants must discuss how their specific situation and facts meet the requirements for a disability waiver. Applicants may consider addressing some or all of the following supporting details and suggestions that are applicable to their specific case. This list is not exhaustive or conclusive.

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- The student has or had an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP) during the time for which the waiver is requested.
- The student's disability makes him or her incapable of passing a section of the high school graduation assessment, even with the provision of all allowable accommodations.
- The student's disability and its impact on the student's achievement must be documented in the IEP over time.
- The student's disability is directly related to the subject in which the student was unsuccessful.
- The inclusion of verified and documented evidence from test, diagnostics, or evaluations conducted by credentialed individuals in the field related to the disability.
- The student was improperly diagnosed or was not assigned to the correct courses according to the defined graduation requirements.
- Documented participation in Express after unsuccessful attempts if applicable to the subject of area of your request. Online ExPreSS, offered by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) for high school students and certificate of attendance recipients who were unsuccessful on or who have not yet taken the English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and/or Social Studies Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), are self-paced online courses.
- Obtaining a written recommendation from a teacher(s) in each subject area in which the applicant has not achieved a passing score on the high school graduation assessment. The written recommendation should be agreed to by the principal of the student's school. The written recommendation must be supported by documentation that lists the skills and knowledge set forth in the GPS and how the student has demonstrated equivalent mastery of these skills and standards through specific class work and performance on other academic achievement assessments.
- The student should document successful completion of a career pathway sequence, The student should also document successful completion of a career internship, based on a career/transition assessment, which includes work-based learning opportunities in a variety of supervised situations or successful integrated paid employment at a maximum of three job locations monitored by the LEA.

A Hardship Waiver is defined in rule as the situation in which the student did not have a reasonable opportunity to pass a particular section of the high school graduation assessment due to a substantial hardship beyond the student's control. When creating a waiver request, applicants must discuss how their specific situation and facts meet the requirements for a hardship waiver. Applicants may consider addressing some or all of the following supporting details and suggestions that are applicable to their specific case. This list is not exhaustive or conclusive.

- Substantial hardships would include significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal or other type of deprivation.
- Chronic or severe illness. Demonstration of the length of the illness. Appropriate evidence may include an attending physician's statement certifying that testing the student would yield unreliable results due to the medical conditions.
- Hardship caused by homelessness. Appropriate evidence may include documentation from the LEA homeless liaison identified in the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act. Additional supporting information would include documentation of dates or length of homelessness.

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- Death of an immediate family member or legal guardian. Appropriate evidence may include the date and relationship of family member as documented in obituary notice, death certificate or other verifiable record.
- Student has multiple unsuccessful testing attempts and has enrolled, attended and successfully completed coursework at the postsecondary level.
- Student has multiple unsuccessful testing attempts and is successful in current career endeavors.
- Documented participation in Express after unsuccessful attempts if applicable to the subject of area of your request. Online ExPreSS, offered by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) for high school students and certificate of attendance recipients who were unsuccessful on or who have not yet taken the English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and/or Social Studies Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT), are self-paced online courses.
- Obtaining a written recommendation from a teacher(s) in each subject area in which the applicant has not achieved a passing score on the high school graduation assessment. The written recommendation should be agreed to by the principal of the student's school. The written recommendation must be supported by documentation that lists the skills and knowledge set forth in the GPS and how the student has demonstrated equivalent mastery of these skills and standards through specific class work and performance on other academic achievement assessments.
- The student should document successful completion of a career pathway sequence. The student should also document successful completion of a career internship, based on a career/transition assessment, which includes work-based learning opportunities in a variety of supervised situations or successful integrated paid employment at a maximum of three job locations monitored by the LEA.

### How to Apply for a Waiver:

1. Potential applicants should review all requirements and prerequisites to determine whether he or she can qualify for a waiver.
2. Submit a waiver request in writing to the local superintendent of schools of the school system where a student attends school or where an individual attended school.
3. Applicant will work with the LEA to prepare the necessary information packet.
4. The local school system will submit the completed waiver application to the GaDOE.
5. Once the GaDOE has validated that the required information is complete, the waiver application will be reviewed internally and submitted to the SBOE for consideration at the earliest possible meeting.
6. After a determination is made by the SBOE, a letter which states the outcome of the waiver request will be sent to the local school system.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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### 1. What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

A written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (ID EA) 2004 . [34 C .F .R . § 300 .22]

### 2. What is a testing accommodation?

Changes in instruction that enable children to demonstrate their abilities in the classroom or assessment/test setting. Accommodations are designed to provide equity, not advantage, for children with disabilities. Accommodations include assistive technology as well as alterations to presentation, response, scheduling, or settings. When used appropriately, they reduce or even eliminate the effects of a child's disability but do not reduce or lower the standards or expectations for content. Accommodations, that are appropriate for assessments do not invalidate assessment results. A testing accommodation is an adjustment made to the testing situation based on a disability and identified in your IEP. Identified accommodations may adjust the testing environment, for example, special lighting, or the timing/scheduling of the assessment, for example, extended timing, or the presentation of the assessment, for example, testing in Braille, or how the individual responds to the assessment, for example, assistive technology.

### 3. Why does the State Board want me to take the test even if I have a disability?

Federal law states that students with disabilities cannot be exempt from participating in statewide assessments like the GHSGT. Therefore, it is an expectation that all students, even students with disabilities, take the test. Even though your IEP may call for accommodations to be utilized as you take the test, it cannot excuse you from taking the test. The State Board looks carefully at your individual disability to see if it would prevent you from passing the test for which you are seeking a waiver. A disability that impairs your ability to do math would not impair your ability to be successful in the language arts test and therefore would most likely not qualify you for a waiver. Even with a disability, the State Board feels that you should take the graduation test with the appropriate accommodations as specified in your IEP. Because you have several opportunities to take the test prior to completion of your coursework, the State Board would typically expect to see four attempts (with specific remediation following each unsuccessful attempt) prior to your request for consideration for a waiver.

### 4. What happens after I apply for a waiver?

Your local school superintendent will submit the waiver request along with additional information to the State Superintendent of Schools. The request will be forwarded within 15 business days from the date the local superintendent receives the written waiver request from you or your parent/guardian.

### 5. What types of additional information will my local school system send to the SBOE?

Information submitted to the GADOE with a copy of your original request will include:

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your school records, including an official transcript;  
your current schedule/status, and your program of study if applicable;  
your high school attendance records; and  
your GHSGT/GHSWT test reports.

Additional information may include:

any plans for accommodations made in your instructional program, including minutes of Student Support Team (SST) meetings, and other action plans, if any;

any recommendations for accommodations that have been made for the test in question;

any special education records, including evaluation reports, eligibility reports, legible individual education plans, classroom modifications that have been implemented;

a statement giving the number of attempts you have made to pass the test(s) for which the waiver is requested, including an explanation of extenuating circumstances known to the school if you did not take advantage of each testing opportunity;

a statement describing any extraordinary opportunities provided by the school to assist you in preparing for the test(s), including remediation classes, tutoring sessions, etc., and your participation in such activities (you or your parent/guardian may have additional information); and

a statement from your local superintendent or local board of education indicating their position regarding your request; and any other information the local superintendent feels is pertinent to your request.

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### 6. What happens at the state level?

Staff at the State Department of Education (GADOE) will assign a case number to each waiver request received and process the waiver using the information submitted as a part of the waiver packet. Your case number will be sent to your local superintendent of school. The State Superintendent of Schools will send all waiver requests to the SBOE for consideration. The SBOE generally meets monthly. Incomplete packets may be returned to the local school system. All complete waiver requests will be reviewed by the Board within 60 days of their receipt at the State Department of Education. Packets returned due to incomplete information will be received as a new packet upon resubmission including the 60 day review period.

### 7. Will I be able to make a presentation to the SBOE? Will I be able to attend the meeting at which my request is considered?

Individuals are not allowed to make presentations to the SBOE at their meeting. Discussion of individual waiver cases occurs in Executive Session, a portion of the meeting that is not open to the public.

### 8. How will I find out whether or not I have been granted a waiver?

When considering a Waiver Request the SBOE may approve, deny, or postpone a waiver. The official decision of the SBOE will be posted on the Department's web page by case number. The GaDOE will let your local Superintendent know of the Board's decision in a letter that will also be copied to the person of record who requested the waiver.

### 9. If the SBOE denies my waiver request, how do I appeal their decision?

Georgia law allows you to appeal the decision of the SBOE through your local Superior Court. Complete information about the appeal process can be obtained by calling the Georgia Department of Education at (404) 656-4328.

### 10. May I request a reconsideration of a waiver request denied by the SBOE?

Whenever the SBOE makes a decision to deny a waiver request, there is no opportunity for reconsideration for the same waiver unless substantially new evidence that pertains directly to the case is submitted and a request for reconsideration is made through your local superintendent of schools.

## Part 4: Variances

Section (2)(e) of State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.09 WAIVERS AND VARIANCES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION ASSESSMENTS sets forth the minimum criteria for a variance to be granted. A variance may be granted to an applicant as an alternative means of demonstrating academic proficiency. The rule provides for specific other academic achievement tests that can be used to demonstrate academic proficiency on specific sections of the high school graduation assessment. In addition, to request a variance, other minimum qualifications must first be met before an application may be submitted to the GaDOE.

Applicants must be able to meet all of the following criteria before another academic achievement test may be used to demonstrate academic proficiency on a particular section of the high school graduation assessment.

1. The student has attempted the relevant section(s) of the high school graduation assessment four or more times without passing; and
2. The student has successfully completed a structured remedial class(es) after each attempt to pass the relevant section(s) of the high school graduation assessment; and
3. The student has passed any three of the five high school graduation assessments; and
4. The student has obtained a scale score that falls within one standard error of measurement (SEM) for passing the relevant section of the high school graduation assessment. The SEM shall be applied to the student's highest score achieved over multiple administrations; and
5. The student has met the attendance requirements for graduation as described in the applicable State Board of Education high school graduation requirements rule; and
6. The student has met the course unit requirements for graduation as described in the applicable State Board of Education high school graduation requirements rule; and
7. The student has a 90% or better attendance record, excluding excused absences, while enrolled in grades 9-12.

Applicants meeting the foregoing requirements may use the following academic achievement tests to demonstrate academic proficiency on a particular section of the high school graduation assessment.

1. Where applicable, the student has successfully passed each End-of-Course Tests (EOCT) related to the sections of the high school graduation assessment in which the variance is being sought. The following EOCT coordinate with the following sections of the high school graduation assessment:
  - a. Math section of the high school graduation assessment

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- i. Algebra 1 EOCT
  - ii. Geometry EOCT
  - iii. Mathematics I: Algebra/Geometry/Statistics EOCT
  - iv. Mathematics II: Geometry/Algebra II/Statistics EOCT
- b. English language arts and Writing sections of the high school graduation assessment
- i. Ninth Grade Literature & Composition EOCT
  - ii. American Literature & Composition EOCT
- c. Science section of the high school graduation assessment
- i. Biology EOCT
  - ii. Physical Science EOCT
- d. Social Studies section of the high school graduation assessment
- i. US History EOCT
  - ii. Economics/Business/Free Enterprise EOCT
2. Where applicable, attain the minimum required score on another qualified academic achievement test to demonstrate comparable performance on a section of the high school graduation assessment through a variance. Specific other qualified academic achievement tests, minimum scores, and portions of the high school graduation assessment established for a variance under this subsection shall be defined in the document entitled, “Guidelines Defining Other Academic Achievement Tests and Associated Minimum Passing Scores Qualifying for a Variance of High School Graduation Assessments.”

### Considerations for Students Seeking a Variance after Completing High School

In certain instances, students, who have completed high school earning a high school certificate, may wish to submit a variance application in an attempt to earn a high school diploma. For these students, the following additional considerations must be addressed in the application process:

1. The student will be responsible for meeting the course unit requirements for the graduation rule that coordinates with the year in which the student entered the ninth grade.
2. It is preferable that the student should have attempted the high school graduation assessment within twelve months prior to submission of the variance application.

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3. The student will need to provide evidence of remediation – whether secondary or postsecondary – in the specific areas for which the variance is sought. Postsecondary remediation may include courses taken at an accredited postsecondary institution.
4. If EOCT were not available when the student was enrolled in high school, the local school superintendent will indicate on the information submitted to the GaDOE that the student is exempt from the EOCT requirement.
5. The local school superintendent will also be responsible for verifying the attendance records of students who have already completed high school.

### **How to Apply for a Variance:**

1. Potential applicants should review all requirements and prerequisites to determine whether he or she can qualify for a variance.
2. Submit a variance request in writing to the local superintendent of schools of the school system where a student attends school or where an individual attended school.
3. Individual will work with the local school system to prepare the necessary information packet.
4. The local school system will submit the completed variance application to the GaDOE.
5. Once the GaDOE has validated that the necessary information is included it will be reviewed internally and submitted to the SBOE for consideration at the earliest possible meeting.
6. After a determination is made by the SBOE, a letter which states the outcome of the variance request will be sent to the local school system.

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

1. End-of-Course Tests were not available for courses when I took the course. Am I eligible to be considered for a waiver in that situation?

If an End-of-Course Test was not available when you took a course, the local superintendent of the school system to which you apply for a variance will indicate on the information submitted to the SBOE that you are exempt from that requirement. This will be verified by the GaDOE.

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2. How do I know what the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) is for the test that I took?

The SEM is different for each of the test subsections. The following chart identifies the SEM for each subsection:

Content Area	QCC/Transitional SEM	QCC/Transitional Range of Scores	GPS SEM	GPS Range of Scores
<b>English Language Arts</b>	7	≥ 493	10	≥ 190
<b>Mathematics</b>	6	≥ 494	10	≥ 190
<b>Science</b>	6	≥ 494	8	≥ 192
<b>Social Studies</b>	5	≥ 495	7	≥ 193
<b>Writing</b>	4	≥ 496	6	≥ 194

3. I have been out of high school for several years and have not taken advantage of remediation opportunities offered through the local school system and/or my attendance information is no longer available. Are there substitutions for this requirement?

Although the SBOE prefers documentation of involvement in remediation and documentation of actual attendance, verified success in courses or work involving the sections of the high school graduation assessment in which the variance is being sought may be considered by the SBOE as a substitute for the remediation. For example, if you are seeking a variance for the math portion of the GHSGT and have successfully completed course work in mathematics at a postsecondary institution, that may be substituted for the remediation requirement.

If attendance information is no longer available at the local school level, the local superintendent of the system to which you apply for a variance, will indicate on the information submitted to the SBOE that you are exempt from that requirement.

4. Are there any remediation opportunities available for students?

Yes.

The ExPreSS Tutorial Program is offered by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) for high school students and certificate of attendance recipients who were unsuccessful on or who have not yet taken the English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and/or Social Studies Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT). The Online ExPreSS modules are virtual self-paced courses. For more

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information on ExPreSS visit the Georgia Standards website at <http://georgiastandards.org> and click the ExPreSS link.

Note: All public libraries in the state of Georgia have free internet access for individuals with limited or no internet access. Students should contact their local public library for business hours and availability.

5. What types of additional information will my local school system send to the SBOE?

your school records, including an official transcript;

your current schedule/status, your program of study;

your high school attendance records; and

your EOCT score reports ; and

your score reports for other academic achievement tests as set forth in “Guidelines Defining Other Academic Achievement Tests and Associated Minimum Passing Scores Qualifying for a Variance of High School Graduation Assessments” which can be obtained from <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Waivers-and-Variations.aspx>; and

your high school graduation assessment test reports; and

a statement giving the number of attempts you have made to pass the test(s) for which the variance is requested, including an explanation of extenuating circumstances known to the school if you did not take advantage of each testing opportunity; and

a statement from your local superintendent or local board of education indicating their position regarding your request; and any other information the local superintendent feels is pertinent to your request.

6. I successfully passed another academic achievement test which is listed in the guidelines. What kind of documentation do I need to provide to the LEA.

Applicants must provide an official record from the testing vendor or organization which includes your name, the date the test was taken, the test attempted, and the score attained.

7. Will I be able to make a presentation to the SBOE? Will I be able to attend the meeting at which my request is considered?

Individuals are not allowed to make presentations to the SBOE at their meeting. Discussion of individual variance cases is made in Executive Session, a portion of the meeting that is not open to the public.

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8. How will I find out whether or not I have been granted a variance?

The official decision of the SBOE will be posted on the Department's web page by case number at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Waivers-and-Variations.aspx>. A formal letter will be sent to your local Superintendent that summarizes the Board's decision.

## Appendix A: Sample Language for Notifying Students and Parents of Waivers, Variances and Remediation Opportunities

*NOTE: This is a sample only. LEAs are not required to use this document and are encouraged to include your own specific remediation opportunities and add any other additional information particular to your area.*

You recently took the Georgia High School Graduation Tests or the Georgia High School Writing Test and are now receiving your results. If you were unsuccessful in one or more of the tests we would like to make you aware of possible opportunities that may be available to assist you as you work to complete your high school graduation requirements.

### ExPreSS

The ExPreSS Tutorial Program is offered by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) for high school students and certificate of attendance recipients who were unsuccessful on or who have not yet taken the English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and/or Social Studies Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHS GT). The ExPreSS modules are online self-paced courses. For more information on ExPreSS visit the Georgia Standards website at <http://georgiastandards.org> and click the ExPreSS link.

Note: All public libraries in the state of Georgia have free internet access for individuals with limited or no internet access. Students should contact their local public library for business hours and availability.

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities documented on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are eligible for services until the age of 22. These students should contact the Special Education Director in the local school system to plan for additional instruction and support.

### Variance

A variance is a process which allows a student to use another qualified achievement test to show demonstrated mastery in a particular area measured by the high school graduation assessment. You may be able to qualify for a variance from portions of the high school graduation assessment if you meet some very specific requirements. You can view all the specific qualifications for a variance by visiting the Georgia Department of Education website at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Waivers-and-Variations.aspx>. In addition, you may also contact your local school system or the local school system where you attended high school and ask to speak with the individual who coordinates waivers and variances of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests.

### Waiver

A waiver is a process whereby a student petitions the State Board of Education to be absolved from having to pass a one or more sections of the Georgia High School Graduation Assessment or the Georgia High School Writing Test. To be considered for a waiver a student must be able to prove that a significant, unique, and demonstrable economic, technological, legal, or other type of deprivation existed which directly affected the ability of the student to pass one or more portions of the high school graduation assessment. Other conditions and requirements apply. Making an application for a waiver

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does not guarantee that it will be granted. Each case is decided by the State Board of Education whose decision is final. You can view the specific qualifications for a waiver by visiting the Georgia Department of Education website at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Waivers-and-Variations.aspx>. In addition, you may also contact your local school system or the local school system where you attended high school and ask to speak with the individual who coordinates waivers and variances of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests.