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Action

Professional Services Committee

Update on the Basic Skills Requirement and Potential Approval of an Additional Option for Meeting the Basic Skills Requirement

Executive Summary: This agenda item provides an update on the implementation of the basic skills requirement, including the variety of options to meet the basic skills requirement. In addition, one new option is presented for the Commission's potential approval.

Policy Question: Does the Commission wish to accept specified passing scores on selected Advanced Placement (AP) examinations as an additional option for meeting the basic skills requirement?

Recommended Action: That the Commission accept specified passing scores on selected AP exams as an additional option for meeting the basic skills requirement.

Presenter: Michael Taylor, Consultant, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

I. Educator Quality

- ◆ Develop, maintain, and promote high quality authentic, consistent educator assessments and examinations that support development and certification of educators who have demonstrated the capacity to be effective practitioners.

Update on the Basic Skills Requirement and Potential Approval of an Additional Option for Meeting the Basic Skills Requirement

Introduction

This item clarifies the various options allowed by law for credential candidates to meet the basic skills requirement and presents an additional option the Commission may wish to approve concerning accepting specified scores from select Advanced Placement examinations to meet the basic skills requirement.

Background: The Basic Skills Requirement

The California Education Code and Title 5 Regulations specify, in most cases, that applicants for a credential, certificate, or permit to serve in the public schools of California must demonstrate basic skills proficiency before the credential, certificate, or permit will be issued. For Multiple and Single Subject Teaching Credential candidates, the basic skills requirement must be met prior to being assigned to daily responsibility for whole class instruction in student teaching or serving as an intern. However, institutions may require the basic skills requirement be met prior to program enrollment.

Current options for meeting the basic skills requirement are to:

1. Pass the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) – Individuals only need to pass the CBEST once; CBEST passing scores remain valid indefinitely for all credential and employment purposes. To pass the CBEST, one must obtain a minimum scaled score of 41 in each of the three sections—reading, writing, and mathematics. However, a score as low as 37 on an individual section is acceptable if the total scaled score is at least 123. Any or all sections of the CBEST can be repeated as many times as necessary to obtain a passing score.
2. Pass the CSET: Multiple Subjects Plus Writing Skills Examination – Passing the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET): Multiple Subjects examination in combination with the CSET: Writing Skills examination meets the basic skills requirement.
3. Demonstrate proficiency on the California State University (CSU) Early Assessment Program or the CSU Placement Examinations – Demonstrating proficiency on the CSU Early Assessment Program (EAP) (English and Mathematics sections) or the CSU Placement Examinations (English Placement Test [EPT] and Entry Level Mathematics [ELM]) are sufficient to meet the basic skills requirement.
4. Pass a Basic Skills Examination from Another State – The Commission will accept basic skills examinations from other states.

Each of these options is described more fully below.

Option 1: the CBEST

The CBEST is by far the most commonly used approved method for meeting the basic skills requirement. The CBEST was first administered in 1982 and recently underwent new development to update test items and to increase the size of the item bank to allow for on-demand computer-based testing, which began in 2009.

During the 2013-14 academic year, 33,965 individuals took all three sections of CBEST (reading, writing, and math) and 26,689 individuals passed, for an overall pass rate of 79%. Of the individuals who responded to the voluntary background questions at the time of test administration 48% indicated that they were taking CBEST as a step toward earning a teaching credential, 36% indicated that they were taking CBEST for employment purposes such as substitute teaching and the rest indicated other purposes for taking the exam such as earning services credentials.

Option 2: CSET: Multiple Subjects and CSET: Writing Skills

Education Code section 44252.6 specifies that the use of the CSET: Multiple Subjects examination in combination with the CSET assessment of basic writing skills is allowed to meet the basic skills requirement. Passing exam scores on the CSET: Multiple Subjects examination used to meet the basic skills requirement only remain valid indefinitely. The CSET: Writing Skills may not be used alone and must always be used in combination with the CSET: Multiple Subjects examination.

Option 3: The CSU Waivers

As indicated above, Education Code section 44252(b)(8) specifies that the basic skills requirement can be met by demonstrating proficiency on the CSU placement exams (ELM and EPT) administered to new undergraduate students entering the CSU system. For use of the EAP, candidates must achieve a score of "College Ready" or "Exempt" for both math and English. For use of the ELM, candidates must achieve a score of 50. For use of the EPT, candidates must achieve a score of 151.

The CSU system allows new undergraduate students to earn a waiver exemption from further entry level placement assessments using scores from the EAP exams (administered to 11th grade students in California) to waive the ELM and/or EPT requirements when they enter college. Because the ELM and EPT can be used to meet the basic skills requirement, current thinking suggests that examinations which allow CSU students to waive the EPT and ELM should also be sufficient for meeting the basic skills requirement. As such, the Commission also allows credential candidates who scored high enough on EAP to use those scores to meet the basic skills requirement.

The CSU also allows new students entering the system to waive the ELM and/or EPT requirements if they achieved a high enough score on college entrance exams, specifically the ACT and SAT, or on specific AP exams students may have taken in high school.

In addition, this same section of statute allows for candidates who achieve the specified scores on the SAT and ACT that waive the CSU’s EPT and ELM requirements to also be exempt from the basic skills requirement. Accordingly, candidates who achieve a score of at least 500 on the SAT English exam, or a score of at least 22 on the ACT English exam, and a score of at least 550 on the SAT mathematics exam, or a score of 23 on the ACT mathematics exam, are determined to have met the basic skills requirement.

Option 4: Basic Skills Examinations from Other States

Education Code section 44252(b)(3) permits an individual who has passed a basic skills examination in another state where they were credentialed to be exempt from California’s basic skills examination. There is no recency requirement for the date the examination was passed. The list of Basic Skills examinations from other states accepted by the Commission can be found at: <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl667.pdf>.

The table below shows the current options for candidates to use scores from other examinations to meet the basic skills requirement.

Current Options for Meeting the Basic Skills Requirement without Taking CBEST

Examination	English Score Requirement	Math Score Requirement
CSU Early Assessment Program (EAP)	“College Ready” or “Exempt”	“College Ready” or “Exempt”
CSU Placement Exams (EPT and ELM)	Score of 151 or above	Score of 50 or above
College Board SAT	Score of 500 or above	Score of 550 or above
ACT	Score of 22 or above	Score of 23 or above
Meets Basic Skills Requirement	Reading and Writing	Mathematics

Proposed Option 5: College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations

The CSU also waives the EPT and ELM requirements for students who achieve a score of 3 or higher on the College Board AP English exam, AP Calculus exam or AP Statistics exam, respectively. The intent of these waivers is that any valid assessment score which carries the weight of determining college readiness can be used to demonstrate that a student has met the basic educational requirements for studying at a college level. As this intent applies to EAP, ACT, and SAT, and carries through so that high scores on these exams can be used to meet the basic skills requirement, the Commission may wish to also allow scores of 3 or higher on AP English and either AP Calculus or AP Statistics to meet the basic skills requirement for teacher preparation candidates.

The table below shows a fifth option for candidates to use scores from specified AP exams as an additional way for candidates to meet the basic skills requirement.

Possible Additional Option for Meeting the Basic Skills Requirement without Taking CBEST

Examination	English Score Requirement	Math Score Requirement
College Board Advanced Placement Examinations (AP)	Score of 3 or above on one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP English Language and Composition • AP English Literature and Composition 	Score of 3 or above on one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Calculus AB • AP Calculus BC • AP Statistics
Proposed to meet Basic Skills Requirement	Reading and Writing	Mathematics

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission take action to approve the use of College Board AP scores as described above as an additional method for meeting California’s basic skills requirement for teacher preparation candidates.

Next Steps

If the Commission approves the use of AP scores as an additional method for meeting the basic skills requirement, staff will prepare necessary communication to the field to notify the field of the all available option for meeting the basic skills requirement.