## *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020*

Adopted by the Virginia Board of Education January 24, 2019

## Purpose of the Guidelines

The *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020* replace the *Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019* adopted by the Board in October 2016. The updated guidelines clarify the expectation that divisions are to continue the implementation of performance assessments, emphasizing the use of the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/performance-based/quality-criteria-tool.docx) and common rubrics developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to achieve consistent expectations for Virginia students. This document provides guidance for local alternative assessments in non-verified credit courses in which Standards of Learning tests were eliminated by the General Assembly in 2014. [*Guidelines for the Use of Local Performance Assessment to Award Verified Credits in Writing*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2018/09-sep/item-h.docx), adopted by the Board on September 20, 2018, and announced in [Superintendent’s Memo #266-18](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2018/267-18.docx) provide guidance to school divisions that choose to administer local performance assessments to students to verify credits in writing.

## Background Information

Legislation in the 2014 General Assembly amended § 22.1-253.13:3.C of the Code of Virginia to eliminate the following state-developed Standards of Learning (SOL) tests and replace them with locally developed alternative assessments:

* Grade 3 History,
* Grade 3 Science,
* Grade 5 Writing,
* United States History to 1865, and
* United States History: 1865 to the Present.

In addition to replacing these SOL tests, the legislation also required each local school board to annually certify that it had provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each SOL subject area in which the SOL assessment was eliminated. Specifically, the Code now states:

*Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.*

## Certification That Content Has Been Taught and Assessments Administered

Local school boards and division superintendents will continue to certify through the annual Standards of Quality (SOQ) compliance assurance that instruction has been provided and local alternative assessments measuring the Standards of Learning (SOL) and adhering to the Board’s guidelines administered in the following subject areas:

* Grade 3 History,
* Grade 3 Science,
* Grade 5 Writing,
* United States History to 1865, and
* United States History: 1865 to the Present.

## Definition of Authentic Performance Assessments

Performance assessments generally require students to perform a task or create a product that is typically scored using a rubric. Authentic performance assessments often include tasks that mirror those that might occur in a “real-life” situation and/or are authentic to the academic discipline. It is up to the local school division to determine whether a performance task is authentic.

## Timeline for Implementation of Performance Assessments

While some divisions have successfully implemented all the steps listed in previous guidelines, other divisions are not yet ready for full implementation. Divisions should continue to progress toward implementation of performance assessments as part of a balanced assessment system in courses where the SOL tests were replaced with local assessments.

The timeline for implementation approved by the Board in October 2016 and communicated in [Superintendent’s Memo #284-16](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2016/284-16.shtml) has been adjusted to allow time for all divisions to implement performance assessments utilizing resources developed by VDOE staff. The resources are designed to ensure consistency across the Commonwealth and to support divisions in the implementation of performance assessments. School divisions are expected to use the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/performance-based/quality-criteria-tool.docx) to determine the quality of tasks during development and revision. Common rubrics that provide consistent expectations for student achievement are being developed by VDOE staff, and school divisions are expected to use these rubrics when evaluating student responses to locally developed performance assessments.

### Expectations for 2018-2019

For the 2018-2019 school year and beyond, school divisions are expected to use the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/performance-based/quality-criteria-tool.docx) to ensure that students have access to quality tasks. Each locally developed performance assessment should be evaluated by the local school division using this tool and necessary modifications should be implemented prior to continued use with students. Additionally, school divisions are encouraged to begin using the common rubrics developed by the VDOE with performance assessments in classrooms where an SOL assessment has been replaced (Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present).

*School divisions will continue to refine local alternative assessment plans that describe how performance assessments that are designed to inform instruction are being implemented.*

### Expectations for 2019-2020

For the 2019-2020 school year, school divisions are expected to continue to use the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/performance-based/quality-criteria-tool.docx) to ensure that students have access to quality tasks. School divisions should also continue to make progress in using the common rubrics developed by VDOE with performance assessments in classrooms where an SOL assessment has been replaced (Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present).

Additionally, beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, all school divisions will be expected to prepare Balanced Assessment Plans for each of the five replaced SOL assessments. These Balanced Assessment Plans will more fully detail the local alternative assessment plan for each of these courses and will indicate the types of assessments used to measure the content and skills covered in the course. Assessment plans may include a variety of assessment types but must include some performance assessments. Additional information about the development of assessment plans will be provided by the VDOE beginning in spring 2019.

The development and selection of the local assessments that comprise the balanced assessment plans are left to the discretion of the school division. However, assessments used should be designed to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers regarding the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in the content and skills included in the SOL covered and should demonstrate continued progress in implementing performance assessments as part of a balanced local assessment system.

Local school divisions may choose to administer the same assessments for particular grade levels and content areas to all students in the division or may provide schools with flexibility in selecting the assessments to be administered.

By 2019-2020, school divisions should provide opportunities for cross-scoring student responses to performance assessments within schools and across schools within the school division, using common rubrics developed by the VDOE to evaluate student work. Meetings scheduled by the VDOE in 2019 will provide opportunities for professional development on the application of the common rubrics in scoring student work.

## Use of Integrated Assessments

The legislation encourages integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas. For example, a local assessment might address content from both grade 3 history and grade 3 science. If such assessments are used, the results should include information about the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in each specific set of SOL covered.

## Professional Development

The capacity of teachers to design and implement assessments that are intended to inform instruction is likely to vary widely across the Commonwealth. School divisions should evaluate the capacity and experience of their teachers in implementing such assessments and use this information to design professional development. Professional development should encourage the collaboration of teachers within grades and across grades to implement the assessments and to use their results to determine instructional needs. School divisions will be notified when materials used in the summer 2018 Performance Assessment events and other performance assessment resources are posted to the VDOE website.

## Documentation and Reporting to the Virginia Department of Education

During the 2018-2019 through the 2019-2020 school years, VDOE staff will conduct annual site visits or “desk reviews” in a sample of school divisions. As a part of these “desk reviews,” documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of these reviews will be to determine how local school divisions are verifying that the content is being taught, to determine the types of alternative assessments that are being administered, to identify exemplars of performance assessments that may be shared with other school divisions, and to assist teachers, schools, and school divisions in strengthening their own alternative performance assessments. The reviews will help Department staff to identify “best practices” for sharing with other Virginia school divisions.

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, the balanced assessment plans completed by school divisions will become part of the desk reviews. For 2019-2020, materials retained at the division for possible review should include the following:

1. Balanced Assessment Plan for each of the five replaced SOL assessments;
2. Copies of assessments administered, including performance tasks;
3. Rubrics used for scoring; and
4. Division-specific material used to train teachers and samples of student writing from the various score points of the rubric.

School divisions are to retain these documents for one year after the end of the academic year, as outlined in the [Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, General Schedule No.GS-21](http://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_local/GS-21.pdf) (Series 000236, 000240). The VDOE will not require the retention of individual student work beyond the student work samples that demonstrate division scoring.

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

School divisions should be aware of the following requirement found in Section 300.160 c (1) of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*:

A State (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, an LEA) must develop and implement alternate assessments and guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in regular assessments, even with accommodations, as indicated in their respective IEPs, as provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

If school divisions choose to meet the local alternative assessment requirements through the use of division wide assessments, an alternate assessment for students with disabilities who cannot participate in regular division assessments must be provided.

## Use of Local Assessments in State Accreditation or Federal Accountability

The results of the local alternative assessments will not be used to designate state accreditation or federal accountability status.