



2014–2015 NC Final Exams of English Language Arts I, III, and IV

North Carolina Assessment Specifications

Purpose of the Assessments

- NC Final Exams were developed to replace locally developed assessments, providing teachers and principals with a common measure for all students state-wide during a given testing window.
- North Carolina's Final Exams for High School English Language Arts (ELA) courses will measure students' academic progress in the NC *Standard Course of Study*, adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education in June 2010. The NC *Standard Course of Study* for English Language Arts is posted at: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>.
- NC Final Exam scores (along with any other relevant end-of-course or end-of-grade assessment scores) will be used in the Educational Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) to produce student growth measures to satisfy Standards 6 and 8 of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System. For more information on the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System, go to: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/effectiveness-model/>.
- NC State Board of Education policy GCS-A-016 directs schools to use the results from all course-specific NC Final Exams as a minimum of 20% of the student's final course grade.
- NC Final Exams will not be used for school and district accountability under the READY Accountability Model or for Federal reporting purposes.

Developing Assessments

North Carolina educators were recruited and trained to write new items for the NC Final Exams. The diversity among the item writers and their knowledge of the current standards was addressed during recruitment. Trained North Carolina educators also review items and suggest improvements, if necessary. The use of North Carolina educators to develop and review items strengthens the instructional validity of the items.

Curriculum and Assessment Cycle

- June 2010: North Carolina State Board of Education adoption of the NC *Standard Course of Study*.
- 2012–2013: Operational administration of the Measures of Student Learning: Common Exams.
- 2013–14: Redesign and subsequent first operational administration of the NC Final Exams.
- 2014–15: Second operational administration of the NC Final Exams.

Prioritization of Standards

□ Members of the Test Development section of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) invited teachers to collaborate and develop recommendations for a prioritization of the standards indicating the relative importance of each standard, the anticipated instructional time, and the appropriateness of the standard for multiple-choice and constructed response item formats.

□ *Tables 1–3* describe the percentage range of total score points that will appear on the NC Final Exams forms in ELA. English Language Arts I and IV will consist of only multiple-choice items. English Language Arts III will also include constructed response items. Students will probably take twice as long to answer the constructed response items. The multiple-choice items are worth one point each and the constructed response item is worth two points. The table of test specification weights describe the percent of total score points, rather than the percent of total items.

Table 1. Test Specification Weights for the ELA I NC Final Exam

Domain	Standards	Percent of Total Score Points
Language	L.4, L.5	15 to 20%
Reading for Information	RI.1–RI.6	35 to 40%
Reading for Literature	RL.1–RL.6	45 to 50%
Total		100%

Table 2. Test Specification Weights for the ELA III NC Final Exam

Domain	Standards	Percent of Total Score Points
Language	L.4, L.5	12 to 17%
Reading for Information	RI.1–RI.6	35 to 40%
Reading for Literature	RL.1–RL.6	45 to 50%
Writing	RL.1, RL.4, RI.1, RI.4, W.9	5%
Total		100%

Table 3. Test Specification Weights for the ELA IV NC Final Exam

Domain	Standards	Percent of Total Score Points
Language	L.4, L.5	15 to 20%
Reading for Information	RI.1–RI.6, RI.8	35 to 40%
Reading for Literature	RL.1–RL.6	40 to 45%
Total		100%

Cognitive Rigor

Multiple-choice items will require students to read, comprehend, and recall information. Also, students will be expected to analyze the reading passages; identify points of view, claims, and evidence; apply concepts and skills; and make inferences.

Constructed response items on the NC Final Exam of English III will draw from the following NC *Standard Course of Study* writing standards:

- Standard 1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Standard 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Standard 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Types of Items and Supplementary Materials

The NC Final Exams for ELA I, III, and IV will consist of four-response-option multiple-choice items. ELA III will also contain constructed response items.

Each form will consist of selections drawn from works of literature, which includes short story and poetry, or informational texts, drawn from the domains of History/Social Studies or Science/Technology.

In ELA III, two selections will have a constructed response item. The constructed response items will be short answer and can typically be answered well in a paragraph or less. Each constructed response item will target reading skills and will also measure specific writing skills. These short answer items will be worth two points each. Students will write their responses on the lines provided on the answer sheet. Students must not write beyond the end of the lines or in the margins. Words written in the margins or unlined areas of the answer sheet will not be scored. Students must not add more lines to the answer sheet. Words written on extra lines will not be scored. Scorers only review for the specific criteria as stated in the item. Additional information not required in the answer does not increase the student's score. It is permissible to respond in bullets. The English Language Arts III answer sheet may be reviewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/common-exams/answer-sheets/>. The answer sheet may be shared with students to familiarize them with the expectations.

A complete list of the supplemental test materials (i.e., *NC Final Exams Materials List*) may be reviewed at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/common-exams/>.

Released items are available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/common-exams/released-items/>. Released items may be used by school systems to help acquaint students with items. These materials must not be used for personal or financial gain.

Testing Structure and Test Administration Time

For ELA I and IV, the total test will contain 50 multiple-choice items. For ELA III, the exam contains 48 multiple-choice items and two constructed response items.

Included in the total item counts are embedded multiple-choice field test items that will not count toward the students score but will be used for purposes of developing items for future test forms.

The English III NC Final Exam includes two constructed response items. One constructed response item is an embedded field test item and will not be included in the student’s score but will be used for purposes of developing items for future test forms. One constructed response item is operational and will be included in the student’s score.

Students will be given 120 minutes to answer all items. Students should monitor the clock to ensure they allow themselves adequate time to respond to all items.

Appendices A–C show the number of operational items for each standard assessed by the 2014–15 exams. Note that future coverage of objectives could vary within the constraints of the content category weights in *Tables 1–3*.

Test Cycle and Delivery Mode

The NC Final Exams are administered to students enrolled in fall and spring courses. A list of course codes that align with the 2014–2015 NC Final Exams (i.e., *Course Codes that Align with the NC Final Exams*) is available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/common-exams/>.

The NC Final Exams are available for paper-and-pencil mode. However, transition to online administrations is proceeding during the 2014–2015 academic year.

NC Final Exam	Fall 2014 Delivery Mode Option(s)	Spring 2015 Delivery Mode Options
ELA I	Paper-and-Pencil only	Paper-and-Pencil and Online via NCTest
ELA III	Paper-and-Pencil and Online via NCTest	Paper-and-Pencil and Online via NCTest
ELA IV	Paper-and-Pencil only	Paper-and-Pencil and Online via NCTest

Appendix A
English I NC Final Exam 2014–15
Number of Items by Standard

The following table shows the number of operational items for each objective. Note that future coverage of objectives could vary within the constraints of the test specification weights in *Tables 1–3*. Some objectives not designated with tested items (i.e., “–”) may be a prerequisite objective, may be tested within the context of another objective or may be included as an embedded field test item.

English I Standard (Grade 9-10)	Number of Items Per Objective*
RL.1 (Reading: Literature)	4
RL.2	3
RL.3	7
RL.4	1
RL.5	2
RL.6	1
RL.7	–
RL.9	–
RL.10	–
L.1 (Language)	–
L.2	–
L.3	–
L.4.a	5
L.4.b	–
L.4.c	–
L.4.d	–
L.5.a	1
L.5.b	–
L.6	–
RI.1 (Reading: Informational Text)	3
RI.2	4
RI.3	3
RI.4	1
RI.5	3
RI.6	1
RI.7	–
RI.8	1
RI.9	–
RI.10	–

* Some objectives not designated with tested items (i.e., “–”) may be a prerequisite objective, may be tested within the context of another objective or may be included as an embedded field test item.

Appendix B
English III NC Final Exam 2014–15
Number of Items by Standard

The following table shows the number of operational items for each objective. Note that future coverage of objectives could vary within the constraints of the test specification weights in *Tables 1–3*. Some objectives not designated with tested items (i.e., “–”) may be a prerequisite objective, may be tested within the context of another objective or may be included as an embedded field test item.

English III Standard (Grade 11-12)	Number of Items Per Objective*
RL.1 (Reading: Literature)	4
RL.2	2
RL.3	3
RL.4	4
RL.5	4
RL.6	3
RL.7	–
RL.9	–
RL.10	–
L.1 (Language)	–
L.2	–
L.3.a	–
L.4.a	2
L.4.b	–
L.4.c	–
L.4.d	–
L.5.a	3
L.5.b	–
L.6	–
RI.1 (Reading: Informational Text)	3
RI.2	2
RI.3	2
RI.4	3
RI.5	2
RI.6	2
RI.7	–
RI.8	–
RI.9	–

RI.10	–
W.1 (Writing)	–
W.4	–
W.9.a	1
W.9.b	–

* Some objectives not designated with tested items (i.e., “–”) may be a prerequisite objective, may be tested within the context of another objective or may be included as an embedded field test item.

Appendix C
English IV NC Final Exam 2014–15
Number of Items by Standard

The following table shows the number of operational items for each objective. Note that future coverage of objectives could vary within the constraints of the test specification weights in *Tables 1–3*. Some objectives not designated with tested items (i.e., “–”) may be a prerequisite objective, may be tested within the context of another objective or may be included as an embedded field test item.

English IV Standard (Grade 11-12)	Number of Items Per Objective*
RL.1 (Reading: Literature)	4
RL.2	2
RL.3	4
RL.4	3
RL.5	4
RL.6	1
RL.7	–
RL.9	–
RL.10	–
L.1 (Language)	–
L.2	–
L.3.a	–
L.4.a	2
L.4.b	–
L.4.c	–
L.4.d	–
L.5.a	4
L.5.b	–
L.6	–
RI.1 (Reading: Informational Text)	4
RI.2	2
RI.3	2
RI.4	3
RI.5	3
RI.6	2
RI.7	–
RI.8	–
RI.9	–
RI.10	–

* Some objectives not designated with tested items (i.e., “–”) may be a prerequisite objective, may be tested within the context of another objective or may be included as an embedded field test item.