

APPENDIX U
CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION—MCAS-ALT

Guidance on Designating Students for the MCAS-Alt

Decisions regarding participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities must be discussed at the student's annual IEP team meeting and be documented in the IEP.

IEP team members should familiarize themselves with the criteria used to designate students for alternate assessments. The criteria listed below together with the [Decision-Making Tool for MCAS-Alt Participation](#) should be used by teams as the basis for making **annual assessment decisions for each student in each subject required for academic assessment**.

Criteria for Designating a Student for an Alternate Assessment

A student with the *most significant cognitive disability* should take the **MCAS-Alt** if he or she

- is working on *learning standards* in the content area that have been *substantially modified* due to the severity of the disability; **and**
- is receiving *intensive, individualized instruction* in order to acquire, generalize, and demonstrate knowledge and skills; **and**
- is *unable to demonstrate knowledge and skills on a standardized paper or online test*, even with accommodations.

Teams should **not** assume that a student should take an alternate assessment based on the fact that he or she

- has not been provided instruction in the general curriculum;
- has a specific disability (e.g., all students with intellectual disabilities should not automatically be designated for the MCAS-Alt);
- is placed in a program or classroom where it is expected that students will take the MCAS-Alt;
- has taken an alternate assessment previously (since this is an annual decision);
- has previously failed the MCAS test;
- is an English learner;
- is from a low-income family or is a child in foster care;

- requires the use of assistive technology or an alternative augmentative communication system; or
- attends a school in which the IEP team may have been influenced to designate the student for an alternate assessment in order for the school to receive disproportionate credit toward the school's accountability rating.

Other Considerations

When an IEP team (or 504 plan coordinator) is *undecided* as to which assessment format is most appropriate for a particular student, the Department recommends that the **standard test, either with or without accommodations, be assigned as the default assessment format for the student.**

When assigning the standard test, teams should also deliberate as to whether it would be more appropriate for a student to take the computer-based Next-Generation MCAS test (for which universally designed accessibility features, tools, and accommodations are available) or a paper-based MCAS test (offered as an accommodation instead of the computer-based test).

When the decision is made to administer a standard MCAS test, with or without accommodations, the IEP team should evaluate after administration whether useful information was provided by the test results. If so, it may be preferable to have the student continue taking the standard MCAS test in that subject because of the broad range of standards that are assessed and reported on MCAS tests compared to the limited standards assessed in an MCAS-Alt portfolio. Students who take the MCAS-Alt will not be eligible to earn a Competency Determination and receive a high school diploma.

Questions on alternate assessment may be addressed to mcas@mass.gov. Thank you for your attention to this important information.