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# 2B

## Action

### *Professional Services Committee*

#### **Approval of a Plan for Alternative Subject Matter Competency Assessment for Additional Less Commonly Taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE)**

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**Executive Summary:** This agenda item presents for Commission approval a plan for an alternative subject matter competency assessment process to meet the needs of teachers of those less commonly taught languages other than English for which there is currently no CSET: LOTE subject matter examination and no single subject matter preparation program available.

**Recommended Action:** That the Commission approve the proposed plan as presented in the agenda item.

**Presenter:** Phyllis Jacobson, Ed.D.,  
Administrator, Professional Services Division

**Strategic Plan Goal: 1**

**Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators.**

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators and for the accreditation of credential programs.

April 2008



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# Approval of a Plan for Alternative Subject Matter Competency Assessment for Additional Less Commonly Taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

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## **Introduction**

This agenda item presents a plan for an alternative assessment approach to meet candidate needs for establishing subject matter competency in those less commonly taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE) for which the Commission does not have a California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET) examination and for which there are also no single subject matter preparation programs available. The item is in two parts: the first part addresses a process for assessing the subject matter competency for all other languages except for Native American languages; the second part addresses the process for assessing subject matter competency for Native American languages.

## **Background**

The Commission currently offers seventeen different CSET: LOTE subject matter competency examinations:

• American Sign Language	• Japanese
• Arabic	• Khmer
• Armenian	• Korean
• Cantonese	• Mandarin
• Farsi	• Punjabi
• Filipino	• Russian
• French	• Spanish
• German	• Vietnamese
• Hmong	

Although the list is extensive, this set of language-related subject matter examinations as a whole does not cover the full range of languages taught in California public schools. Current and prospective Single Subject and/or bilingual teachers of these other languages (for example, Hindi, Turkish, and Native American languages) do not now have a means of establishing their subject matter competency. Without being able to establish subject matter competency, these individuals cannot either obtain an initial credential in this area of authorization or, if they already hold a valid California credential, cannot add the particular language authorization to that credential.

It is impractical and not fiscally feasible for the Commission to develop, validate, and maintain a CSET: LOTE examination for all of these less commonly taught languages. The number of candidates needing to establish subject matter competency in some of these languages may be fewer than ten on an annual statewide basis, and in some years there may be no candidates in a

given less commonly taught language. To start the dialogue regarding this situation, staff brought informational agenda items to the Commission in January 2006 (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2006-01/2006-01-7H.pdf>) and October 2007 (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2007-10/2007-10-3G.pdf>) discussing an alternative subject matter competency assessment approach which could be used for these less commonly taught languages.

Subsequent to the two Commission meetings, staff further discussed the proposed plan with the California Foreign Language Subject Matter Project Advisory Board in December 2007 to obtain input from a variety of stakeholders from K-12 and higher education institutions, with members of language-related examinations development panels, and also with the American Indian Education Oversight Committee at its regularly-scheduled March 2008 meeting.

Education Code Section 44280 authorizes the Commission to establish and implement guidelines for accepting alternative assessments for languages other than English performed by organizations that are expert in the language and culture assessed. It is important, however, that any alternative assessment process for subject matter competency be of similar rigor and cover similar content specifications for languages other than English as are assessed by the CSET: LOTE standardized examinations or covered within approved single subject matter preparation programs.

## **Part 1. Proposed Alternative LOTE Subject Matter Competency Assessment Plan for Languages other than Native American Languages**

The proposed alternative assessment plan for less commonly taught languages other than Native American languages, if adopted by the Commission, would incorporate two types of candidate assessments: a standardized assessment to be developed that would be adapted from current CSET: LOTE examination subtests, and an alternative language skills proficiency assessment process that would be conducted by organizations expert in the target language and culture. Taken as a whole, these two complementary approaches would assure that candidates in the less commonly taught languages are assessed with similar rigor and to similar content specifications as all other Single Subject LOTE and/or bilingual authorization candidates who establish their subject matter competency via examination or by approved subject matter program completion.

### **A. Standardized Alternative Assessment Process**

The standardized alternative assessment process for languages other than Native American languages would adopt the “template” examination format already established for other less commonly taught languages other than English (e.g., Filipino, Khmer, and Arabic). The standardized assessment would include elements from the following CSET: LOTE examination subtests:

- Culture of the target language group (applicable generic questions from the CSET: LOTE Subtest I and/or the CSET: LOTE Subtest V)
- General Linguistics (from CSET: LOTE Subtest I)
- Literary and Cultural Texts, Traditions and Analysis (includes oral traditions in place of texts for nontext-based languages) (*includes applicable questions and some adaptation from the CSET: LOTE Subtest I for less commonly taught languages*)

A candidate test guide for the standardized assessment would be developed to include the KSAs eligible to be covered by the examination and other related study materials, as is standard practice for all CSET examinations.

### **B. Local Alternative Language Proficiency Assessment Process for Target Language Skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing), Conducted by Organizations Expert in the Culture and Language to be Assessed**

Candidates' target language skills proficiency in the four skills areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing would be assessed by qualified local personnel rather than by a standardized language assessment. The level required for passing should be at least intermediate-high, as described in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency standards provided in Appendix A. The assessor agency may, however, provide a rationale for setting a different proficiency standard for the Commission's consideration.

The local assessor would be required to be a faculty member at a college or university, or a credentialed K-12 teacher with expertise in the language and culture to be assessed, or have equivalent training, expertise and/or experience, if the assessor were a community member or member of a particular cultural organization. The assessor agency/organization would apply to the Commission for approval (using an on-line application form) to administer the alternative language assessment process, including in its application a description of the qualifications of the specific assessor(s) for each language. A sample draft of the on-line application form is provided as Appendix B to this agenda item.

The assessor agency/organization would need to notify the Commission as to the status of examinees who passed the alternative language portion of the assessment. Candidates who passed both the standardized assessment described in subsection A above plus the alternative language proficiency assessment described in subsection B above would be deemed to have met the subject matter competency requirement by examination. The Commission will conduct a periodic review of the status of each approved assessor agency/organization to assure that the approved process is being regularly carried out.

#### **Benefits of this Approach**

- Allows for inclusion of an unlimited number of languages
- Relatively minimal cost to the Commission for a one-time development process that would include review/adaptations of the relevant CSET: LOTE subtests
- Is proactive on the part of the Commission rather than waiting for legislation or other requirements that could potentially lower the Commission's LOTE standards for certain candidates
- Is relatively equal to the candidate requirements for languages for which there are CSET examinations or approved subject matter preparation programs available.

### **Part 2. Proposed Alternative Subject Matter Competency Assessment Plan for Native American Languages**

Native American languages present a special challenge for establishing candidate subject matter competency. The two-component alternative subject matter competency assessment process described in Part 1 above will not necessarily work for these particular languages, given that

many of the qualified individuals available to assess candidates' language skills would not necessarily be faculty members or K-12 credentialed teachers but would instead establish their expertise based on local training and/or experience and/or tribal status.

The Commission has already received a request from a school district in the Humboldt area for addressing the needs of teachers of three local Native American languages (Yurok, Karuk, and Hoopa) who need to establish their subject matter competency for both credentialing and NCLB-related Highly Qualified Teacher purposes. Other states such as Idaho, New Mexico, and Washington have recognized the unique situation of Native American language groups by modifying their credentialing assessment requirements to better meet the needs of candidates from these language and cultural groups. In March 2008, staff met with Native American representatives on the American Indian Education Oversight Committee for input. The Oversight Committee is an advisory committee to the Superintendent of Public Instruction on issues relating to the education of Native American students.

After considering input from the field, staff is proposing a modified alternative subject matter competency assessment plan for the Native American languages group for adoption by the Commission. Under the modified assessment plan, local K-12 school districts who need California credentialed teachers or who want to employ California credentialed teachers in any of the Native American languages, plus tribes and/or tribal organizations associated with a given Native American language, may apply to be the approved assessor agency for all aspects of candidate subject matter competency (including language skills, literary and cultural skills). The proposed assessor agency would need to provide the Commission in its application with details of its qualifications as an assessor agency, and would need to provide the qualifications of each local assessor, similar to the process previously described for languages other than Native American languages.

In the case of a school district as the applicant assessor agency, the LEA would have to work with the tribe(s) to identify qualified tribal members as assessors, or, where a tribe is not available, then with the tribal organization associated with that Native American language. The tribe assessor(s) or tribal organization assessor(s) qualified to administer the Native American language assessment would administer and score the assessment. Candidates who passed this alternative assessment would be deemed to have met the subject matter competency requirement by examination for that particular Native American language. The Commission will conduct a periodic review of the status of each approved assessor agency/organization to assure that the approved process is being regularly carried out.

### **Benefits of this Approach**

- Allows for inclusion of an unlimited number of Native American languages
- Minimal cost to the Commission
- Is responsive to local employer needs as well as to tribal needs for California credentialed Native American language teachers
- Is responsive to the geographic constraints faced by areas of the state where there are concentrations of Native American students
- Takes advantage of local, tribal, and other tribal organization expertise

### **Proposed Implementation Plan**

If the Commission approves the alternative Languages Other Than English subject matter competency assessment plan, the following steps would then be taken:

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Activity</b>
May 2008	Correspondence to the field would be sent out to all stakeholders regarding the process for alternative Languages Other Than English subject matter competency assessment
June 2008	Finalized alternative assessor agency application forms would be available and Native American assessor agencies may begin applying to the Commission
Late summer/early Fall 2008	Work would begin on the development of the standardized assessment described in Part 1 of the agenda item; assessor agencies for all other languages may begin applying to the Commission
May 2009	First administration of the standardized assessment described in Part 1 of the agenda item
June 2009	Standard-setting meeting to establish the recommended passing score standard for the standardized assessment
August 2010	Adoption by the Commission of the passing score standard for the standardized assessment

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the alternative Languages Other Than English subject matter competency assessment plan as provided in Parts 1 and 2 of this agenda item be approved.

## **APPENDIX A**

# **AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES (ACTFL) PROFICIENCY STANDARDS DESCRIPTION**

# **ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: LISTENING**

## **Intermediate-Low**

Able to understand full length spoken sentences in content areas referring to personal background, personal needs, and routine social practices (ordering meals, receiving instructions, and receiving directions). Listening is primarily fact to face. Understanding is often uneven; repetition and rewording may be necessary. Misunderstandings arise frequently.

## **Intermediate-Mid**

Able to understand full length spoken sentences in additional content areas referring to more difficult tasks (lodging, transportation, and shopping), personal interests, activities, and greater diversity of receiving instructions and directions. Listening tasks will also pertain to short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech (simple announcements and news reports) Understanding continues to be uneven.

## **Intermediate-High**

Able to understand longer stretches of dialogue on additional content areas pertaining to different times and places. Understanding may be inconsistent due to difficulty in grasping main ideas and/or details. Topics are not significantly different from an Advanced level listener, but comprehension will be poorer.

## **Advanced**

Able to understand main ideas and most details of longer stretches of dialogue on a variety of topics that may fall outside of the immediate situation, however comprehension may be uneven due to topic familiarity or other factors. Dialogue will frequently involve different time frames (present, past, regularly occurring, or seldom occurring), and may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics, and reports on factual information. Listener is aware of cohesive devices, but may not be able to use them to follow the sequence of thought when listening.

## **Advanced Plus**

Able to understand the main ideas of most speech in the standard dialect, however it may be difficult to sustain understanding during lengthy or especially complex communication. Listener is beginning to become aware of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the dialogue, but may fail to understand the subtle sociocultural meanings in the message.

## **Superior**

Able to understand the main ideas of all speech in the standard dialect, including technical discussion in a particular field of specialization (academic/ professional settings, lectures, speeches, and reports). Listener shows some appreciation of aesthetic norms (idioms, colloquialisms, register shifting), and can understand subtle sociocultural meanings. Rarely misunderstand, except during fast paced, highly colloquial speech, or speech with highly strong cultural references.

## **Distinguished**

Able to understand virtually all forms and styles of speech, has a strong understanding of social and cultural references. Understands plays, movies, academic debates, literary readings, and most jokes and puns. May have some difficulty with non standard dialects and slang.

# **ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: SPEAKING**

## **Intermediate-Low**

Able to successfully handle limited, face-to-face, conversation involving tasks and social situations such as introducing self, ordering meals, asking directions, and making purchases. Strong inference from native language may occur and misunderstandings are frequent.

## **Intermediate-Mid**

Able to successfully handle a variety of simple conversation involving tasks and social situations beyond their most immediate needs (personal history, leisure time activities). Speech length increases slightly, but frequent long pauses are likely. Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by native language. Misunderstandings still arise.

## **Intermediate-High**

Able to successfully handle most simple conversations involving task and social situations, as well as general conversation on a range of circumstances and topics. Errors are evident and limited vocabulary may cause speaker to hesitate and ramble. Simple narration and/or description is improved.

## **Advanced**

Able to successfully handle conversations required in everyday situations, and routine school and work requirements. Complicated tasks and social situations (elaborating, complaining, apologizing) may still be difficult. Can narrate and describe with some details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Weaknesses can be smoothed over by pause fillers and different rates of speech. Some groping for words may still be evident.

## **Advanced Plus**

Able to successfully handle a broad variety of everyday, school, and work conversations, as well as discuss concrete topics relating to interests and special fields of competence. Speaker is beginning to be able to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize. Has a well-developed ability to compensate for weaknesses by paraphrasing. Can communicate fine shades of meaning with inflection and differentiated vocabulary.

## **Superior**

Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topics. Speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. Can distinguish main ideas from supporting information. No patterns of error are evident.

# ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: READING

## **Intermediate-Low**

Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest text about basic personal and social needs. Examples of texts include messages with social purposes and information for the widest possible audiences, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.

## **Intermediate-Mid**

Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Texts provide basic information and guesswork is minimal for the reader. Examples include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.

## **Intermediate-High**

Able to read consistently with full understanding simple texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can understand some main ideas from texts at next higher level featuring description and narration. Basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted. Tests do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read several times for understanding.

## **Advanced**

Able to read longer prose with familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts, may miss some detail. Comprehension comes from situational and subject matter knowledge as well as increasing control of the language. Texts include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, social notices, correspondence, and simple technical material written for a the general reader.

## **Advanced Plus**

Able to follow essential points at the Superior level in areas of special interest or knowledge. Able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and have complex language, and/or texts with unfamiliar topics, situations, or cultural references. Awareness of aesthetic properties of languages is emerging permitting comprehension of a wider variety of texts. Misunderstandings may occur.

## **Superior**

Able to read with almost complete comprehension at normal speed on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of texts. Readers is not expected to thoroughly comprehend texts requiring a high degree of knowledge of the target culture. Texts feature hypotheses, argumentation, grammatical patterns, and academic/professional vocabulary. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur due to use of uncommon phrases. Material includes a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports, and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary.

## **Distinguished**

Able to read fluently and accurately most styles and forms. Able to understand references in text to real-world knowledge and almost all sociolinguistic and cultural references. Able to understand nuance and subtlety, and follow unpredictable turns of thought. Text include sophisticated editorials, specialized journal articles, novels, plays, poems, as well as any subject matter area directed to the general reader.

# ACTFL PROFICIENCY STANDARDS: WRITING

## **Intermediate-Low**

Able to write short messages, postcards, and simple notes. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. Writing produces consists of simple sentences on very familiar topics.

## **Intermediate-Mid**

Able to write for practical needs. Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events, and other topics grounded in personal experience. Can express present time and at least one other time frame (nonpast, habitual, imperfective). Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on a given topic and provides little evidence of conscious organization.

## **Intermediate-High**

Able to meet most practical writing needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work and school experience. Can express time, tense, or aspect rather consistently, but not always accurately. An ability to describe and narrate in paragraphs is emerging.

## **Advanced**

Able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. May still make errors in punctuation, spelling, or the formation of nonalphabetic symbols. Makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. Uses a limited number of cohesive devices accurately. Writing may resemble literal translation from the native language, but a sense of organization is emerging.

## **Advanced Plus**

Able to write about a variety of topics with significant precision and in detail. Can write most social and informal business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences fully but has difficulty supporting points of view in written discourse. Can write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows remarkable fluency and ease of expression, but under time constraints and pressure writing may be inaccurate. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weakness and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling or character writing formation may result in occasional miscommunication. Some misuse of vocabulary may still be evident. Style may still be obviously foreign.

## **Superior**

Able to write clearly in most formal and informal writing. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling or nonalphabetic symbol production, and a wide general vocabulary allow the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident, although not thoroughly executed.

**APPENDIX B**

**SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM  
ALTERNATIVE ASSESSOR AGENCY**

**LANGUAGES OTHER THAN NATIVE AMERICAN  
LANGUAGES**



COMMISSION ON  
TEACHER CREDENTIALING  
*Ensuring Educator Excellence*

**Application to be an Assessor Agency for a Language Other Than English**  
*(Please note that this will be an on-line application form)*

**Name of Applicant Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/State/Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Language(s) to be Assessed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Describe the background of the applicant assessor agency with respect to languages other than English.
2. Describe the agency's capacity and/or resources to carry out the responsibilities of an alternative language other than English assessor agency.
3. Describe the qualifications for each language assessor to be used by the agency. Use one form per assessor. The assessor qualification form is provided on the following pages of the application, and may be duplicated as necessary.
4. Describe how the assessor will assess the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of the teach candidate in the target language(s) to determine if the candidate meets the Commission's minimum standards for that language. Refer to the chart provided and the description of the ACTFL proficiency levels to identify the minimum level of language proficiency required for the target language(s).
5. Provide any additional information the assessor agency would like the Commission to consider.

*1. Describe the background of the applicant assessor agency*

*2. Describe the agency's capacity and/or resources to carry out the responsibilities of an alternative language other than English assessor agency.*

**3. Describe the qualifications for each language assessor to be used by the agency. Use one form per assessor.**

**Assessor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Select the assessor's level of competence for listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language using the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) standards for each level. See appendix A for descriptions of standards for each level.

**Listening Level:** Select Level from Dropdown Menu

**Speaking Level:** Select Level from Dropdown Menu

**Reading Level:** Select Level from Dropdown Menu

**Writing Level:** Select Level from Dropdown Menu

**If applicable:**

Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

**Include with this application any additional documentation of the qualifications of the specific assessors. Additional written information may be filled in below or additional pages may be added as needed.**

**4. Describe how the assessor will assess the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of the teach candidate in the target language(s) to determine if the candidate meets the Commission's minimum standards for that language. Refer to Appendix A for the chart of the description of the ACTFL proficiency levels to identify the minimum level of language proficiency required for the target language(s).**

Description of the methods that will be used to test the applicant's listening skills (*typing field will expand as necessary*):

Description of the methods that will be used to test the applicant's speaking skills(*typing field will expand as necessary*):

Description of the methods that will be used to test the applicant's reading skills (*typing field will expand as necessary*):

Description of the methods that will be used to test the applicant's writing skills(*typing field will expand as necessary*):

**5. Describe any additional information the assessor agency would like the Commission to consider**