

COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING

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OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

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To: All Individuals and Organizations Interested in the
Activities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing

From:  Philip A. Fitch, Executive Secretary

Subject: New Assessments to Verify Subject Matter Competence
in Five Single Subjects

Adoption of New Subject Matter Assessments by the Commission

On July 19, 1991, the Commission adopted five new assessments for evaluating the subject matter competence of applicants for Single Subject Teaching Credentials in English, Life Science, Mathematics, Physical Science, and Social Science. Beginning with the November 1991 administration of the National Teachers Examination (NTE), these applicants must pass the NTE Specialty Area Examination, which was required previously, plus the new Content Area Performance Assessment (CAPA) in the appropriate subject.

Unlike the Specialty Area Examinations which consist of multiple-choice questions, the Content Area Performance Assessments consist of longer questions, exercises, and problems that require candidates to write extended responses. Each question, exercise, and problem in the CAPAs is designed to measure the candidate's ability to *perform* competently in the discipline. Candidates in English are expected to analyze works of literature, applicants in science are asked to design an experiment, prospective teachers of mathematics are required to solve problems, and candidates in social science are expected to interpret information. In each discipline, the CAPA complements the NTE Specialty Area Exam, which measures knowledge of basic information in the subject. The Commission's 1987 study of the validity of the NTE Exams showed, among other conclusions, that subject matter assessments should include a content-based *performance* assessment, which is why the Commission planned, designed, and adopted the CAPAs.

The new CAPAs were developed by Educational Testing Service under the terms of two successive contracts with the Commission, and with the advice of the Commission's Teacher Preparation and Assessment Advisory Panels in English, Life Science, Mathematics, Physical Science, and Social Science. The panels consisted of California teachers, professors, and curriculum specialists in the five subjects. The panels developed extensive specifications for the subject matter exams and assessments, which the Commission also adopted on July 19. ETS conducted pilot studies and field tests of the new CAPAs, and the Advisory Panels reviewed the results of each field study before completing their work on the CAPAs.

Procedures for Exam Registration and Credential Application

Individuals must register separately for the NTE Specialty Area Examination and the CAPA. It is not necessary to take the two tests on the same day. To take the CAPA outside of California, the candidate will need to request a supplementary test center. See page 17 of the 1991-92 NTE bulletin for more information.

When applying for a credential based on passing scores in these two examinations (Specialty Area and CAPA), the candidate must submit to the Commission the official examination score reports for both examinations and one thirty-dollar (\$30) test development and administration fee (formerly called a "filing fee"). If the applicant is applying for two or more subject areas on the basis of passing NTE scores, there is a \$30 test development and administration fee for each subject area.

The CAPA in the areas of English, Life Science, Mathematics, Physical Science, and Social Science were field tested at California NTE test administration sites in September 1990, March 1991, and July 1991. Any individual who participated in one of these field tests and failed to pass the NTE Specialty Area Examination needs to retake only the Specialty Area Exam and does not need to retake the CAPA; participation in the CAPA field study waives the requirement to submit a passing score. An applicant who falls into this category must submit the original examination score report showing the failing score with his or her credential applicant to verify that the examination was taken in California on one of the field study test dates.

CAPA Passing Standards

The score report will indicate whether or not the candidate has passed the test. However, the chart below shows how the passing scores are derived.

Subject of Assessment	Number of Questions	Score Scale (per rater)	Question Score Range (2 raters)	Test Score Range (# of questions x question range)	Recommended Passing Score	Recommended Constraints in Awarding Passing Scores
English	2	0-6	0-12	0-24	15	No question score less than six
Life Science	4	0-5	0-10	0-40	20	No question score less than two
Mathematics	4	0-5	0-10	0-40	23	Only one question score less than six
Physical Sciences	4	0-5	0-10	0-40	20	No constraints recommended
Social Sciences	2	0-6	0-12	0-24	14	No question score less than six

Single Subject Credentials in English

In the past, applicants for Single Subject Teaching Credentials in English who wished to verify subject matter competence by examination were required to pass the NTE Specialty Area Examination in English Language and Literature as well as the CLEP English Composition with Essay examination. Coded Correspondence 91-9110 announced that passage of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) could be substituted for passage of the CLEP. To meet the CBEST requirement, the applicant must verify a minimum score of 41 on both the reading and writing sections of the examination or else show passage of the entire CBEST regardless of the score on any individual section.

To this we now add that individuals who participated in the field study for the CAPA in English at the September 1990, March 1991, or July 1991 administrations do not need to verify passage of either the CLEP or the CBEST for this purpose. These applicants must submit the original examination score report with their credential application to verify that the examination was taken in California on one of the field study test dates.

To use CLEP or CBEST, the NTE Special Area Exam must have been passed prior to the November 1991 test administration, and the passing scores must be used for credentialing purposes within five years of the test date. Effective with the November 1991 test administration, applicants for the Single Subject Teaching Credential in English must pass both the multiple choice Specialty Area Examination and the CAPA as explained above. Passage of the CLEP will not be required, nor can it be substituted for the CAPA.

Other Subject Areas

Individuals wishing to verify subject-matter competence by examination for Single Subject areas other than English, Life Science, Mathematics, Physical Science, or Social Science will continue to take the Specialty Area Examination in their subject. There are no approved examinations for the subjects of Government, Health Science, or History, or for any foreign language except Spanish, German, and French.

Field studies for new CAPAs in the areas of Art, French, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish will be conducted at the November 1991, March 1992, and July 1992 NTE test administrations. Everyone taking an NTE examination in one of these subject in California will participate in the field study.

As with the previous study, participation in the field study will waive the subsequent requirement to submit a passing score.

Individuals wishing to qualify for the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential by examination will participate in the field study for the new Elementary Subjects Examination if they take the General Knowledge section of the Core Battery on March 7, 1992, or June 13, 1992. The Commission intends to replace the General Knowledge exam with the new exam by fall of 1992.

A Final Note

The CAPA examination does not affect teachers who took and passed the NTE prior to November 9, 1991, as long as the test scores are used to verify subject matter competence for the credential within five years of the test date. Neither does the CAPA affect candidates who are completing Commission-approved subject matter waiver programs at California colleges or universities. Teachers who wish to add a subject to an existing credential by examination must take the Specialty Area Examination and the CAPA when applicable beginning with the November 1991 administration.

The following page provides a chart that summarizes the information explained above and may be of help to applicants to determine which examinations they need to take. Please feel free to duplicate it.

If you have questions, you may call our Information Services Office between 12:30 and 4:30 any week-day afternoon at (916) 445-7254 and select the menu choice that provides information about examinations.

