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## Information

### *Professional Services Committee*

#### **Update on 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 an update on the implementation of the plan approved by the Commission in April 2008 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:** For information only

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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

June 2009



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# Update on Alternative Subject Matter Competency Assessment for Additional Less Commonly Taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

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## **Introduction**

In April 2008, the Commission approved 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. This agenda item provides an update on the implementation of that plan. (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2008-04/2008-04-2B.pdf>)

## **Background**

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

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

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 did not previously have a means of establishing their subject matter competency. Without being able to establish subject matter competency, these individuals cannot 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.

The alternative assessment plan approved by the Commission is an examination-only route to establishing subject matter competence. The plan includes two components, which together are equivalent to the existing CSET: LOTE examination series. The first part is a standardized examination of the candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities with respect to all of the LOTE subject matter requirements with the exception of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This standardized alternative LOTE examination will be administered by

the Commission’s testing contractor as part of the Commission’s regular CSET: LOTE series of examinations.

Since 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, the second part of the alternative LOTE assessment is a locally-developed and locally-administered examination of the candidate’s language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This part of the examination may be developed by local colleges, universities, cultural and/or other organizations expert in the particular language and culture that apply to the Commission for approval as an alternative language other than English assessor agency. The passing standard for the locally-developed and administered language skills examination is the same as that adopted for the existing CSET: LOTE language skills examinations in the more commonly taught languages (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) level Advanced-Low for Western languages and ACTFL level Intermediate-High for non-Western languages [see Appendix A]).

**Benefits of this Approach**

As indicated in the April 2008 agenda item, the benefits of the approach adopted by the Commission are that the process:

- Allows for inclusion of an unlimited number of languages
- Requires relatively minimal cost to the Commission for a one-time development process that includes 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

**Implementation Plan**

The April 2008 action agenda item contained an implementation plan with proposed dates for each part of the alternative assessment plan. The implementation plan is reprinted below for reference along with a status update.

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Status Update June 2009</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	Completed
June 2008	Finalized alternative assessor agency application forms would be available and Native American assessor agencies may begin applying to the Commission	Completed

Late summer/ early Fall 2008	Work would begin on the development of the standardized assessment component; assessor agencies may begin applying to the Commission	Development work moved to June 2009 due to the need for staff to work on revising the RICA examination on a priority basis. Applications for alternative assessor agencies were available on schedule. First application was received in April 2009.
May 2009	First administration of the standardized assessment described in Part 1 of the agenda item	First administration of the alternative standardized CSET: LOTE examination moved to November 2009
June 2009	Standard-setting meeting to establish the recommended passing score standard for the standardized assessment	Standard-setting moved to December 2009 following the first administration of the alternative standardized CSET: LOTE examination
August 2009	Adoption by the Commission of the passing score standard for the standardized alternative CSET: LOTE assessment	Adoption of the passing score standard will be moved to January 2010 following the standard-setting meeting.

#### **A. Update on the Implementation of Part 1 of the Alternative Assessment Process, the Standardized Alternative CSET: LOTE Assessment**

The standardized alternative assessment process adopts the “template” examination format already established for other less commonly taught languages other than English (e.g., Filipino, Khmer, and Arabic). The standardized alternative LOTE assessment will 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 will be developed to include the KSAs covered by the examination and other related study materials, as is standard practice for all CSET examinations.

Although the development of the standardized part of the alternative CSET: LOTE examination was originally intended to take place in late summer/early fall 2008, the need to reallocate staff resources to the revision of the RICA examination took precedence. Development is now scheduled to take place during June 2-3 and June 9-10, and the first administration of the standardized alternative CSET: LOTE Examination will be in November 2009. This examination

will be offered twice per year, in November and in May, which is the same schedule as all of the other CSET: LOTE examinations in less commonly taught languages. Standard-setting will follow the first administration of the standardized alternative CSET: LOTE examination, and is expected to take place in December 2009 with the standard-setting recommendation coming to the Commission for action in January 2010.

**B. Update on the Implementation of Part 2 of the Alternative Assessment Process: 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 will be assessed by qualified local personnel rather than by a standardized language assessment administered by the Commission's testing contractor. The level required for passing was set by the Commission at least Intermediate-High, as described in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency standards provided in Appendix A.

The local assessor must 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 applies 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. The on-line application form is provided as Appendix B to this agenda item.

The assessor agency/organization will be responsible for notifying the Commission as to the status of examinees who passed the alternative language portion of the assessment. Candidates who passed both the standardized alternative LOTE assessment described in subsection A above plus the alternative language proficiency assessment described in subsection B above will 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.

When an application from an alternative assessor agency is received, Commission staff review the application to assure compliance with the Commission's requirements for the qualifications of a local assessor, that the assessment addresses the candidate's listening, speaking, reading, and writing target language skills, and that the passing standard is at least at the ACTFL Intermediate-High level. If the application is found to be in compliance with the Commission's requirements, staff will include a recommendation to approve the applicant institution or agency on the Consent Calendar.

To date, the Commission has received one application from a potential alternative LOTE assessor agency. Hebrew Union College, which offers a Commission-approved teacher preparation program, has submitted an application to be an alternative assessor agency for Hebrew. Staff will review this application for compliance with the requirements identified above. If the application is found to be compliant, staff will include a recommendation to

approve Hebrew Union College as an alternative language assessor agency for Hebrew on the August 2009 Consent Calendar.

## **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**

**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***