

## Adopting *High School Equivalency (HSE) Examination Guidelines*

**Resolution Number 2015-26**

**September 10, 2015**

The Board of Education approves the *High School Equivalency Examination Guidelines for Virginia* which will be used as the basis for selecting HSE examination(s) to be administered in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Adult Education and Literacy

### **HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR VIRGINIA**

The Virginia Department of Education will utilize these guidelines to review all applications received from any High School Equivalency (HSE) examination provider. All vendors seeking approval for the use of a high school equivalency (HSE) examination in Virginia shall meet all of the following guidelines. The Virginia Department of Education shall be the agency to determine whether an HSE examination provider is approved. If an HSE examination is approved for use in Virginia, the approval will remain in effect for five years. Those vendors whose examination is not approved may reapply during an open application period set by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

<b>Quality of the HSE Test:</b>	
Alignment	The vendor must provide evidence from a third party evaluator to show that the HSE examination is fully aligned to the <i>College &amp; Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education</i> and substantially aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL).
Rigor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) The vendor must provide evidence that its HSE examination meets or exceeds the most recent content and technical standards established by the 2014 edition of the <i>Standards for Education and Psychological Testing (SEPT)</i>, a product of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME).</li><li>2) The vendor must ensure that 80 percent of the HSE examination includes items using Depth of Knowledge Levels 2 and 3.</li></ol>
Test Development: Initial & Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) The vendor's design process for development of the HSE examination must be based on the SEPT in developing test items as is necessary for demonstrating high school equivalent knowledge and skills.</li><li>2) The vendor will review and update its question pool annually.</li></ol>

Reliability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor will provide results of reliability studies to show the consistency and stability of the HSE examination.</li> <li>2) The vendor will describe the psychometrics used to determine reliability.</li> <li>3) The vendor will present a plan for maintaining and measuring reliability over time.</li> </ol>
Validity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor will provide results of validity studies to show that the HSE examination measures what it intends to measure.</li> <li>2) The vendor will describe the psychometrics used to determine validity.</li> <li>3) The vendor will present a plan for maintaining and measuring validity over time.</li> </ol>
Norming of Tests	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must have completed a norming of its HSE examination with graduating high school seniors within the last two years of test development.</li> <li>2) The vendor will demonstrate that the norming study conducted met the SEPT.</li> <li>3) The vendor will describe its plan for future norming studies, for both new test items and for overall HSE examination norming, to ensure that the set passing scores on the HSE examination remain consistent with high school completion requirements.</li> </ol>
Passing Scores	The vendor will identify a minimum of two cut scores: one for high school equivalency and another for college and career readiness.
Test forms; Sections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor will provide a minimum of three HSE examination forms in English per year.</li> <li>2) The HSE examination will measure test-takers' skills in interpreting, analyzing, reasoning, and problem solving, as appropriate for the subject and standard.</li> <li>3) The HSE examination will measure skills in the areas of writing, reading, math, science, and social studies.</li> </ol>
Test Security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor shall employ well-defined, clear, and transparent security measures to ensure the security, integrity, and accessibility of its HSE examination, taking into consideration local testing centers' capabilities.</li> <li>2) The vendor must provide guidelines for testing centers to follow when security incidences occur during testing.</li> <li>3) The vendor must provide the VDOE with the protocol regarding a national, state, or local breach in security with the HSE examination and the actions the vendor will take.</li> <li>4) The vendor will specify the manner in which the VDOE and local testing centers will be informed of any problem concerning test security, including the resolution to the problem.</li> </ol>

Official Practice Tests (OPT)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A minimum of three Official Practice Test (OPT) forms in English must be available.</li> <li>2) OPTs must be aligned to the operational HSE examination and be predictive of how a test taker will perform on the actual HSE examination.</li> <li>3) OPTs must provide a diagnostic report to assist the test taker in preparing for the HSE examination.</li> </ol>
Credibility/Recognition of Test Name	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor will provide evidence that the HSE examination is nationally portable and broadly accepted by employers and postsecondary institutions.</li> <li>2) The vendor will provide a plan to increase the HSE examination's name recognition to all stakeholders.</li> </ol>
Test Delivery: Computer-Based Testing (CBT) and Paper-Based Testing (PBT)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The HSE examination can be delivered either by computer-based testing (CBT) or paper-based testing (PBT).</li> <li>2) The vendor must provide a downloadable CBT option to Internet access for use by Corrections.</li> <li>3) The CBT HSE examination must be secure on the Internet and be accessed by testing administrators only.</li> <li>4) The vendor must be equipped with the connectivity and computing capacity to handle a high volume of HSE examination data.</li> <li>5) The PBT must meet the same standards as the CBT in alignment, rigor, reliability, and validity.</li> <li>6) The vendor must ship the PBT examination and related materials to the test sites designated by the VDOE.</li> <li>7) The vendor will provide guidelines to ensure a secure method for scoring PBT.</li> <li>8) The vendor will provide to the testing centers and the VDOE a list of all costs for administering and scoring the CBT and PBT.</li> </ol>
<b>Accessibility of the HSE Test:</b>	
Registration process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The registration process should be seamless and easy to follow.</li> <li>2) Registration should be completed online, with the test taker's chosen testing date and time confirmed during the registration process.</li> <li>3) There must be a registration process in place for test takers receiving testing accommodations.</li> <li>4) The vendor must provide customer service support to answer any questions during the registration process, both through phone and online options.</li> </ol>
Test Centers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must approve any test center currently approved by VDOE for HSE examinations.</li> <li>2) Only those testing centers approved by VDOE shall administer the HSE examination.</li> </ol>
Cost	The vendor will identify a cost structure, with pricing of services and justifications for costs for the test taker, testing center, and the VDOE.

Testing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must allow test takers to take individual subtests without taking the complete HSE examination battery.</li> <li>2) The vendor will provide a process to address any and all testing irregularities.</li> <li>3) The vendor must have a process in place to authenticate the test taker's identity and eligibility to test.</li> <li>4) The vendor must have a process in place to ensure that anyone enrolled in public education will not be eligible to take the HSE examination until the student meets eligibility requirements and is permitted to test by VDOE.</li> </ol>
Cancellations/No Shows	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must have a clear policy on cancellations, with a minimum of 24 hours to cancel, without penalty.</li> <li>2) The vendor will provide guidelines as to what would constitute an "exception" if someone is a "no show" to the testing center and the process to follow to reschedule at no additional cost.</li> </ol>
Retakes	<p>A clear policy must be in place for when a test taker can retake the HSE examination (e.g., the number of times a person may retake the examination in one year; wait time between retakes; costs of retakes).</p>
Accommodations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must offer alternate forms of delivery for the HSE examination that accommodate individual test takers who have diagnosed physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive disabilities in order to allow the test taker to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled peers.</li> <li>2) The available accommodations must be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended.</li> <li>3) The vendor shall provide an easily accessible, step-by-step process to request accommodations for test takers who would benefit from receiving accommodations to test.</li> <li>4) The vendor will bear the sole responsibility of approving test takers' requests for accommodations.</li> <li>5) The vendor shall ensure that the validity of all allowable accommodations is supported and documented.</li> <li>6) The vendor must work with VDOE to develop provisions for the use of assistive technology.</li> <li>7) Determination of accommodations' approval must be a timely process, completed in 30 days or less.</li> <li>8) An appeals process must also be identified and available to those who have been denied accommodations.</li> </ol>
Scoring of Tests/Access to Scores	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must provide a description of how scoring will occur; examinations must be scored electronically for both CBT and PBT, utilizing human scorers as needed.</li> <li>2) Test takers should have direct, online access to their examination scores within 24 hours of completion for CBT and no more than four days after the vendor's receipt of answer sheets for PBT.</li> <li>3) The vendor must have processes and procedures in place for quality control and quality assurance to verify scoring results.</li> <li>4) The vendor will provide a score report that reflects the academic</li> </ol>

	<p>strengths of the graduate and a diagnostic report for the test taker who needs to retake the test.</p> <p>5) The VDOE will have electronic access to all test takers' scores in the state.</p>
Suitability for Correctional Institutions, and City and Regional Jails	<p>1) The delivery of the HSE examination must be compatible with the administrative needs of city and regional jails, the Virginia Department of Corrections, and the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice.</p> <p>2) There must be an alternate registration process in place for test takers in correctional institutions because test takers cannot self-register.</p> <p>3) The PBT must be available to city and regional jails that do not have the capacity for computer-based testing.</p>
<b>Administration of the HSE Test:</b>	
Technology	<p>1) The vendor will provide a complete description of technology required to provide CBT at local testing centers, in accordance with the criteria contained herein.</p> <p>2) CBT requirements must be compatible for use in a correctional setting.</p>
Data Management	<p>1) All data, current and historical, is the intellectual property of VDOE. The vendor must maintain all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in accordance with FERPA, state privacy laws and current Virginia Information Security Standards (SEC 501).</p> <p>2) The vendor will provide access to a data management system that produces analysis of scores and statistical and demographic reports and any other customized, generated reports required by the VDOE.</p> <p>3) The vendor shall provide technical assistance in the use of the data management system and work in consultation with the VDOE to provide additional required reports.</p> <p>4) The vendor shall set the levels of access to the data management system in accordance with VDOE regulations.</p> <p>5) The vendor shall update and backup files in the database on a daily basis.</p> <p>6) The vendor must maintain all necessary configurations and data for file restorations. In the event files are lost, or if for any reason data files must be restored, the vendor must notify VDOE and restore the system to full operating capacity in a timely manner.</p> <p>7) The data management system must be available to the VDOE at all times, except for necessary maintenance. All regular system maintenance must be confined to non-business hours (7 p.m. to 6 a.m.).</p>

<p>Training: Teachers, Staff, Administrators</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must provide professional development, as it relates to testing, to the state at all levels - including teachers, examiners, local program administrators, and state staff.</li> <li>2) The vendor must provide relevant training materials to the VDOE for review and approval before issuance. The VDOE reserves the right to edit and revise the materials as deemed necessary.</li> <li>3) Training materials provided to the local program's test site staff must be provided at no additional charge to the state or localities.</li> <li>4) The vendor must provide the specific minimum qualifications for testing personnel.</li> <li>5) The vendor will make testing guidelines available, either in print or electronically, to each certified testing site, updating the guidelines as needed.</li> <li>6) The vendor must certify testing administrators.</li> </ol>
<p>Transcripts/Certificates</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The credentialing service used by the vendor must be able to maintain all current and historical records for VDOE.</li> <li>2) The credentialing service used by the vendor will return, in a format that is agreeable to VDOE, all current and historical data to VDOE, if there is a cancellation or termination of services.</li> <li>3) The credentialing service used by the vendor must maintain all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in accordance with FERPA, state privacy laws and current Virginia Information Security Standards (SEC 501) and sign a Restricted Use Data Agreement (RUDA).</li> <li>4) The vendor must provide all data to the credentialing service in a mutually approved format and in a timely manner.</li> <li>5) Transcripts and certificates, both electronic and paper copies, will be given to all first- time passers free of charge.</li> <li>6) The credentialing service may charge a nominal fee for those graduates who need a copy of either their transcript or certificate.</li> <li>7) Electronic copies of transcripts or certificates shall be received within 48 hours of request. Paper copies of transcripts or certificates shall be received within five business days of request.</li> <li>8) If a graduate has requested a transcript or certificate and no records are found, a resolution process must be in place to address this concern.</li> <li>9) No changes or modifications can be made to the official state certificate without VDOE's permission.</li> </ol>
<p>Classroom preparation materials</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor shall provide information on the examination's content, format, and scoring process to VDOE.</li> <li>2) The vendor shall recommend study materials to prepare students to take the HSE examination.</li> </ol>

Collection of Testing Fees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor will collect all testing fees during the registration process.</li> <li>2) The vendor will reconcile with testing centers monthly for testing center fees to be dispersed.</li> <li>3) The vendor shall provide the opportunity to purchase testing vouchers for the local adult education programs.</li> </ol>
<b>Vendor Quality</b>	
Vendor Experience with Large-scale Assessment	<p>The vendor must have a minimum of three years' proven experience of successfully providing services for large-scale (e.g. statewide or national), high-stakes testing programs. A "high-stakes" testing program is one which uses assessment results for high-stake decisions, such as federal and state educational accountability purposes, student graduation requirements, or qualification for entry into college or to take college entrance exams.</p>
Technical Assistance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor must provide 24-hour technical assistance to testing centers, or identify designated personnel to be available during testing center operating hours.</li> <li>2) The vendor will provide a dedicated, toll-free telephone number that testing centers can use to report technical problems during testing and expect to receive an immediate response (within 30 minutes).</li> <li>3) The vendor will also provide a toll-free telephone number and online access for the test takers to use for support, with an expected response by the next business day after initial contact.</li> </ol>
Customer Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The vendor will have a comprehensive customer service plan.</li> <li>2) The vendor will identify at the state level the process that needs to be followed for any areas of concern, for both testing centers and test takers.</li> <li>3) The vendor will provide the name and telephone number of the person(s) assigned to the resolution of specific issues (e.g., technology, registration, scoring, general issues, etc.).</li> <li>4) The vendor will immediately resolve all testing centers' complaints and issues through a variety of options (telephone calls, e-mail, fax); test takers' complaints and issues will be resolved by the next business day after initial contact.</li> </ol>
Compliance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The approved HSE vendor(s) will comply with all of the criteria listed within these guidelines.</li> <li>2) If a vendor, once approved, does not comply, the VDOE has the right to remove approval of the HSE vendor from the approved list to administer an HSE examination in the Commonwealth of Virginia.</li> </ol>

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