



## MEMORANDUM

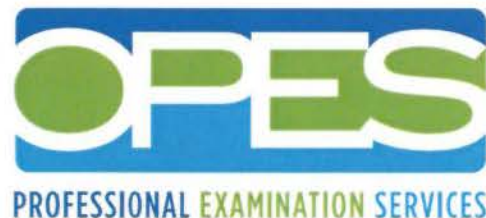
<b>DATE</b>	October 31, 2014
<b>TO</b>	Psychology Board Members
<b>FROM</b>	Karen Johnson Licensing Coordinator <i>KJ</i>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Agenda Item (c)</b> Licensing Committee – Overview of the Examination Development Process (Office of Professional Services)

Attached are three documents that cover examination development, passing score, and Subject Matter Expert guidelines to be presented by the Professional Examination Services.

### Action

For informational purposes only. No action required.

## CRITERION-REFERENCED PASSING SCORES



### Purpose

The Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) recommends a criterion-referenced passing score, which applies standards for competent practice to all candidates regardless of the form of the examination administered. A criterion-referenced passing score increases the likelihood that candidates who pass the licensure examination have sufficient knowledge and experience to practice safely and competently.

### Process

OPES follows a criterion-referenced methodology called the “modified Angoff technique” for determining licensure examination passing scores. Standard setting is a group process. The group is composed of licensed practitioners representing all aspects of practice or profession and a test development specialist. The process should always include a number of newly licensed practitioners to ensure participation from entry-level licensees.

Criterion-referenced standard setting begins with the establishment of a minimally acceptable level of competence for safe practice that candidates must possess in order to pass the examination. The group develops common definitions of different levels of candidate performance by identifying critical work behaviors that contrast the highly competent, the minimally competent, and the incompetent candidate.

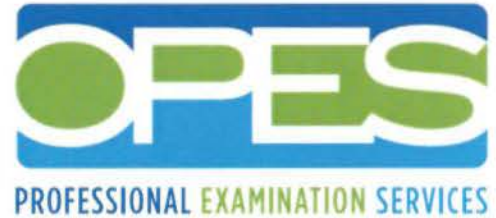
### Advantages

Because licensing examinations are known to vary in difficulty from one examination form to another, a fixed passing score or percentage such as 70% does not represent the minimally acceptable competence for all administrations of an examination. Therefore, arbitrary passing scores are not considered legally defensible.

By applying a criterion-referenced methodology, a passing score is lowered for an examination containing a large number of difficult items (questions) and raised for an examination containing a small number of difficult items. Candidates who take a more difficult test would be placed at a disadvantage unless a criterion-referenced passing score is established. Thus, the passing score provides safeguards to both the candidate and the consumer affected by the particular profession.

Another advantage of using criterion-referenced methodology is that the passing score is independent of the performance of other candidates who take the examination at the same time. The passing score is not based on performance with respect to the group. Rather, the passing score is based upon the difficulty of the items within the examination.

# EXAMINATION DEVELOPMENT



## Purpose

The purpose of licensing examinations is to protect consumers by verifying that new licensees possess the minimally acceptable knowledge and experience necessary to perform tasks on the job safely and competently.

## Process

A valid occupational analysis (OA) and content outline is required to begin the examination development process. The content outline provides the specifications for the examination.

Examination development is a group process, conducted in structured workshops comprised of subject matter experts (SMEs). Each SME provides a different perspective of the profession that would not otherwise be objectively considered by individuals working alone. To ensure that the description of the profession represents the job tasks of practitioners entering the profession, each workshop always includes a number of newly licensed practitioners. While there may be several workshops to develop an examination, it is recommended that each be scheduled for a minimum of two days to obtain optimum results.

The types of workshops required may include such tasks as re-linking old items (questions) to a new OA content outline; writing new items linked to the outline; reviewing and revising new or poorly functioning items; constructing a new examination version; and determining a passing score.

During each workshop SMEs are trained in the technical, professional, and legal standards that serve as specific guidelines for the development of examinations. For multiple-choice examinations, incorrect options (distracters) in multiple-choice items should be plausible so that an unprepared candidate will seriously consider them with the correct answer (key). For performance examinations, the activities should be sufficiently complex that an examiner can thoroughly assess a candidate's competence to perform actual job-related tasks.

## Validation

In order for an examination to be valid, it must be empirically linked to the content outline of a recent occupational analysis. See Informational Series No. 1, "Occupational Analysis" for more information.



### Purpose

In licensure examination development work, expert consultants are referred to as subject matter experts (SMEs). Their participation is essential to the development of licensure exams, and ensures that the exams accurately assess whether candidates possess the minimally acceptable knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform tasks on the job safely and competently.

### Process

The selection of expert consultants/SMEs by boards, bureaus, and committees of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) critically affects the quality and defensibility of their licensure exams, and is based on the following minimum criteria:

- Reflect the profession in specialty, practice setting, geographic location, ethnicity, and gender.
- Represent the current pool of practitioners.
- Possess current skills and a valid license in good standing.
- Articulate specialized technical knowledge related to a profession.

In addition, several of the six to ten expert consultants/SMEs in each workshop should be licensed five years or less to ensure an entry-level perspective is represented.

Due to potential conflict of interest, undue influence, and/or security considerations, board members, committee members, and instructors shall not serve as expert consultants/SMEs for, nor participate in, any aspect of licensure exam development or administration, pursuant to DCA Policy OPES 11-01.

### Workshops

OPES exam development workshops bring together the professional knowledge and experience of expert consultants/SMEs, and the expertise of OPES exam development specialists. Separate workshops are conducted for:

**Occupational analysis:** Identifying critical job tasks and required knowledge.

**Item linking:** Linking old exam items (questions) to an updated exam outline.

**Item writing:** Creating new items.

**Item review:** Revising new or poorly functioning items.

**Exam construction:** Selecting items to construct a new exam version.

**Setting a passing score:** Determining the passing score of an exam.

OPES exam development specialists begin each workshop by training expert consultants/SMEs in the required concepts, standards, and techniques. The exam development specialist serves as a facilitator, guide, and coach. Workshops are typically conducted on two consecutive eight-hour days at the OPES offices in Sacramento.

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**Security**

OPES has implemented a variety of controls to ensure the integrity, security and appropriate level of confidentiality of licensure exam programs. These controls vary according to the sensitivity of the information, and will include restricting and/or prohibiting certain items, such as electronic devices, when conducting exam-related workshops.

Expert consultants/SMEs are required to provide valid identification, allow for personal belongings to be secured during workshops, and sign one or more agreements accepting responsibility for maintaining strict confidentiality of licensing exam material and information to which they have access.

Any person who fails to comply with OPES' security requirements will not be allowed to participate in licensure exam workshops. In addition, any person who subverts or attempts to subvert any licensing exam will face serious consequences which may include loss of licensure and/or criminal charges.

**Authority**

California Business and Professions Code section 123