
Teacher Licensure, Praxis Changes, Policy

The Background:

For many years Tennessee has required newly licensed teachers to demonstrate subject-area content knowledge by means of a licensure exam. This is done to ensure that teachers have entry-level, minimal competency in the content area and to validate the mastery of licensure standards that were covered within the preparation program. The State Board of Education prescribes which tests are taken in the various subject areas and approves the passing scores for each of the licensure examinations.

Praxis Licensure testing requirements and passing scores are found in State Board Policy number 5.105.

Educational Testing Service (ETS) has undergone a number of test revisions which have resulted in updated versions of these exams with new code numbers and, in some cases, new titles. The new exams under consideration here include:

- 0114 – Music: Content and Instruction (K-12) [Vocal & Instrumental Endorsements]
- 0272 – SPED: Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students (PreK-12)
- 0282 – SPED: Teaching Students With Visual Impairments (PreK-12)
- 0301 – Reading Specialist (PreK-12)
- 0421 – Professional School Counselor (PreK-12)
- 0691 – SPED: Early Childhood (PreK-3)
- 0911 – Economics (7-12)
- 0931 – Government/Political Science (7-12)
- 5665 – Chinese (Mandarin) (PreK-12)

To support the decision-making process for State Departments of Education with regards to establishing passing scores, or cut scores, for these Praxis assessments, research staff from Educational Testing Service (ETS) designed and conducted two multi-state standard setting studies for each exam. The studies also collected content-related validity evidence to confirm the importance of the content specifications for entry-level teachers.

The standard setting studies involved two expert panels, comprised of teachers, administrators and college faculty. The recommended cut scores for each panel, as well as the average cut score across the two panels, were provided to help state departments of education determine appropriate cut (or passing) scores.

Due to the number of tests involved with revisions this year, a chart has been attached with the changes in test number, test title, and recommendations for passing scores.

In addition, Educational Testing Service (ETS), the developers of the PRAXIS examinations, is gradually changing the test numbers on some examinations as well as the score scale on their examinations to have a score range of 100-200 instead of 250-990. These adjusted score scales need to be reflected in the State Board Policy 5.105. At this time two tests are being converted from the 250-990 scale to the 100-200 scale:

0600 – Latin will switch scales and become 0601 – Latin
0640 – Theatre will switch scales and become 0641 – Theatre

The test content has not changed, only the scale. The converted passing scores will be provided once the information is available. These changes will be made automatically unless otherwise instructed. No paperwork is required for these changes.

In addition, ETS is dropping three exams currently required of Tennessee test takers:

0043 – English Language, Literature and Composition: Pedagogy
0065 – Mathematics: Pedagogy
0431 – General Science: Content Knowledge, Part 1

To promote consistency across licensure areas, the department also recommends dropping content essay exams in the areas of Biology and Physics. With the elimination of these exams, all secondary licensure areas will require only two Praxis exams: a Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) exam and a content knowledge exam.

At the April meeting of the SBE the Board asked the SDE to consider adopting the recommended scores from the multi-state standard setting studies conducted by ETS. These changes, along with the other changes presented, were reviewed and recommended at the most recent meeting of the SBE's Advisory Council on Teacher Education and Certification.

The Recommendations:

The SDE recommends the adoption of the recommendations of final reading, SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.