KENTUCKY CTE EMPOWERED
Today's Career and Technical Education

CTE END-OF-PROGRAM (EOP) ASSESSMENT ONLINE IT REQUIREMENTS

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

CTE EOP Assessments are administered using the online assessment system, E-SESS, through Pitsco Education. Please review the following technical specifications provided by Pitsco Education, the Career and Technical Education Consortium of States (CTECS) and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to ensure a smooth testing experience. District Assessment Coordinators (DAC), Building Assessment Coordinators (BAC), and Principals should communicate with Building and District Technology Coordinators to confirm all guidelines in this document are addressed.

Browser: The testing program is supported in Chrome, Edge, Firefox and Safari.

KDE Specific Browser Update:

- Firefox or Chrome are preferred on Mac OS.
- Chrome is preferred on Windows.

Other browsers beyond what is listed above may work, but the specified browsers are the only versions actively tested and supported. We will try to help with any other browsers or older versions but offer no guarantees. Bandwidth may be an issue if it is not "dedicated." A district may have connectivity below 500 MB and will need to manage their bandwidth activity to ensure testing is the priority for bandwidth use during the testing window. Please minimize casual use of student and staff bandwidth use of non-critical/non-instructional activities like video or audio streaming during the test window.

Reporting: In some cases, in-browser reports are augmented with spreadsheets and/or PDF documents. Excel (or compatible) and a PDF reader (such as Acrobat Reader) are optional but not required.

Audio: Using the audio feature requires additional bandwidth; you may notice slower response times during testing. If high capacity, high availability wireless mobile networks and devices are used for testing, CTECS recommends using wired internet connections for troubleshooting, as needed. Audio is played using HTML 5 technology.

Display Properties: The testing program is best viewed at 1024 x 768 display resolution or higher. It will work at 800 x 600.

Memory: There are no specific requirements for the CPU, RAM, etc. If the machine will run the browser, the E-SESS application will run.

Be sure to take the sample test (refer to next section) to test your devices and system. The timer (clock) should display correctly on the screen; if not, there is a problem, and students cannot test until it is resolved.

Sample Test: Access the sample test at each location before students begin testing. This ensures that there are no proxy servers preventing access to the site, no software packages preventing cookies/sessions from being stored, etc. The sample test may be accessed multiple times by individual users.

To access the sample CTE EOP Assessment test:

1. Go to esess.org.
2. Select Participant Login
3. Make the following entries into the four blanks:

   Sample

   Organization: KYEOP

   First Name: Sample

   Last Name: Sample

   Password: Sample

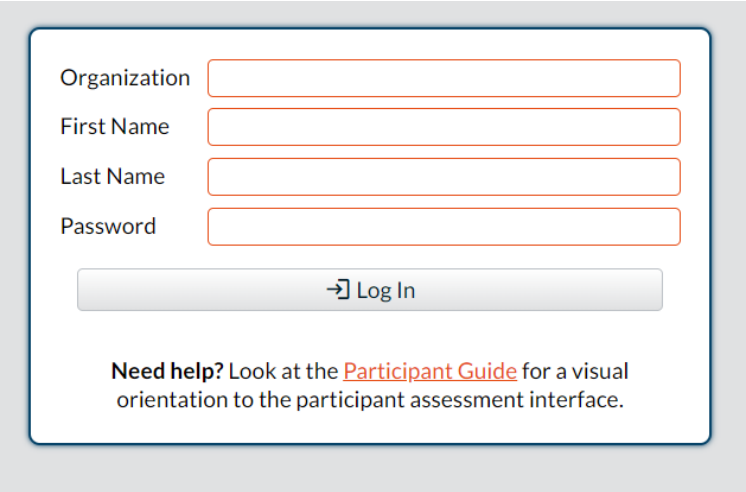
   Sample with Accommodations (e.g., audio reader, extended time)

   Organization: KYEOP

   First Name: Audio Sample

   Last Name: Audio Sample

   Password: Audio Sample



4. Click **Log In**.
5. Click **Continue**.
6. Click **Begin**.

NOTE: At least one graphic should be visible, and the timer should be visible and clearly readable throughout the test.

Firewalls and server settings: Ensure esess.org and any subdomains are not blocked.

The only exception will be images and audio (text-to-speech feature) used on the tests. The images are hosted on Amazon's S3 servers. Server name: media.esess.org

Add the Server name: "esess.org" to the permit lists on the firewalls, internet filters and proxies.

Note: GoGuardian's category list as education K-12 and is automatically "allowed". All Kentucky districts using the state standard product are covered. Any district that waived to use a different Internet filter will still need to follow the guide and manually add the allow list items for their products as directed.

District Guidelines for Network Activity Moratorium During Online Testing:

The following is a list of recommended best practices for district technology personnel to have in place during scheduled online testing windows in their district.

The use of these recommendations will greatly improve the testing experience for the students and reduce or eliminate possible activities that could impede the online testing system. These guidelines apply to all online tests. They were specifically designed to focus on best practices and lessons learned from past testing sessions.

Most Importantly:

Communicate with the DAC or ATC Principal to make sure you have these guidelines in place to meet their scheduled tests.

During Testing Windows:

1. Disable wireless guest networks
2. If a district has routers within their LAN, establish QOS rules to prioritize access to testing sites
3. Whitelist testing sites " esess.org" (Proxy/Internet Filter)
4. Restrict or ban certain network activity during the testing window. This should include:
    a. Video streaming (YouTube, Discovery, Netflix, Hulu, Hudi, etc.)
    b. Audio streaming (Pandora, iHeartRadio, Slacker, etc.)
    c. Large data moves or backup/restoration projects
    d. Alterations to LAN network equipment
    e. Removal or additions to network LAN
    f. System updates (OS Updates, Patches, Software Updates, etc.). These should be rescheduled after the testing window.

g. App updates or downloads. These should be scheduled for after the testing window.

h. Video conferencing

IT TIPS AND SOLUTIONS

The students are using an online assessment tool called E-SESS. The website is esess.org. Below are some problems you might experience during online testing. Please check this list to the best of your abilities before proceeding. If this does not appear to be the problem, then escalate the problem appropriately.

If you must escalate the problem, please have the following information available:

- Browser name and version (e.g., Chrome, Edge, Firefox)
- What time did the problem begin, and if it is still currently going on?
- Is your lab running on wireless, or are the computers physically connected to the network?

If the students are having general connection issues, check the following:

- If possible, check the packet loss in the lab.
- Perform a traceroute to esess.org to see if the connection to E-SESS is OK and packet loss ("No Reply" or "Host Unreachable") is minimal.

Next, refer to the following troubleshooting steps:

1. The test will not load at all. The student clicks the Begin button, but the page never opens.
   a. Check the firewall and/or proxy server to see if esess.org or any subdomains are blocked.
   b. Close all open browser windows (even any minimized ones). Try again. It is possible for the test to already be open and minimized or for an open window to prevent the test from opening.
2. The student clicks Begin, and the page opens, but the assessment never appears.
   a. Check the browser version. The assessment program is supported in Chrome, Edge, Firefox, and Safari.
      - Firefox or Chrome are preferred on Mac OS. An issue has been reported with Safari in the past.
      - Chrome is preferred on Windows.
   b. Try closing the assessment and clicking Begin again.
   c. Check for any specific errors showing up and contact CTECS with the exact error message.
3. "The students keep getting disconnected." The message on the screen should be something like "Please wait while your test is being loaded. The connection to the server has slowed or stopped…"
   a. A background request to E-SESS may have failed. This could be due to server packet loss on an overloaded network. When the student begins the assessment, it will download about 1+MB, but the typical transaction after that is less than 10K, so it does not require much

bandwidth. You might also check to see if a firewall or proxy server is blocking communication with esess.org.

b. If the computer seems acceptable, try a connection speed test, such as http://speedtest.net. Run the test to see if the numbers are abnormally low. Check the browser to be sure that it is adequately responsive when changing to other sites, such as the local school website.

4. The test is going really slowly. Each question takes more than ten seconds to load.

   a. This is most likely the computer itself*, as all items are loaded in the background before the first item is presented*. Try moving the student to another available computer/device for testing.

CTE End-of-Program (EOP) Assessment /TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship Assessment - E-SESS Focus Lock Technical Preparations

In preparation for online testing in E-SESS for the CTE EOP Assessment and TRACK Pre-Apprenticeship Assessment, follow the guidelines and recommendations below when preparing your district's technology and devices for online testing.

The security feature Focus Lock has been added for integrity to the online testing experience. It detects when a test taker navigates away from the testing screen or clicks on a notification. Focus Lock violations may include attempting to access the Internet, access to applications or extensions that may offer corrections, information, or may interrupt the test with pop-up notifications and operating system features that could compromise the security of the test content. Proctors and students should be well-informed about how Focus Lock works.

Guidelines and Recommendations Testing Environment Preparations

- Operating System Updates – Make certain all operating systems are up to date but do not exceed the supported versions documented by the test delivery system. Avoid operating system updates during testing.

- Disable Notifications (Do Not Disturb Settings) – This includes anti-virus, email, text and messaging notifications or any application that may use pop-up notifications on the desktop screen. Disable these prior to the school testing window and restore them once the test windows close for each student to restore the functionality.

- Disable Assistants (Siri/Cortana) – Much like notifications, "assistants" can pop up and interrupt the test session, causing Focus-Lock to activate and shut down the test session. Disable Siri and Cortana prior to a test session and restore them once the test windows close for each student to restore the functionality.

- Disable Extensions (i.e., Grammarly) – Disable Chrome extensions; these can be on the Chrome and Edge Browsers in Windows and MacOS, as well as the Chrome operating system. Any extension that can bring up a prompt, like Grammarly, needs to be disabled to

prevent activation of the Focus-Lock component, shutting down the test session.

- Disable Microsoft Game Bar – The Microsoft Game Bar has the capability to record the screen and can be operated in the background. This needs to be disabled prior to the test sessions to prevent security issues.

- Best Practices: Networks
    a. Wi-Fi – Do not exceed the number of connections per Wireless Access Point. Also, if multiple access points are used, ensure that one does not become overloaded with most connections. Balance access to these network resources.
    b. Reduce Local Network and Internet activity during test windows. For students who are not active during the test window, minimize or restrict local network and Internet access during the test window to reduce local network traffic and promote the most Internet bandwidth available for test sessions.

- Run Sample Test - This practice shows potential issues and allows students and test proctors to become familiar with the test delivery system.

  CTE EOP Online Sample Test
  Organization Name: KYEOP
  First Name: Sample
  Last Name: Sample
  Password: Sample

  CTE EOP Online Sample Test (with audio reader accommodation)
  Organization Name: KYEOP
  First Name: Audio Sample
  Last Name: Audio Sample
  Password: Audio Sample

  Note: Make necessary audio adjustments before beginning the assessment or use keyboard shortcut Alt + F2 to decrease the audio volume and use keyboard shortcut Alt. + F3 to increase the audio volume.

- Assistive Technology – If assistive technology is required that could potentially violate Focus Lock, please contact E-SESS or Career and Technical Education Consortium of States (CTECS) technical support for assistance.

Focus Lock –Test Security Feature

Share this information with teachers, students, proctors and IT staff BEFORE TESTING. Proctors and students should be well-informed about how Focus Lock works. Refer to the following documents:

- CTE EOP Assessment Instructions (Script) in the CTE End-of-Program (CTE EOP) Assessment Coordinator and Test Administrator Manuals

- CTE EOP Online IT Requirements

Before the Test: Disable automatic updates, close unnecessary applications, and **turn off notifications** that might interfere with the testing window.

- Ensure "sleep on idle" settings are disabled during testing.
- Ensure students are instructed to only use the calculator in the testing platform, as opposed to another calculator application

E-SESS Focus Lock User Guide

Overview

Focus Lock is an advanced proprietary feature integrated within the E-SESS assessment engine, designed to uphold the integrity and fairness of the testing process. This innovative browser detection tool is specifically developed to alert users in real-time if they navigate away from their test window, ensuring that the attention remains solely on the assessment at hand.

How Focus Lock Works

Real-Time Monitoring: Focus Lock continuously monitors the active window status of the user's browser to detect any attempts to navigate away from the test environment. This includes switching tabs, opening new browsers, or accessing other applications during the test.

Full Screen Mode: Upon clicking Begin on an assessment, Focus Lock will automatically expand the assessment to a full screen view. Students will no longer have to manually adjust their screens to do so. Focus Lock will operate a step further than before, which will activate if a user leaves full screen mode. An additional benefit of full screen mode is that it reduces the impact of some of the common triggers, meaning less test submissions due to inadvertent background applications, such as notifications. This exciting feature further enhances our proprietary Focus Lock feature.

User Alerts: Upon detecting a deviation from the test window, Focus Lock instantly triggers an alert to the user, indicating that a navigation away from the test has been detected. This system is designed to provide immediate feedback, reminding users to maintain focus on the test.

Warning System: To reinforce the importance of test integrity, Focus Lock employs a structured warning system comprising three alerts if a user navigates away from the test:

First Warning: The initial alert provides users with a 10-second window to acknowledge the warning and return their focus to the test.

Subsequent Warnings: If the behavior persists, two additional warnings are issued, each with a 5-second acknowledgment window.

Consequence of Ignoring Warnings: Ignoring these warnings or failing to acknowledge them within the specified time frame carries significant consequences:

After the third warning, or if any warning is not acknowledged within the allotted time, Focus Lock will automatically submit the user’s test as is. This action serves as a deterrent against any attempt to compromise the test’s integrity and ensures fairness for all participants.

Benefits of Focus Lock

Integrity Assurance: Focus Lock plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity and credibility of the E-SESS assessment process by preventing unauthorized information access or distractions during tests.

Fairness and Equality: By enforcing strict adherence to test protocols, Focus Lock ensures a level playing field for all test takers, contributing to the overall fairness of the assessment.

Real-Time Intervention: The immediate feedback mechanism of Focus Lock assists users in correcting their course of action promptly, reducing the likelihood of inadvertent rule violations.

Automated Test Submission: The automatic submission feature acts as a strong deterrent against repeated distractions or attempts to navigate away, preserving the test's validity.

Common Unintentional Triggers

Automatic Updates: Software updates that initiate automatically in the background can cause the test window to lose focus, inadvertently triggering a Focus Lock alert.

Email Applications: Email clients running in the background that produce pop-up notifications or take focus for new messages can unintentionally cause Focus Lock to activate.

Music and Streaming Services: Applications for music or video streaming that generate notifications or interface pop-ups might inadvertently shift focus away from the test environment.

Calculator Apps: Utilizing calculator apps or other assistive tools, if permitted during the test, may sometimes be misinterpreted by Focus Lock as navigating away from the test.

Processing - The “Processing” screen typically means the device has lost its internet connection. To get things back on track, please try the following steps:

- Ensure the device has reconnected to the internet.
- Refresh the browser screen.
- Continue the test as usual.

The good news is that the test remains unlocked, so students can pick up where they left off. If any time was lost due to this issue, CTECS, KYEOP, or Pitsco can adjust the test duration as needed.

Other:

- The users are explicitly acknowledging notifications of some sort.
- An app is stealing focus in the background.
- An unusual OS configuration is causing problems.

Mitigation Strategies

To minimize the impact of these unintentional triggers, several strategies can be employed:

Pre-Test Checklist: Encourage users to complete a pre-test checklist that includes disabling automatic updates, closing unnecessary applications, and turning off notifications that might interfere with the test. Enable do not disturb mode: It should cause the active app to remain front

and center and suppress active on-screen notifications. Use the links to follow how to enable this setting.

- Microsoft's instructions for Windows
- Apple's instructions for macOS

User Guidelines: Provide clear guidelines for users on how to prepare their testing environment, including which applications should be closed and how to manage necessary ones to prevent unintended Focus Lock activations.

Technical Support: Technical support is available during the assessments to assist users who encounter unintended Focus Lock activations, helping them to quickly resolve the issue without affecting their test performance.

E-SESS Focus Lock Incident Response Policy

Students will see a warning before beginning the test. **If locked out, students should notify the proctor or test site administrator for assistance.** Proctors or test site administrators should contact technical support for the following scenarios:

- **Test Ended for Inadvertent Technical Issue:** When a student's account is locked out of the assessment in E-SESS due to Focus Lock, if the incident was an inadvertent technical issue (e.g., power outage, internet connectivity issue, other technical issue, or extenuating circumstance) the student may be granted a new attempt. Incidents and resulting decisions fall under the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) and local LEA jurisdictions. Contact technical support for assistance; a new attempt may be required.
- **Test Ended for Malicious Focus Lock Violations:** For intentional attempts or an intent to cheat, the student would **NOT** be permitted to take the test again during the current school year. If the incident is reported to be an intentional violation, **NO** new attempt will be permitted. Any consequence beyond would be up to KDE-OCTE and local jurisdictions.

Technical Support

If you have any technical concerns prior to testing, please contact:

CTECS Testing Technical Support:
(available Monday – Friday 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM ET)

Tim Withee
(404) 994-6535
twithee@ctecs.org

Robyn Marshall
(404) 994-6534
rmarshall@ctecs.org

E-SESS Technical Support:
(available Monday – Friday 7:00 AM CT / 8:00 AM ET – 5:00 PM CT / 6:00 PM ET)

E-SESS Support
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