

Frequently Asked Questions:

For parents of students who did not pass all five of the Ohio Graduation Tests and will not graduate from high school

Test scores from the March administration of the tests are distributed in May. Below are the most frequently asked questions and answers for parents and students who did not pass the OGT and will not graduate from high school.

Q: *My child passed all but one OGT. Is there another way for him or her to graduate?*

A: Ohio law requires most students to pass all of the OGT. However, your child may be able to graduate if the child:

1. failed to pass by 10 points or less;
2. has a 97 percent school attendance rate in each of the last four school years, excluding any excused absences;
3. has not been expelled from school in any of the last four school years;
4. has a grade point average of at least 2.5 out of 4.0 in the subject area of the failed OGT as determined by the conversion chart adopted by the State Board of Education;
5. has completed the high school curriculum requirements in the subject area of the failed test;
6. has taken advantage of any intervention programs provided by the school district or school in the subject area of the failed OGT and has a 97 percent attendance rate, excluding any excused absences, in any of those programs that are provided at times beyond the normal school day, school week or school year, or has received comparable intervention services from a source other than the school district or school; and
7. holds a letter recommending graduation from each of the person's high school teachers in the subject area of the failed OGT and from the person's high school principal.

A school counselor will have information about intervention programs and summer retakes.

Q: *Who do I talk to about the alternative pathway to graduation? Where can I find more information about the alternative pathway to graduation?*

A: The school counselor should be able to tell you if this is a possibility. You also may read more information on the ODE Web site where you found this document (keyword *alternative pathway*).

Alternative Pathway - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *Can I walk for graduation while the school is getting the letters from teachers?*

A: That is a local decision. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) does not have the authority to make that decision or to suggest a course of action for schools.

Q: *My student was on the honor roll (or class president, etc.) and didn't pass all of the OGT. It shouldn't be required.*

A: Beginning with the class of 2007, passing the OGT is required by state law to graduate.

Q: *Is there a point in the year where a transfer student can opt out of the OGT? For example, if a student transfers in April, can he or she opt out?*

A: Transfer students must take and pass all five parts of the OGT and satisfy the district's curriculum requirements in order to earn a diploma. No such "opt out" exists in Ohio Revised Code §3313.61 (Graduation Requirements) or §3313.615 (Alternative Pathway).

Q: *I moved to Ohio from another state last year and have not passed all of the OGT, but I passed the graduation tests where I'm from. Do they count in Ohio?*

A: No, Ohio does not recognize test results from other states.

Q: *Can a foreign exchange student qualify for a diploma under the alternative pathway if they have been excused from passing the social studies OGT?*

A: No. Ohio law exempts certain students from having to pass the social studies part of the OGT as a requirement for earning a diploma. These students must not be citizens or permanent residents of the United States, and they must indicate their intention not to reside in the United States after completing high school. This provision of law applies almost exclusively to foreign exchange students [ORC §3313.61(H)].

Foreign exchange students who fit these requirements and opt out of the social studies part of the OGT do not qualify for consideration under the alternative pathway for earning a diploma. That is because the alternative pathway criteria apply to students that have taken all five parts of the OGT. The provision may apply, however, if a foreign exchange student passes the social studies part of the OGT, but fails one of the other subject area tests and meets all of the statutory provisions of the alternate pathway for earning a diploma [ORC 3313.615(C)].

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Q: *One of my teachers is no longer at the school and I can't get his or her recommendation. What can I do?*

A: You should talk to the school counselor. Usually, another teacher in the subject area with familiarity of the student's academic performance may substitute for the other teacher.

Q: *My child transferred from another school in their last year of high school. Do I need to get teacher recommendations from both schools or just the current one?*

A: The law says the student needs letters of recommendation from "each of the person's high school teachers [ORC §3313.615(A)(7)]." This includes teachers from any high school attended, in any state, in the subject area of the fail test. If you cannot get in contact with a teacher from a previous high school, you can usually use another teacher that:

1. Is from the previous school
2. Is in the same subject
3. Has familiarity of the student's academic performance

Q: *What if only one teacher refuses to recommend my child for graduation? Can my child still qualify for the alternative pathway?*

A: No. If one teacher refuses to recommend graduation, then the student will not graduate.

Q: *What can districts do to help raise a student's GPA if it is below a 2.5?*

A: Districts have two options on this front, have the student:

1. Retake the courses to replace the lower grade
2. Take different courses in the subject area

District policy must also allow for grades to be replaced for option one. If the course is retaken, and the student earns a higher grade, the higher grade may **replace** the lower grade in calculating the student's GPA. For example, if a student received an F in a course, but retook it and earned a B, then the B would replace the F in calculating his/her GPA. However, a district cannot increase an existing grade once it has been posted.

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Q: *My district does not award pluses or minuses with their letter grades. My child earned many numerical grades that may equate to a C+ in another district. When calculating the GPA for the alternative pathway, can I use a grade point of 2.3 instead of 2.0?*

A: A student's letter grade is determined the student's teachers **in accordance with district policy**. It is that letter grade which is used to calculate the student's subject area GPA for the alternative pathway. If district policy does not allow pluses or minuses, then they cannot be factored in when using the alternative pathway.

There is one exception to this rule. If the district has a board-adopted and uniform policy allowing the use of pluses or minuses for the alternative pathway (but not for course credit), then the pluses or minuses can be used in calculating the subject-area GPA.

Q: *My child has earned a 2.45 GPA in the subject area of the failed test. Can I round this up to the required 2.5?*

A: For the purposes of the alternative pathway, students are **not** allowed to round their GPA. Rounding up from a 2.45 to a 2.50 artificially inflates the student's performance.

Q: *Do electives count when calculating the student's subject area GPA?*

A: Yes, all courses in the subject area of the fail test are counted. For example, a psychology course would count toward the GPA if the student fails the social studies OGT. If you are unsure about which subject area an elective belongs, check with the school's EMIS coordinator to see what code the course is assigned.

Q: *Is there a state certificate of attendance given to those students who meet all requirements but passing the OGT?*

A: No. Ohio Revised Code §3313.61 governs issuance of diplomas, and it makes no mention of a certificate of attendance or any other similar document. Each district decides what to do for those students who do not meet all graduation requirements, including participation in commencement activities.

Q: *How long can students keep taking the OGT?*

A: Students can continue to take the OGT as often as it is needed until they pass. This would be three times a year until they pass all five sections, including as adults. To assist students, the Success Web site at <http://portal.success-ode-state-oh-us.info/>

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contains a number of teaching tools (practice tests, scoring practice and samples) that will allow students to focus on the areas where they struggle.

Q: *My child fulfilled all the requirements except the score (criterion #1) before graduation. After a few more tries at the test after high school, my child received a high enough score (390+) to fulfill all the requirements. Is my child still eligible for the Alternative Pathway?*

A: Students of any age are eligible for the alternative pathway. The legislation has several requirements mentioning the last four years of school, but nowhere does it require that the last four years be enrolled in school. In fact, adults enrolled in an adult education program can take advantage of the alternate pathway (ORC §3313.611).

Q: *Criterion #1 for the alternative pathway states that a student must pass four of the five OGT and receive a scaled score of 390 or higher on the last OGT. Does the 390 have to be on the student's most recent administration?*

A: No. A student can score a 390 at any point in his or her OGT testing history.

Q: *A school district does not offer the summer administration of the OGT. Can I take it in another district?*

A: Students may take the OGT at any school where OGT testing is given. However, the student should make every effort to notify the school in advance so that sufficient test materials are ordered and the student is advised of the district's requirements to participate in the test. There is no fee for students wishing to take the summer OGT administration.

Q: *How long can a student attend high school?*

A: Under Ohio Revised Code 3313.64, a student may attend school tuition-free until the student's 22nd birthday. Thereafter continued attendance is at the discretion of the local district; however, adult high school would be a logical alternative at that point.

Q: *Are students who complete graduation requirements early eligible for the alternative pathway?*

A: Yes. If a student meets all of the criteria, even on a fast track for graduation, then the alternative pathway is available.

Q: *Under 3313.615, can a student that is exempted from the consequences of failing four of the OGT sections via an individualized education program (IEP) be eligible for a diploma under the alternative pathway provisions?*

A: No. ORC §3313.615 states that the alternative conditions for eligibility for a diploma when a person passes all but one graduation test applies to required tests from which the person was not excused or exempted pursuant to division (L) of ORC §3313.61, division (B)(1) of ORC §3313.612 or ORC §3313.532.

Division (L) of ORC §3313.61 is the section of Ohio law which allows a student who has an IEP to be awarded a diploma without attaining the applicable scores, provided an IEP specifically exempts the student from attaining such scores.

Q: *Criterion #6 requires attendance at district intervention programs. Do these programs have to occur outside the school day (after school, summer) to count?*

A: Ohio Revised Code §3313.615 (Alternative Pathway) does not define the term “intervention program.” Therefore, defining and offering the required intervention program are local decisions. The school district could require intervention outside the day or during it. Students’ attendance in the intervention offered must be at 97 percent of offered opportunities.

Q: *I believe my child deserves to graduate and I disagree with how the Superintendent is interpreting the alternative pathway. What can ODE do to help me?*

A: ODE has no role in hearing appeals of local decisions regarding students’ satisfying alternative pathway criteria. Those decisions are made locally. ODE can explain the law and direct people to its many resources, but ODE cannot call the local district and persuade or pressure change. In addition, ODE cannot overturn a district decision.

Q: *My district demands that all students pass each OGT subject test in order to receive a diploma. Are they allowed to deny my child access to the alternative pathway?*

A: The awarding of diplomas is a local decision. The alternative pathway offers lenience to the state’s requirements – not the districts. The legislation (ORC §3313.615) states that students who meet the criteria “**may** be awarded a diploma”, not that they **must** be awarded a diploma.

Q: *School transcripts do not show alternative pathway completion. How should schools record this?*

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A: Transcripts need show only if the student met the OGT requirements. How this is done is a local decision.

Q: *Do school districts send records to the Ohio Department of Education?*

A: No. The alternative pathway is a locally administered program. Please do not send records to ODE. ODE recommends keeping copies of records in the student's permanent file as well as giving copies to parents.