


Participation in the  
North Carolina Alternate Assessment:  
An NCEXTEND1 User Guide

February 2024



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## **Purpose**

In 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and required all states to place a 1.0% cap on student participation in the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). Since then, North Carolina has worked hard to navigate the new restrictions on student participation in this assessment. The 1.0% cap limits participation in the AA-AAAS to students with the “most significant cognitive disabilities.” To meet this requirement, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has developed and revised guidelines, definitions, and decision-making tools to assist individualized education program (IEP) teams in determining which students are eligible to participate in the AA-AAAS (NCEO Report 40). Currently, North Carolina has exceeded the 1.0% cap each year.

This document is designed to consolidate new and previously issued technical assistance documents, tip sheets, and other materials intended for the NCDPI Office of Exceptional Children to support the Public School Unit’s (PSU’s) mission to meet the requirements of ESSA.

## Timeline of Activities

Activity	Month
	January
	February
1.0 Percent Participation Justification Form Waiver process begins if the PSU anticipates going over the 1%. (See TNN from Testing and Accountability provided by the testing coordinator)	March
	April
Office hours: 1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process update, including due dates of June and September.	May
Due: 1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process: Record of completion and aggregate report	June
Due: PSU's anticipating exceeding the 1% mandate for the 1% Justification. (See TNN from Testing and Accountability provided by the testing coordinator)	July
Train staff around Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet in ECATS (PSU)	August
Due date for 1.0 Percent Statewide Annual Review Process: Due Date for Training and submission of staff training log to NCDPI	September
EC Director collaborates with Testing Coordinator to receive testing data from the secure shell.	October
	November
	December

## Extended Content Standards Key Details

### Monitoring Participation

- The NCDPI recommends running an aggregate report in ECATS. Directions on how to create this report can be found in the Monday Message titled [Case Management Report](#). Once the report is finalized, enable the filter capabilities in the spreadsheet by clicking on row 1 and clicking filter in the top right. Filter ECS column for “Yes” only. Next, look at the course of study column. Every student instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards* in high school must have the *Extended Content Standards* as the course of study.
- Students instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards* are eligible to participate in the NCEXTEND1 grades 3-8, 10, and 11.

### IEP Team Decision

- The *Extended Content Standard* IEP team decision is not an academically lifelong decision. The decision must be made and reviewed at each annual review to ensure students are receiving the appropriate instruction and assessment.
- The *Extended Content Standard* decision must be made and reviewed annually and documented within the Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS) *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet*.
- Students instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards* are not eligible for a high school diploma, rather a certificate of completion.

### High School Transcripts/Certificate

- *Extended Content Standards* Course Codes:
  - Elementary courses have an AZ in the 5th and 6th nodes.
  - Middle school courses have an AY in the 5th and 6th nodes.
  - High school courses have an AX in the 5th and 6th nodes.
- Establish a course progression for high school students using the [GRAD010](#) policy for students instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards*.
- Transcript must be coded correctly to indicate *Extended Content Standards* and not *Future Ready Course of Study*.
- If a student’s IEP team determines that the *ECS* is not appropriate for the student, any AX high school courses will not count toward the diploma track.
- The IEP team must have sound rationale and data for making the decision to place a student on the *Extended Content Standards*.

## **Alternate Assessment Worksheet**

To guide and support IEP teams in determining whether a student is most appropriately instructed towards alternate academic achievement standards and assessed with an alternate assessment, the NCDPI, in consultation with stakeholders, has developed an [Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet](#) found in ECATS (A tip sheet may be found in Appendix A). This tool clarifies and requires IEP team members to have meaningful discussions around student data and evaluations, to make the most informed decision for the student's course of study. This tool is required for IEP teams to use within ECATS in the special factors section when discussing the *Extended Content Standards* pathway.

[Recording Link for using the Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet](#)

Password: Worksheet2023!

Prior to the *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet*, the NCDPI released a guidance flowchart. The [Guidance Flowchart](#) is guidance provided by the NCDPI Office of Exceptional Children.

## **Extended Content Standard Course Credit Requirements**

[The Guidance Document for High School ECS Credit Requirements](#) (Appendix B) is a template that provides PSUs with an optional outline for the credits required for students instructed towards the alternate academic achievement standards and assessed through the alternate assessment. Please refer to State Board Policy [GRAD-010](#) to find credits needed to earn the certificate of completion.. Take note of the header at the top of each table. The header indicates the GRAD-010 policy requirements for the first year the student enrolled in high school. In PowerSchool, ensure the student is on the *Extended Content Standard Course of Study* upon graduation.

Students instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards* in high school must be enrolled in "AX" courses for core content areas and the two mandatory electives of Health, Safety, and Independent Living and Vocational Preparation. If the student's IEP team determines the student no longer qualifies for the *Extended Content Standards* in high school, all "AX" course credit earned will not count toward the *Standard Course of Study* coursework. At that time, the student will not follow the GRAD-010 policy and must complete the requirements of the different pathway selected.

## **District Resources**

**Extended Content Standard Self Reflection Guide:** The NCDPI Office of Exceptional Children developed the [Extended Content Standard Self Reflection Guide](#) (Appendix C) as an optional resource for PSUs that are interested in being proactive regarding alternate assessment participation rates. This self-reflection guide is designed to support PSUs in the data review process to address the appropriate eligibility in the alternate assessment. Each section of the guide provides the NCDPI Office of Exceptional Children best practices with guiding questions and resources.

## **Family Resource**

The [Family Resource Flyer](#) (Appendix D) captures what families should know about alternate assessments, how IEP teams determine alternate assessment eligibility in North Carolina, and provides a reminder that there is federal legislation in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that requires all students participate in statewide assessments. This document is to serve as useful guidance to IEP teams, especially parents, during special education meetings regarding alternate assessment inquiries, eligibility and participation.

## North Carolina Alternate Assessment FAQ

### ***GENERAL QUESTIONS***

#### **What is the Alternate Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

North Carolina's Alternate Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities is the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment. The NCEXTEND1 is the federally required statewide assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in the state's general assessment with or without accommodations.

The NCEXTEND1 is aligned to North Carolina alternate academic achievement standards, the [Extended Content Standards](#) and [Essential Extended Standards](#), and designed to allow students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in an appropriately rigorous assessment.

#### **Why must students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take state assessments?**

The reauthorized federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEA, 2004)\* extends educational accountability and reform to **all** students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This legislation, along with the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and North Carolina law, mandates that all students with disabilities be included in state and district assessments and participate in either the general tests (with or without accommodations) or alternate assessments. These laws provide clear expectations that states will align assessments of student achievement with the state's academic content standards.

#### ***\*IDEA Regulations on Participation in State and District-wide Assessment Programs:***

*(a) A State must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general State and district-wide assessment programs, including assessments described under section 1111 of the ESEA, 20 U.S.C. 6311, with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary, as indicated in their respective IEPs. Sec. 300.160.*



## **When and how will the NCEXTEND1 be administered?**

For grades 3-8 and 10, the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessments are administered to students during the final ten instructional days of the school year. This testing window was chosen to provide as much instructional time as possible prior to testing as well as to provide ample time to test all eligible students at each student's pace. The NCEXTEND1 at grade 11 is the alternate to the ACT; therefore is administered during the state-designated ACT testing window. The assessor, usually the student's teacher, will administer the tests to each student in a one-on-one environment.

## **How is the NCEXTEND1 designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

The NCEXTEND1 is designed to be accessible to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Students may respond using their preferred method of communication (oral, point/gesture, sign language, picture system or augmentative communication device). There is no time restriction on the assessment, and the test may be paused and resumed at any point during the testing window. The NCDPI Office of Accountability and Testing has a [detailed description of the NCEXTEND1](#).

## **In which grades and content areas will students be assessed?**

Students identified by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team as having a significant cognitive disability instructed towards the alternate academic achievement standards will be assessed using an alternate assessment. According to NCDPI's [Testing Students with Disabilities Handbook](#), as best practice, the decision regarding a student's participation in an alternate assessment should be made and documented in the student's IEP at least 120 school days before the testing window. As seen in the table below, the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment is administered at the following grades and content areas.

<b>Student Grade Level</b>	<b>Content Areas to be Administered</b>
3	Reading and Mathematics
4	Reading and Mathematics
5	Reading, Mathematics, and Science
6	Reading and Mathematics

7	Reading and Mathematics
8	Readings, Mathematics, and Science
10	Biology, English II, and NC Math 1
11	Reading, Mathematics, and Science (alternate to the ACT)

**What does the student’s performance level indicate?**

The performance levels indicate how often and accurately the student demonstrates the knowledge and skills being assessed. [Achievement levels and descriptors for the NCEXTEND1](#). Families are encouraged to speak with their child’s teacher(s) to learn more.

**Where can I learn more about North Carolina’s NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

The NCDPI [Office of Accountability and Testing website](#) offers more information about all state assessments, including the NCEXTEND1. The website includes information such as assessment specifications to the *Extended Content Standards* and *Essential Extended Standards*, achievement level descriptors, briefs, student reports, released forms, supplemental materials, and legislation and policy.

## ***ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION***

### **Who takes the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

Federal law requires that all students take yearly state assessments. Most students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) take the general state assessment. North Carolina's NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities is only appropriate for the very small population of students who are unable to take a general assessment, with or without accommodations.

Students who are eligible for the NCEXTEND1 are most likely identified as having a multiple disability, an intellectual disability, a traumatic brain injury, are deaf-blind or identified as being on the autism spectrum. However, only students identified by the IEP team to have a **most significant cognitive disability** would qualify for participation on the NCEXTEND1. Students with other types of disabilities will very rarely have a significant cognitive disability that will make them eligible for the NCEXTEND1.

### **How does the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team make the decision that the student is eligible for participation in the NCEXTEND1?**

The NCDPI would like to make it clear that the parent or guardian is a member of the IEP team. As a member of the IEP team, the parent must have access to and understand the eligibility criteria for the NCEXTEND1. The NCDPI provides IEP teams with guidance criteria for participation in the NCEXTEND1, which can be found in North Carolina [guidance flowchart](#).

It is important to understand that identifying a significant cognitive disability is not solely determined by an IQ test score, nor based on a specific disability category, but rather on a holistic understanding of the complex needs of a student. Participation in the NCEXTEND1 reflects the pervasive nature of a most significant cognitive disability that impacts both intellectual ability and adaptive functioning (daily living skills). These students will have intellectual functioning and adaptive skills well below average and other characteristics must also be considered beyond only standardized test scores.

A wide range of data sources should be evaluated when determining NCEXTEND1 eligibility that may include:

- Work sample evidence
- Results from formative assessments
- Universal screeners and diagnostic assessments

- Data from evidence-based interventions
- Evaluation results
- Assistive technology assessment
- District benchmark data
- Daily instructional supports provided by all teachers

**When does the IEP team make the decision that the student is eligible for participation in the NCEXTEND1?**

The decision regarding which assessment(s) a student will participate in is to be made annually by the IEP team. An IEP team can find that a student has made enough progress to switch to the *Standard Course of Study*, in which case the *Extended Content Standards* are not appropriate. These types of decisions must be made by the IEP team. As best practice, the decision regarding a student’s participation in an alternate assessment should be made and documented in the student’s IEP at least 120 school days before the testing window.

**When can the parent learn more about the student’s test score?**

The parent should check with the student’s school to determine when you will receive their report. The score reports for the NCEXTEND1 will show the student’s performance on each content area of the assessment. The Requirement to Report Student Scores According to 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0307 “(h) LEAs shall report scores resulting from the administration of State-mandated tests from the Annual Testing Program to students and parents or guardians no later than 30 days after the test is administered and along with available score interpretation information within 30 days from receipt of the scores and interpretive documentation from the NCDPI.”

**How will taking the NCEXTEND1 affect the student and the student's future?**

Planning for life after graduation begins the moment a student enters school. Early learning curriculum and assessments impact what the student will learn and be able to demonstrate in high school and beyond.

In North Carolina, students learning from the *Extended Content Standards, Essential Extended Standards*, and are assessed with the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment, graduate with a certificate of completion, not a high school diploma. There are graduation requirements for all students, including students assessed using the NCEXTEND1.

[GRAD010](#) is the graduation policy for students graduating from the *Extended Content*

*Standards* and assessed utilizing the NCEXTEND1. Parents must understand that for a student who participates on the NCEXTEND1 and earns a certificate of completion, the certificate does not reflect the same level of post high school readiness as those who graduate with a high school diploma.

**Can a student who is nonverbal participate in assessments?**

All individuals communicate, regardless of their verbal ability. Most people interact using many modes of communication throughout each day. Some students communicate through facial expressions, eye gaze, gestures, signed language, augmented language systems, picture exchange and/or using a variety of other behaviors. A student may have many modes of communication and the IEP team will need to consider accommodations that include these varied modes. Students participating in grade level learning, can demonstrate knowledge and skills using alternate forms of communication, including no tech, low tech, augmentative and assistive technology.

**Where can I learn more about graduation requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities who take the NCEXTEND1?**

Students with significant cognitive disabilities graduate with a certificate of completion, not a high school diploma. When IEP teams make this decision, all IEP team members must understand the implications of this decision. The [GRAD010](#) policy clearly outlines the necessary credits students must earn to graduate with a certificate of completion.

## Appendix A



### Tip Sheet: Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet & Assurance

#### Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet

The Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet is designed to assist IEP Teams in making the very important decision for students to follow the NC Extended Content Standards and participate in alternate assessments. This worksheet is designed to assist teams in reviewing the criteria established by the NCDPI, and to document the decision in the IEP within the Special Factors section.

Steps to follow on the Special Factors:

**Step 1:** Consider the need for instruction on the Extended Content Standards:

Is the IEP Team considering instruction on the Extended Content Standards for this student?

Yes/No	Additional Information
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

If No, there will be no further information to include.

If Yes, The Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet button will appear in the center of the screen. Teams are required to complete the worksheet when considering Extended Content Standards for students.

Is the IEP Team considering instruction on the Extended Content Standards for this student?

**Warning:** This form must be completed if the IEP team is considering Extended Content Standards and Alternate Assessment. It must be completed for the IEP to be finalized.

**Information:** This form must be completed if the IEP team is considering Extended Content Standards and Alternate Assessment. It must be completed for the IEP to be finalized.

[ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT ELIGIBILITY WORKSHEET](#)

Yes/No	Additional Information
<input type="text" value="Yes"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Worksheet:** Each section of the worksheet requires yes/no answers. If answered yes, text is required to document the “why”.

**Remember, consideration of instruction on the Extended Content Standards should be discussed at each annual review meeting. The team must make an informed decision based on the most recent data presented.**

**Section #1:**

Significance of the Cognitive Disability and Limited Adaptive Skills:

Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet

1. Does the student demonstrate a significant cognitive disability and limited adaptive skills that may be combined with physical or behavioral limitation?

a. The student has been determined to have cognitive abilities falling within the most significant cognitive disability range of 3+ standard deviations below the mean plus or minus one standard error of measure using standardized assessments, AMD

Yes/No      Additional information

b. demonstrates adaptive skills that are 2 standard deviations below the mean in one area or one and one-half standard deviations below the mean in two or more domains

Yes/No      Additional information

**Remember teams should document cognitive and adaptive evaluation results that are current and/or relevant to the student. This information should accurately reflect the student's current abilities.**

## Section #2:

### Instructional Considerations

2. Does the student's significant cognitive disability impact the level of supports and services needed to progress through the standards?	
a. The student requires a highly specialized educational program with intensive supports and modifications/accommodations, AND	
Yes/No	Additional Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
b. requires daily instruction for core academic standards and functional life skills on a substantially lower grade level than that of other peers with disabilities, AND	
Yes/No	Additional Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
c. requires extensive and repeated individualized instruction and support to make meaningful gains, AND	
Yes/No	Additional Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
d. uses substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways	
Yes/No	Additional Information
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>

#### Remember when considering statements, a-d:

- The level of support provided to students; the team should see documentation of support that is **SIGNIFICANTLY** different from the support provided routinely to all students. The information provided should be more than just accommodations/modifications.
- A substantially lower grade level is more significant than one or two grade levels below in one skill area. Documentation should reflect information documenting the significance of the grade level gaps in all skill areas (i.e., students cannot follow the ECS for math, but not for reading).
- Extensive and repeated individualized instruction is much more intensive and should be documented to reflect the needs of the student.
- Substantially adapted materials and individualized methods should also reflect the level of intensity that is needed for the student to access the curriculum and is also much more than testing accommodations.



**Section #3:**  
Post School Outcomes

3. Will the students significant cognitive disability impact the students post-school outcomes compared to same age peers?

Yes/No      Additional Information

*Remember, all decisions made during the educational career impact the student's future and although the transition plan is completed starting at age 14, teams should consider those outcomes at all grade levels and ages.*

*Keep in mind, the ECS should not be a "holding place" for a middle school student that would be appropriate for the Occupational Course of Study.*

**Section #4:**  
Assessment Participation

4. Is the students inability to participate in the regular assessment primarily the result of the extent of the significant cognitive disability and NOT the result of excessive absences, visual or auditory processing, social, cultural, language or economic difference?

Yes/No      Additional Information

*Remember, teams must carefully review each of these extenuating factors and ascertain the cognitive disability and adaptive behavior skills are the main factors.*

**Section #5:**  
Decision of Instruction

5. Is the student receiving instruction using the Extended Content Standards?

Yes/No      Additional Information

*Remember, this question must be considered at each Annual Review. The answer to this question is based on the data reviewed on the eligibility worksheet. If the team concluded the student requires intensive instruction with intensive supports, at a grade level significantly below their same aged peers and with repeated/intensive instruction and substantially adapted materials the team should consider if the ECS is appropriate for the student.*

**Step 2:** Once the worksheet is completed and the user clicks Save & Continue, users are redirected to the Special Factors Page. Scroll down and a new question will appear, and teams must answer yes/no.

Is the student instructed towards Extended Content Standards & participating in the alternate achievement assessment?

Yes/No      Additional Information

If “no”, there will be no further information to include.

If the team answers “yes” to this question a new box will appear in the center with the Alternate Assessment Assurance Document button:

Is the student instructed towards Extended Content Standards & participating in the alternate achievement assessment?

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT ASSURANCE DOCUMENT

Yes/No      Additional Information

Once the user clicks on the green button, the Alternate Assessment Assurance will appear, and teams will need to answer each question yes/no:

The screenshot shows a form titled "Alternate Assessment Assurance" with four numbered questions, each followed by a "Yes/No" label and a dropdown menu. At the bottom, there is an information icon and a text box: "If the IEP Team is in disagreement, document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Prior Written Notice." Below this are three green buttons: "BACK", "SAVE", and "SAVE & CONTINUE ==>".

1. The IEP Team, including the parent/guardian/student, has a clear understanding that the North Carolina Extended Content Standards are alternate academic achievement standards aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

Yes/No

2. The IEP Team, including the parent/guardian/student, has a clear understanding that the NCEXTEND1 is the alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities instructed on the extended content standards.

Yes/No

3. The IEP Team, including the parent/guardian/student, has a clear understanding that instruction on the extended content standards and participation in the alternate assessment (NCEXTEND1) will not result in a high school diploma. The student will earn a certificate of completion upon graduating/exiting high school.

Yes/No

4. The IEP Team, including the parent/guardian/student, agrees that instruction on the extended content standards and participation in the alternate assessment (NCEXTEND1) is reasonable and appropriate in light of the student's significant cognitive disability.

Yes/No

If the IEP Team is in disagreement, document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Prior Written Notice.

BACK SAVE SAVE & CONTINUE ==>

If teams answer yes, teams must include at least 2 short-term objectives and/or benchmarks with goals. ECATS will trigger an error message if objectives are not included, and the user will not be able to finalize the document.



Also, teams must choose the alternate assessment when adding state tests and include an explanation of why the student is participating in the alternate assessment:

The screenshot shows a section titled "Alternate Assessments" with a text input field and a checkbox. The text above the input field reads: "If the student is participating in any alternate assessment(s), explain why the regular testing program, with or without accommodations, is not appropriate and why the selected assessment is appropriate." The checkbox is labeled "Not applicable at this time".

Alternate Assessments

If the student is participating in any alternate assessment(s), explain why the regular testing program, with or without accommodations, is not appropriate and why the selected assessment is appropriate:

Not applicable at this time

## Appendix B

### Guidance Document for High School ECS Credit Requirements

This template provides an optional outline for the credits required for students instructed towards the alternate academic achievement standards and assessed through the alternate assessment. Please refer to State Board Policy [GRAD010](#) to find credits needed to earn the graduation certificate. Take note of the header at the top of each table. The header indicates the GRAD010 policy requirements for the 1st year the student enrolled in high school. In Powerschool, ensure the student is on the Extended Content Standard course of study, indicated in the top right of the transcript.

<b>For Eligible Students Entering Grade 9 For The First Time In 2022-2023 22 credits required</b>		
<b>Credit**</b>	<b>Semester/Year Taken</b>	<b>Credit Received</b>
<b>English I</b>		
<b>English II (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>English III</b>		
<b>English IV</b>		
<b>Financial Management I</b>		
<b>Financial Management II</b>		
<b>NC Math 1A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>NC Math 1B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Life Science</b>		
<b>Biology A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Biology B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Economics and Personal Finance</b>		

<b>Founding Principles: Civic Literacy</b>		
<b>American History</b>		
<b>World History</b>		
<b>Health and PE</b>		
<b>NC Vocational Prep</b>		
<b>NC Health, Safety, and Independent Living</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep I</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep II</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep III</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep IV</b>		

\*NCEXTEND1 is administered in grade 10. It is highly recommended students complete the NCEXTEND1 identified courses during the 9th and 10th grade years to ensure instruction has occurred prior to the assessment being administered.

\*\* Courses for students instructed towards the ECS can be found within the [course code catalog](#). ECS courses are coded with an “AX” in the fifth and sixth nodes. An [NCDPI supported video for the ECS](#) about course codes is available.

\*\*\* Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX core courses are only eligible for a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma.

**For Eligible Students Entering Grade 9 For The First Time In 2021-2022  
22 credits required**

<b>Credit**</b>	<b>Semester/Year Taken</b>	<b>Credit Received</b>
<b>English I</b>		
<b>English II (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>English III</b>		
<b>English IV</b>		
<b>Financial Management I</b>		
<b>Financial Management II</b>		
<b>NC Math 1A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>NC Math 1B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Life Science</b>		
<b>Biology A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Biology B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Economics and Personal Finance</b>		
<b>American History I</b>		
<b>American History II</b>		
<b>Civics and Governance</b>		
<b>Health and PE</b>		
<b>NC Vocational Prep</b>		
<b>NC Health, Safety, and Independent Living</b>		

<b>Elective course such as Prep I</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep II</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep III</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep IV</b>		

\*NCEXTEND1 is administered in grade 10. It is highly recommended students complete the NCEXTEND1 identified courses during the 9th and 10th grade years to ensure instruction has occurred prior to the assessment being administered.

\*\* Courses for students instructed towards the ECS can be found within the [course code catalog](#). ECS courses are coded with an “AX” in the fifth and sixth nodes. Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX courses must receive a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma. An [NCDPI supported video for the ECS](#) about course codes is available.

\*\*\* Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX core courses are only eligible for a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma.

**For Eligible Students Entering Grade 9 For The First Time In 2019-2020  
21 credits required**

<b>Credit**</b>	<b>Semester/Year Taken</b>	<b>Credit Received</b>
<b>4 English credits which could be</b>		
<b>English I</b>		
<b>English II (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>English III</b>		
<b>English IV</b>		
<b>4 Math credits which could be</b>		
<b>Financial Management I</b>		
<b>Financial Management II</b>		
<b>NC Math 1A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>NC Math 1B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>3 Science credits which could be</b>		
<b>Life Science</b>		
<b>Biology A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Biology B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>3 Social Studies credits which could be</b>		
<b>Economics and Personal Finance</b>		
<b>American History I</b>		
<b>American History II</b>		
<b>Civics and Governance</b>		



<b>Health and PE</b>		
<b>NC Vocational Prep</b>		
<b>NC Health, Safety, and Independent Living</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep I</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep II</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep III</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep IV</b>		

\*NCEXTEND1 is administered in grade 10. It is highly recommended students complete the NCEXTEND1 identified courses during the 9th and 10th grade years to ensure instruction has occurred prior to the assessment being administered.

\*\* Courses for students instructed towards the ECS can be found within the [course code catalog](#). ECS courses are coded with an “AX’ in the fifth and sixth nodes. Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX courses must receive a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma. An [NCDPI supported video for the ECS](#) about course codes is available.

\*\*\* Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX core courses are only eligible for a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma.

**For Eligible Students Entering Grade 9 Prior to 2019-2020  
21 credits required**

Credit**	Semester/Year Taken	Credit Received
<b>4 English credits which could be</b>		
<b>English I</b>		
<b>English II (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>English III</b>		
<b>English IV</b>		
<b>4 Math credits which could be</b>		
<b>Financial Management I</b>		
<b>Financial Management II</b>		
<b>NC Math 1A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>NC Math 1B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>3 Science credits which could be</b>		
<b>Life Science</b>		
<b>Biology A (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>Biology B (NCEXTEND1* course)</b>		
<b>3 Social Studies credits which could be</b>		
<b>Economics and Personal Finance</b>		
<b>American History I</b>		
<b>American History II</b>		

<b>Civics and Governance</b>		
<b>Health and PE</b>		
<b>6 local elective credits which could be</b>		
<b>NC Vocational Prep</b>		
<b>NC Health, Safety, and Independent Living</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep I</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep II</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep III</b>		
<b>Elective course such as Prep IV</b>		

\*NCEXTEND1 is administered in grade 10. It is highly recommended students complete the NCEXTEND1 identified courses during the 9th and 10th grade years to ensure instruction has occurred prior to the assessment being administered.

\*\* Courses for students instructed towards the ECS can be found within the [course code catalog](#). ECS courses are coded with an “AX’ in the fifth and sixth nodes. Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX courses must receive a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma. An [NCDPI supported video for the ECS](#) about course codes is available.

\*\*\* Students enrolled throughout high school in the AX core courses are only eligible for a graduation certificate and are not eligible to receive a high school diploma.

## Appendix C

### Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide

#### **Purpose**

The Public School Unit (PSU) *Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide* is an optional resource for use in reviewing PSU policies, practices, and procedures for determining whether the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessment is appropriate for students with disabilities.

#### **Who should be part of this process?**

Any professional with knowledge around students with significant cognitive disabilities can be part of this process. The Exceptional Children Director would be an ideal candidate to lead this process. Collaboration with a program specialist, compliance monitor, classroom teacher, and any other stakeholder that the PSU would think appropriate to be part of this reflection process.

#### **How to use the Extended Content Standard Self-Reflection Guide**

Sections A through G of the guide organizes a particular component with essential questions for problem-solving. This organization is intended to support the identification of areas to strengthen and prioritize first steps.

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## Section A

### Data Gathering and Reporting

Begin with using the ECATS Case Management Report to identify students instructed on the *Extended Content Standards* (ECS) and participating in the NCEXTEND1 alternate assessment.

### Guiding Questions

1. Who is in charge of reviewing ECATS data for students on the ECS?
2. How often are ECATS aggregate reports run to accurately identify the number of students instructed towards the ECS?
3. What patterns exist across the data (i.e. disability categories, grades, race, ethnicity, case manager, etc.)?

### Resources

[Monday Message](#)

[Case Management Report](#)

## Section B

### Policies, Practices, and Procedures

All decisions about alternate assessment and extended content standards eligibility are made annually by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The IEP team can use the guidance flowchart provided by the Office of Exceptional Children. The IEP team must use the student's detailed, current, and relevant data, evaluation and assessment results, and present levels of academic performance when making this determination.

### Guiding Questions

#### *Student Level*

1. Has the student been provided with adequate instruction from the *Standard Course of Study* prior to this decision?
2. Has the IEP team ensured the student has access to a communication method prior to making the alternate assessment placement?
3. How do IEP teams ensure that alternate assessment eligibility is not made too soon for the student?
4. In what grade levels do IEP teams begin making decisions about alternate assessment eligibility and placement?
5. How does the PSU ensure IEP teams are making the most informed decisions and utilize the guidance flowchart, if applicable to the PSU policies?
6. What data is utilized when making this decision? Is the data current and relevant?

#### *District Level*

1. What is the district timeline for providing training on the use of alternate assessments?
2. Is there a coaching practice in place to review data that will be used in the determination of participation on the extended content standards prior to IEP Team meetings?
3. Are Assessment Summaries in ECATS sufficiently detailed to provide data necessary to

respond to participation worksheets?

**Resources**

[Guidance Flowchart](#)  
[Literacy Access for All](#)

**Section C**

**Training for PSU Staff Regarding the *Extended Content Standards* and the NCEXTEND1 Alternate Assessments**

All professionals working with students instructed towards the *Extended Content Standards* must be properly educated in working with the student population. Effective teaching practices in literacy and math should be accompanied by evidence based practices. A thorough understanding of the *Extended Content Standards* is essential for the highest quality education for students. All district and charter staff who administer the alternate assessment must be trained by their local district or school test coordinator.

**Guiding Questions**

1. Do all the professionals working with students with significant cognitive disabilities have proper professional learning for effective teaching practices?
2. Do all the professionals working with students with significant cognitive disabilities have proper professional learning for understanding the *Extended Content Standards*?
3. Who provides the test administration training for the NCEXTEND1?
4. How are all IEP team members trained and informed about alternate assessment participation?
5. Are case managers equipped to explain the educational implications of diagnostic and formal evaluations (i.e., standard scores, adaptive scores, intellectual functioning, etc.)?

**Resources**

[NCDPI Alternate Assessment Information](#)  
[Eligibility Criteria](#)

**Section D**

**Family Engagement**

Families are an integral part of the IEP team. Families must be informed about the implications of changing a student's instruction from the *Standard Course of Study* to the *Extended Content Standards*. Discussions about earning a certificate of completion versus a high school diploma must occur as soon as instruction of ECS is discussed as well as annually.

**Guiding Questions**

1. How are families informed about alternate assessment eligibility and the guidance flowchart?
2. How are families informed at each meeting about the ECS pathway leading to a certificate of completion?
3. What type of coaching is provided to case managers to successfully navigate critical conversations with compassion?

## Section E

### Examine Disproportionality

The PSU reviews disproportionality for trends, patterns, or red flags that would indicate overidentification or disproportionality in one or more subgroups. This data may be accessed by the PSU test coordinator via the secure shell.

### Guiding Questions

1. In reviewing your disproportionality data, what subgroups in your PSU have the largest discrepancy between participants on the general assessment and the alternate assessment?
2. When looking at subgroup discrepancies, what hypothesis can be formed?
3. What problem-solving actions will the PSU take to address the identified hypothesis?

### Resources

[1% Justification form video](#)

## Section F

### SPP/APR: Indicator 3 - Participation in Alternate Assessment

The PSU reviews indicator 3 data for trends, patterns, or red flags. PSUs should review Indicator 3 data to determine if students participating in alternate assessments are experiencing positive outcomes.

1. Are students participating in alternate assessments meeting targets and demonstrating proficiency?
2. Do classroom observations match instructional requirements for the *Extended Content Standards*?

## Section G

### Planning Forward

Use the space below to begin planning to address next steps in sections A through E.

### Guiding Questions

1. What is currently working in your PSU?
2. Have you identified any priorities because of this review?
3. What are your next steps?
4. What will the PSU do differently because of this review?

### Next Steps

## Appendix D

# Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

A state's academic achievement standards describe how much students are expected to learn in order to be proficient on a state's general assessment. In North Carolina, the state's academic achievement standards are called the *Standard Course of Study*. Alternate academic achievement standards set an expectation of performance that differs in complexity from a grade-level achievement standard. In North Carolina, the alternate academic achievement standards are called the *Extended Content Standards*. The *Extended Content Standards* were developed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.



## Who is a student with a significant cognitive disability?

A significant cognitive disability is not a primary area of eligibility. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team makes this decision if the severity of the student's disability constitutes as having the most significant cognitive disability in nature. NCDPI provides a [guidance flowchart](#) to assist IEP teams when making this decision.

## How does an IEP team decide if a student has a significant cognitive disability?

A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should utilize a wide range of sources to determine if a child has a significant cognitive disability. These sources are outlined in ECATS in the *Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet*.

These sources typically include:

- ❖ Significant deficits in cognitive and adaptive skills
- ❖ Work samples
- ❖ Results from assessments
- ❖ Data from evidence-based interventions
- ❖ Instruction on a substantially lower grade level than that of peers with disabilities
- ❖ The use of substantially adapted materials and accessing information in alternate ways
- ❖ Extensive and repeated individualized instruction



## **The IEP team has decided the student has a significant cognitive disability. What happens now?**

The student will be instructed towards the [Extended Content Standards](#) and assessed utilizing the NCEXTEND1, North Carolina's alternate assessment. The IEP team will continue to review the data for the student and make the decision of whether the student has the most significant cognitive disability annually. When the student attends high school and has completed the necessary credits following the [GRAD-010 policy](#), the student will graduate with a certificate of completion.

## **What is the NCEXTEND1?**

North Carolina's Alternate Assessment, the NCEXTEND1, is aligned to the alternate academic achievement standards. This is the federally required state assessment provided by North Carolina for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The NCEXTEND1 is based on North Carolina's alternate academic achievement standards, the Extended Content Standards. The NCEXTEND1 is designed for a very small population of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on an appropriate assessment.

## **Why does my child have to take an assessment?**

The State Board of Education policy [ACCT-021](#) requires all students with disabilities to participate in the statewide testing program by taking the standard test administration with or without available accommodations or by participating in an alternate assessment with or without accommodations. To participate in alternate assessments, students must meet eligibility criteria established by the NCDPI, and the decision to participate in the alternate assessments must be documented in their current Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).