

Description of Cut Scores Posted on the Virginia Department of Education Web Site

The “cut scores” in the chart on the Virginia Department of Education’s web site represent the number of correct answers required for the achievement levels of pass/proficient and pass/advanced on a particular SOL test. These cut scores, which were adopted by the Virginia Board of Education, are based on the original form of the test called the “standard setting form.” This standard setting form is reviewed by a committee of educators, known as the standard setting committee, who reviews the test form and makes recommendations to the Virginia Board of Education as to the number of correct answers, or raw score, which should be required for the various achievement levels. Once the Board adopts the cut scores, the raw score adopted by the Board to represent pass/proficient on the standard setting form is assigned a scaled score of 400, while the raw score adopted for pass/advanced is assigned a scaled score of 500.

Explanation as to Why the Raw Scores Required for “Pass/Proficient” and “Pass/Advanced” May Vary

Students must obtain a scaled score of 400 for an achievement level of pass/proficient and a scaled score of 500 for pass/advanced on all SOL tests. These scaled scores remain consistent in difficulty over time and across test forms. That is, regardless of what test form a student takes or which year a student takes a particular SOL test, the same level of proficiency is required to obtain a 400 or 500 scaled score.

Each new version or form of the test is developed with the intention that it is the same difficulty level as the standard setting form. Several statistical methods are employed during the test construction process to try to make any new forms equal in difficulty to the original form. However, the difficulty level of newly developed forms may vary slightly and the raw score required for an achievement level of pass/proficient or pass/advanced must be adjusted accordingly. For example, suppose that the new form were slightly more difficult than the original form. If this were the case, the raw score required for an achievement level of pass/proficient would be slightly lower. Conversely, if the new form were slightly easier, the raw score required for an achievement level of pass/proficient would be slightly higher.

Scaling and equating are the tools used to ensure that each student receives a fair and equitable score on the test. The scaling and equating methods used by Virginia’s testing contractor to create the equated scaled scores are used by all high stakes testing programs.