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Action

Fiscal Policy and Planning Committee

Establishment of the Fee Structure for Commission Examinations for 2011-12

Executive Summary: Per Education Code section 44235.1, staff will present a revised examination fee structure for Fiscal Year 2011-12.

Recommended Action: Staff recommends the approval of the 2011-12 examination fee structure as identified in the agenda item.

Presenter: Crista Hill, Division Director, Administrative Services Division - Fiscal and Business Services Section

Strategic Plan Goal: 6

Maximize the effectiveness of the agency and its staff through the optimal use of technology, ongoing staff development and maintenance of a positive work environment

- ◆ Conduct periodic review of the efficiency of the day-to-day operations and financial accountability of the Commission

January 2011

Establishment of the Fee Structure for Commission Examinations for 2011-12

Introduction

Education Code section 44235.1 provides the authority for the Commission to review and approve the examination fee structure, as needed, to ensure the current California examination program is self supporting. The examination programs include the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA), California Subject Examinations for the Teachers (CSET), and California Preliminary Administrative Credential Examination (CPACE). This item describes the costs associated with the various examination programs and presents the proposed fee structure for the 2011-12 testing year.

Background

In operating the CBEST, RICA, CSET, and CPACE examination programs, the Commission bears costs in two major categories: contracted costs and non-contracted costs. (It is important to note that in FY 2005-06 the contracted costs were transitioned to what is known as “revenue only” contracts and as a result of this transition the costs are retained by the vendor when the fee is paid by the candidate.) Education Code sections 44252.5, 44253.8, and 44298 require that costs be covered through the fee examinees pay for administration of each examination. The fees include: (a) a fee that registrants pay for each examination to cover the costs of administering the examination and that is retained by the contractor, and (b) a program management fee that registrants pay to cover the Commission’s costs for operating the California examination programs.

The contracted costs category is the largest and covers the test administration and/or development work performed by the contractor for each of these examination programs. The contractor retains a fee per test administered, as specified in the contract, and is based upon the total number of tests administered each year. The non-contracted costs include staff time for managing the examination programs, which include monitoring the contracts and completing other Commission administrative responsibilities related to the examination programs.

To determine fees for these testing programs, Commission staff projects examinee volumes for each program based on a weighted average from past year actuals and compares this with the proposed non-contracted Commission costs for the testing year. It is important to note that a testing year is aligned with the fiscal year and runs from July – June. From these projections Commission staff identifies a fee that is appropriate and necessary to ensure the program is self supporting, as well as leaves a healthy reserve within the Test Development and Administration Account (0408), in which the fees are deposited at the State level.

The fees were adjusted in the 2005-06 testing year and were increased by \$6.00 for all examination programs, except CBEST. Then again in 2007-08 under the new contract for the CBEST, RICA, and CSET a reduction of \$10.00 for the RICA, \$12.00 for the CSET series and

\$102 for the RICA video performance assessment examination was approved by the Commission. The fees have not changed since 2007-08.

Proposed Examination Fees For The 2011-12 Testing Year

Based on the current projections and the award of the new contract for FY 2011-12, the Commission staff believes that the current examination fees should be re-examined. There are two purposes for bringing this issue to the Commission for review and approval: 1) Commission staff need to work with the vendor to prepare the registration bulletins for the next testing year; and 2) this coincides with update of the Fund Condition for the Test Development and Administration Account for discussion purposes with the Administration and the Legislature.

Anticipated Impact of New Fees on Candidates

The Commission staff ran several scenarios to determine the best solution. As reported at the December Commission meeting during the Fiscal Policy and Planning Committee, the Commission is experiencing a decline in the number of test administrations for the entire examination program. The fees that are set by the Commission support the examinations program administered by the Commission.

Provided below is a summary of the current fees paid by candidates as they register for each of the examinations and the proposed fee structure for FY 2011-12. This last year a new contract was awarded to NCS Pearson, Inc. for the administration of the RICA, CBEST, CTEL and CSET. Some of the costs were adjusted to reflect the transition to the computer based testing. This allows candidates the option of an on-demand ability to take examinations instead of waiting for a particular site administration. This concept has proven to be very successful with the CBEST contract. During the term of the contract, the Commission may transition two CSET subtests a year to computer based testing.

Candidate Fee	Current Fee 2010-11	Proposed Fee Structure 2011-12
CBEST		
<i>CBEST – Paper Based Test</i>	\$41.00	\$41.00
<i>CBEST – Computer Based Test</i>	\$105.00	\$101.00
RICA		
<i>RICA-Written Examination</i>	\$130.00	\$165.00 ^{1/}
<i>RICA-Video Performance Assessment</i>	\$130.00	\$130.00
CTEL	\$303.00	\$238.00
CSET	\$210.00	\$198.00
<i>CPACE (Previously SLLA)</i>	\$485.00 ^{2/}	\$383.00

^{1/} The increase in the examination is the result of the transition of this examination to the a computer based examination only. The service fee charged to the candidate to administer this on-demand exam is similar to the fee charged for the CBEST computer based examination.

^{2/} The Commission did not receive any funds from the SLLA administered by the Educational Testing Services.

The following chart reflects the current and proposed fees for the Contractor and the Commission. The Contractors fees are not subject to change as these are the costs indentified under a competitively-bid contact (s).

Examination Program	Current Fee 2010-11			Proposed Fee Structure 2011-12			Change
	Candidate Fee	Vendor Fee	CTC Mgt Fee	Candidate Fee	Vendor Fee	CTC Mgt Fee	
CBEST							
<i>CBEST – Paper Based Test</i>	\$41.00	\$31.00	\$10.00	\$41.00	\$29.00	\$12.00	\$0
<i>CBEST – Computer Based Test ^{1/}</i>	\$105.00	\$95.00	\$10.00	\$101.00	\$89.00	\$12.00	-\$4.00
RICA							
<i>RICA-Written Examination (Paper Based Test)</i>	\$130.00	\$69.00	\$61.00	--	--	--	\$35.00
<i>RICA-Written Examination (Computer Based Test)</i>	--	--	--	\$165.00	\$104.00	\$61.00	
<i>RICA-Video Performance Assessment</i>	\$130.00	\$69.00	\$61.00	\$130.00	\$69.00	\$61.00	\$0
CTEL							
<i>CTEL - Paper Based Test</i>	\$303.00	\$259.00	\$44.00	--	--	--	-\$65.00
<i>CTEL – Computer Based Test</i>	--	--	--	\$238.00	\$190.00	\$48.00	
CSET	\$210.00	\$128.00	\$82.00	\$198.00	\$105.00	\$93.00	-\$12.00
CPACE (Previously SLLA)	\$485.00	\$485.00	--	\$383.00	\$285.00	\$98.00	-\$102.00

^{1/} The current CBEST CBT examinee fee is \$41 + \$64 service fee; proposed CBEST CBT is \$41 + \$60 service fee.

Recommendation

Commission staff recommends that the Commission adopt the 2011-12 examination fees as reflected in chart below.

Candidate Fee	Proposed Fee Structure 2011-12
CBEST	
<i>CBEST – Paper Based Test</i>	\$41.00
<i>CBEST – Computer Based Test</i>	\$101.00
RICA	
<i>RICA-Written Examination</i>	\$165.00
<i>RICA-Video Performance Assessment</i>	\$130.00
CTEL	\$238.00
CSET	\$198.00
<i>CPACE (Previously SLLA)</i>	\$383.00