

Implementation of S.C. Code § 59-29-240: Civics Test Requirement

Overview

The James B. Edwards Civics Education Initiative was enacted into law on June 3, 2015. Beginning with the ninth-grade class in 2016–2017, South Carolina law now requires all public high school students to take a civics test based on the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization exam. This initiative, outlined in **S.C. Code § 59-29-240**, aims to promote civic literacy and ensure students graduate with a foundational understanding of U.S. government and history.

Districts can use their discretion in the administration and grading of the assessment then report the results directly to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) through the summer report card survey completed annually by school and district leaders. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) does not administer, score, or evaluate the assessment. Students should complete the assessment in their United States (U.S.) Government course prior to graduation.

The test questions for the 2025–2026 school year are located at the following website: [Civics Questions and Answers \(2008 Version\)](#). The test questions for the 2026–2027 school year onward are located at the following website: [Civics Questions and Answers \(2025 version\)](#), but teachers should check for updates. This document provides clarification, frequently asked questions, and recommended practices to ensure districts remain in compliance with the proviso and uphold the integrity of the instructional assessment practices.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: What is the civics test requirement under S.C. Code § 59-29-240?

- A: The law mandates that all public high school students must take a civics test based on the USCIS naturalization exam before graduation. The test includes questions about U.S. history, government, and civic principles.

Q2: Who is required to take the test?

- A: All SC public-school students enrolled in a U.S. Government course for high school credit, including those in traditional, virtual, and alternative education settings, must take the test.

Q3: Is passing the test required for graduation?

- A: No. Students are required to **take** the test but **passing** it is not a condition for graduation. However, to encourage improved civics knowledge, districts may recognize students who pass the test. Answering 6 out of 10 questions correctly from the [USCIS 2008 Naturalization Test Bank](#) comprises a passing score in the 2025–2026 school year. Answering 12 of the 20

questions correctly from the [USCIS 2025 Naturalization Test Bank](#) comprises a passing score in school year 2026–2027 onward.

Q4: What is the format of the test?

- A: The test for the 2025–2026 school year should consist of 10 questions from [USCIS 2008 Naturalization Test Bank](#). The test for the 2026–2027 school year onward should consist of 20 questions selected from the [USCIS 2025 Naturalization Test Bank](#). The questions should allow students to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of United States history and the principles and form of United States government. The ten or twenty questions should be formatted and administered in a manner consistent with a classroom-based assessment.

Q5: When should students take the test?

- A: Students should take the test during their U.S. Government course. Districts have flexibility in scheduling the test within the course timeline, but to accommodate any new student who is enrolled in the course, it is recommended to administer the test close to the end of the course, or even as part of the final exam, to ensure that all students take it.

Q6: How is the test administered?

- A: The test may be administered online or on paper, depending on district resources and preferences.

Q7: Will students receive a score or feedback?

- A: Yes. While the score does not impact graduation, districts may choose to provide feedback or use the score for instructional purposes.

Q8: Are accommodations available for students with disabilities?

- A: Yes. Students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plans should receive appropriate accommodations as outlined in their plans. The requirement does not apply to a student who is exempt in accordance with their IEP.

Q9: What resources are available to help students prepare?

- A: Teachers may use the USCIS study materials, SCDE-provided resources, and classroom instruction to prepare students. The USCIS textbook that districts can decide to use as a resource is located at: [One Nation, One People: The USCIS Civics Test Textbook](#).

Q10: When did the test requirements change?

- A: In the fall of 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services updated the Naturalization Test and Study Resources to comply with Executive Order 14161. Due to implementation

mid-school year in 2025–2026, participants in the U.S. Government course in school year 2025–2026 will remain required to take the 2008 version of the test to ensure consistency for all test takers with district reporting requirements. Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year onward, participants in the U.S. Government course will be required to take the 2025 version of the Civics portion of the Naturalization Test.

Q11: Are schools required to test students on the English portion of the test?

- A: The English portion of the test is not required to meet the Civic Test requirement. Only the Civics portion of the test is required for participants in the U.S. Government course.

Q12: What should be reported as a passing score for the school report card survey requirement?

- A: In the 2025–2026 school year, high schools will report the scores on report card survey with passing as 6 out of 10 correct responses. From the 2026–2027 school year onward, high schools will report the scores on the report card survey with passing as 12 out of 20 correct responses.

Q13: Who can I contact for more information?

- A: Districts should contact the SCDE Social Studies Education Associates for support and questions related to test implementation.