

Educational functioning levels mean the ABE, ASE, and ESL literacy levels, as provided in the Guidelines, that describe a set of skills and competencies that students demonstrate in the NRS skill areas.

English as a Second Language (ESL) means instruction designed for an adult whose educational functioning level is equivalent to a particular ESL English language proficiency level listed in the NRS educational functioning level table in the Guidelines.

Guidelines means the *Implementation Guidelines: Measures and Methods for the National Reporting System for Adult Education* (OMB Control Number: 1830-0027) (also known as NRS Implementation Guidelines) posted on the Internet at: www.nrsweb.org.

Local eligible provider means an “eligible provider” as defined in the Act that operates an adult education program that is required to report under the NRS.

State means “State” and “Outlying area” as defined in the Act.

Test means a standardized test, assessment, or instrument that has a formal protocol on how it is to be administered. These protocols include, for example, the use of parallel, equated forms, testing conditions, time allowed for the test, standardized scoring, and the amount of instructional time a student needs before post-testing. Violation of these protocols often invalidates the test scores. Tests are not limited to traditional paper and pencil (or computer-administered) instruments for which forms are constructed prior to administration to examinees. Tests may also include adaptive tests that use computerized algorithms for selecting and administering items in real time; however, for such instruments, the size of the item pool and the method of item selection must ensure negligible overlap in items across pre- and post-testing.

Test administrator means an individual who is trained to administer tests the Secretary determines to be suitable under this part.

Test publisher means an entity, individual, organization, or agency that owns a registered copyright of a test or

is licensed by the copyright holder to sell or distribute a test.

(Authority: 29 U.S.C. 3292, *et seq.*, unless otherwise noted)

[73 FR 2315, Jan. 14, 2008, as amended at 81 FR 55551, Aug. 19, 2016]

§ 462.4 What are the transition rules for using tests to measure educational gain for the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS)?

A State or an eligible provider may continue to measure educational gain for the NRS using tests that the Secretary has identified in the most recent notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER until the Secretary announces through a notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER a date by which such tests may no longer be used.

(Authority: 29 U.S.C. 3292)

[81 FR 55551, Aug. 19, 2016]

Subpart B—What Process Does the Secretary Use To Review the Suitability of Tests for Use in the NRS?

§ 462.10 How does the Secretary review tests?

(a) The Secretary only reviews tests under this part that are submitted by a test publisher.

(b) A test publisher that wishes to have the suitability of its test determined by the Secretary under this part must submit an application to the Secretary, in the manner the Secretary may prescribe, by October 1, 2016, April 1, 2017, October 1, 2017, April 1, 2018, October 1, 2018, and by October 1 of each year thereafter.

(Authority: 29 U.S.C. 3292)

[73 FR 2315, Jan. 14, 2008, as amended at 81 FR 55552, Aug. 19, 2016]

§ 462.11 What must an application contain?

(a) *Application content and format.* In order for the Secretary to determine whether a standardized test is suitable for measuring the gains of participants in an adult education program required to report under the NRS, a test publisher must—

(1) Include with its application information listed in paragraphs (b) through (i) of this section, and, if applicable, the information listed in paragraph (j) of this section;

(2) Provide evidence that it holds a registered copyright of a test or is licensed by the copyright holder to sell or distribute a test.

(3)(i) Arrange the information in its application in the order it is presented in paragraphs (b) through (j) of this section; or

(ii) Include a table of contents in its application that identifies the location of the information required in paragraphs (b) through (j) of this section.

(4) Submit to the Secretary four copies of its application.

(b) *General information.* (1) A statement, in the technical manual for the test, of the intended purpose of the test and how the test will allow examinees to demonstrate the skills that are associated with the NRS educational functioning levels in the Guidelines.

(2) The name, address, e-mail address, and telephone and fax numbers of a contact person to whom the Secretary may address inquiries.

(3) A summary of the precise editions, forms, levels, and, if applicable, sub-tests and abbreviated tests that the test publisher is requesting that the Secretary review and determine to be suitable for use in the NRS.

(c) *Development.* Documentation of how the test was developed, including a description of—

(1) The nature of samples of examinees administered the test during pilot or field testing, such as—

(i) The number of examinees administered each item;

(ii) How similar the sample or samples of examinees used to develop and evaluate the test were to the adult education population of interest to the NRS; and

(iii) The steps, if any, taken to ensure that the examinees were motivated while responding to the test; and

(2) The steps taken to ensure the quality of test items or tasks, such as—

(i) The extent to which items or tasks on the test were reviewed for fairness and sensitivity; and

(ii) The extent to which items or tasks on the test were screened for the adequacy of their psychometric properties.

(3) The procedures used to assign items to—

(i) Forms, for tests that are constructed prior to being administered to examinees; or

(ii) Examinees, for adaptive tests in which items are selected in real time.

(d) *Maintenance.* Documentation of how the test is maintained, including a description of—

(1) How frequently, if ever, new forms of the test are developed;

(2) The steps taken to ensure the comparability of scores across forms of the test;

(3) The steps taken to maintain the security of the test;

(4) A history of the test's use, including the number of times the test has been administered; and

(5) For a computerized adaptive test, the procedures used to—

(i) Select subsets of items for administration;

(ii) Determine the starting point and termination conditions;

(iii) Score the test; and

(iv) Control for item exposure.

(e) *Match of content to the NRS educational functioning levels (content validity).* Documentation of the extent to which the items or tasks on the test cover the skills in the NRS educational functioning levels in the Guidelines, including—

(1) Whether the items or tasks on the test require the types and levels of skills used to describe the NRS educational functioning levels;

(2) Whether the items or tasks measure skills that are not associated with the NRS educational functioning levels;

(3) Whether aspects of a particular NRS educational functioning level are not covered by any of the items or tasks;

(4) The procedures used to establish the content validity of the test;

(5) The number of subject-matter experts who provided judgments linking the items or tasks to the NRS educational functioning levels and their qualifications for doing so, particularly their familiarity with adult education

and the NRS educational functioning levels; and

(6) The extent to which the judgments of the subject matter experts agree.

(f) *Match of scores to NRS educational functioning levels.* Documentation of the adequacy of the procedure used to translate the performance of an examinee on a particular test to an estimate of the examinee's standing with respect to the NRS educational functioning levels in the Guidelines, including—

(1) The standard-setting procedures used to establish cut scores for transforming raw or scale scores on the test into estimates of an examinee's NRS educational functioning level;

(2) If judgment-based procedures were used—

(i) The number of subject-matter experts who provided judgments, and their qualifications; and

(ii) Evidence of the extent to which the judgments of subject-matter experts agree;

(3) The standard error of each cut score, and how it was established; and

(4) The extent to which the cut scores might be expected to differ if they had been established by a different (though similar) panel of experts.

(g) *Reliability.* Documentation of the degree of consistency in performance across different forms of the test in the absence of any external interventions, including—

(1) The correlation between raw (or scale) scores across alternate forms of the test or, in the case of computerized adaptive tests, across alternate administrations of the test;

(2) The consistency with which examinees are classified into the same NRS educational functioning levels across forms of the test. Information regarding classification consistency should be reported for each NRS educational functioning level that the test is being considered for use in measuring;

(3) The adequacy of the research design leading to the estimates of the reliability of the test, including—

(i) The size of the sample(s);

(ii) The similarity between the sample(s) used in the data collection and the adult education population; and

(iii) The steps taken to ensure the motivation of the examinees; and

(4) Any other information explaining the methodology and procedures used to measure the reliability of the test.

(h) *Construct validity.* Documentation of the appropriateness of a given test for measuring educational gain for the NRS, *i.e.*, documentation that the test measures what it is intended to measure, including—

(1) The extent to which the raw or scale scores and the educational functioning classifications associated with the test correlate (or agree) with scores or classifications associated with other tests designed or intended to assess educational gain in the same adult education population as the NRS;

(2) The extent to which the raw or scale scores are related to other relevant variables, such as teacher evaluation, hours of instruction, or other measures that may be related to test performance;

(3) The adequacy of the research designs associated with these sources of evidence (*see* paragraph (g)(3) of this section); and

(4) Other evidence demonstrating that the test measures gains in educational functioning resulting from adult education and not from other construct-irrelevant variables, such as practice effects.

(i) *Other information.* (1) A description of the manner in which test administration time was determined, and an analysis of the speededness of the test.

(2) Additional guidance on the interpretation of scores resulting from any modifications of the tests for an individual with a disability.

(3) The manual provided to test administrators containing procedures and instructions for test security and administration.

(4) A description of the training or certification required of test administrators and scorers by the test publisher.

(5) A description of retesting (e.g., re-administration of a test because of problems in the original administration such as the test taker becomes ill during the test and cannot finish, there are external interruptions during testing, or there are administration errors) procedures and the analysis upon

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which the criteria for retesting are based.

(6) Such other evidence as the Secretary may determine is necessary to establish the test's compliance with the criteria and requirements the Secretary uses to determine the suitability of tests as provided in § 462.13.

(j) *Previous tests.* (1) For a test used to measure educational gain in the NRS before the effective date of these regulations that is submitted to the Secretary for review under this part, the test publisher must provide documentation of periodic review of the content and specifications of the test to ensure that the test continues to reflect NRS educational functioning levels.

(2) For a test first published five years or more before the date it is submitted to the Secretary for review under this part, the test publisher must provide documentation of periodic review of the content and specifications of the test to ensure that the test continues to reflect NRS educational functioning levels.

(3) For a test that has not changed in the seven years since the Secretary determined, under § 462.13, that it was suitable for use in the NRS that is again being submitted to the Secretary for review under this part, the test publisher must provide updated data supporting the validity of the test for use in classifying adult learners with respect to the NRS educational functioning levels and the measurement of educational gain as defined in § 462.43 of this part.

(4) If a test has been substantially revised—for example by changing its mode of administration, administration procedures, structure, number of items, content specifications, item types, forms, sub-tests, or number of hours between pre- and post-testing from the most recent edition reviewed by the Secretary under this part—the test publisher must provide an analysis of the revisions, including the reasons for the revisions, the implications of the revisions for the comparability of scores on the current test to scores on the previous test, and results from validity, reliability, and equating or

standard-setting studies undertaken subsequent to the revisions.

(Authority: 29 U.S.C. 3292)

[73 FR 2315, Jan. 14, 2008, as amended at 81 FR 55552, Aug. 19, 2016]

§ 462.12 What procedures does the Secretary use to review the suitability of tests?

(a) *Review.* (1) When the Secretary receives a complete application from a test publisher, the Secretary selects experts in the field of educational testing and assessment who possess appropriate advanced degrees and experience in test development or psychometric research, or both, to advise the Secretary on the extent to which a test meets the criteria and requirements in § 462.13.

(2) The Secretary reviews and determines the suitability of a test only if an application—

(i) Is submitted by a test publisher;

(ii) Meets the deadline established by the Secretary;

(iii) Includes a test that—

(A) Has two or more secure, parallel, equated forms of the same test—either traditional paper and pencil or computer-administered instruments—for which forms are constructed prior to administration to examinees; or

(B) Is an adaptive test that uses computerized algorithms for selecting and administering items in real time; however, for such an instrument, the size of the item pool and the method of item selection must ensure negligible overlap in items across pre- and post-testing;

(iv) Includes a test that samples one or more of the major content domains of the NRS educational functioning levels of ABE, ASE or ESL with sufficient numbers of questions to represent adequately the domain or domains; and

(v) Includes the information prescribed by the Secretary, including the information in § 462.11 of this part.

(b) *Secretary's determination.* (1) The Secretary determines whether a test meets the criteria and requirements in § 462.13 after taking into account the advice of the experts described in paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(2) For tests that contain multiple sub-tests measuring content domains