# 

# Decision-Making Tool for MCAS Participation by Students with Disabilities

**(Excerpted from the Accessibility and Accommodations Manual for the 2023–24 MCAS)**

# Appendix A: Decision-Making Tool for MCAS Participation by Students with Disabilities

Use the definition and the questions below to guide discussions of how students will participate in MCAS testing.

Massachusetts defines “students with the most significant cognitive disabilities” as those who meet **all** of the following criteria:

* have cognitive disabilities evidenced by significant delays in attaining age-level academic achievement standards, even with systematic, extensive individually designed instruction, related services, and modifications
* have cognitive disabilities that significantly impact their educational performance and ability to apply learning from one setting to another
* require extensive, direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains on the challenging State academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled
* perform significantly below average in general cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior.   
  Note: “Significantly below average”is defined as a student functioning two or more standard deviations below the mean on commonly accepted norm-referenced assessments in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior (e.g., two or more adaptive skill areas such as daily living skills, communication, self-care, social skills, and academic skills).

Question 1: Does this student with disabilities meet the definition for "students with the most significant cognitive disabilities" as described above?
YES: The student is eligible for the MCAS-Alt. Note: Simply because the student is eligible does not warrant the Team to administer the MCAS-Alt. Students taking the MCAS-Alt likely will face challenges earning their high school diploma.
NO: Proceed to question 2.

Question 2: Does this student with disabilities require specific and allowable accommodations and accessibility features to demonstrate knowledge and skills on assessments?
YES: The student's IEP or 504 plan must include the specific allowable accommodations and accessibility features for MCAS testing, which should generally mirror accommodations the student receives during routine instruction.
NO: The student must participate in the standard MCAS testing using available accessibility features. Accommodations may be included int he student's IEP or 504 plan later if the student's needs change.