

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY EXAMINATION GUIDELINES FOR VIRGINIA

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) will use these guidelines to review all applications received from any High School Equivalency (HSE) examination provider. All vendors seeking approval for the use of an HSE examination in Virginia shall meet all of the following guidelines. The VDOE shall be the agency to determine whether an HSE examination provider is approved. If an HSE examination is approved for use in Virginia, the approval will remain in effect for five years. Those vendors whose examination is not approved may reapply during an open application period set by the VDOE.

Quality of the HSE Test:	
Alignment	The vendor must provide evidence from a third party evaluator to show that the HSE examination is aligned to the <i>College & Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education</i> and to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) for high school English, Grade 8 Mathematics, Algebra I, and Geometry.
Rigor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that its HSE examination meets or exceeds the most recent content and technical standards established by the 2014 edition of the <i>Standards for Education and Psychological Testing (SEPT)</i>, a product of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). 2) The vendor must provide evidence that 80 percent of the HSE examination includes items using Depth of Knowledge Levels 2 and 3. 3) The vendor will provide evidence that the HSE examination will measure test-takers' skills in interpreting, analyzing, reasoning, and problem solving, as appropriate for the subject and standard.
Test Development: Initial & Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that the HSE examination's design process is based on the SEPT. 2) The vendor will describe the plan for reviewing and updating its question pool.
Reliability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor will provide results of reliability studies to show the consistency and stability of the HSE examination. 2) The vendor will describe the psychometrics used to determine reliability. 3) The vendor will describe the plan for maintaining and measuring reliability over time.
Validity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor will provide results of validity studies to show that the HSE examination measures what it intends to measure. 2) The vendor will describe the psychometrics used to determine validity. 3) The vendor will describe the plan for maintaining and measuring

	validity over time.
Norming of Tests	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that it has completed a norming study of its HSE examination with graduating high school seniors within the last two years of test development. 2) The vendor will provide evidence that the norming study was conducted in accordance with the SEPT. 3) The vendor will describe its plan for future norming studies, for both new test items and for overall HSE examination norming, to ensure that the set cut scores on the HSE examination remain consistent with high school completion requirements.
Cut Scores	The vendor will provide evidence that it has identified a minimum of two cut scores: one for high school equivalency and another for college and career readiness.
Test forms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor will describe the process for providing a minimum of three English language HSE examination forms each year. 2) The vendor will provide evidence that the HSE examination contains subtests in the areas of writing, reading, math, science, and social studies.
Test Security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence of measures that ensure the security and integrity of its HSE examination, taking into consideration local testing centers' capabilities. 2) The CBT HSE examination must be secure on the Internet and be accessible by testing administrators only. 3) The vendor must provide evidence of procedures for testing centers to follow when test irregularities occur during testing administration. 4) The vendor must provide evidence of procedures for addressing national, state, or local breaches in security with the HSE examination and the actions the vendor will take. 5) The vendor must provide evidence of procedures for informing the VDOE and local testing centers of any problem concerning test security, including its resolution process.
Official Practice Tests (OPT)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence of a minimum of three English language Official Practice Test (OPT) forms. 2) The vendor must provide evidence that the OPTs are aligned to the operational HSE examination and be predictive of an examinee's performance on the operational HSE examination. 3) The vendor must provide evidence of a diagnostic report from the OPTs that assists the examinee in preparing for the HSE examination.
Credibility/Recognition of Test Name	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that the HSE examination is nationally portable and broadly accepted by employers and postsecondary institutions. 2) The vendor must describe the plan to increase the HSE examination's name recognition to all stakeholders.

<p>Test Delivery: Computer-Based Testing (CBT) and Paper-Based Testing (PBT)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that the HSE examination can be administered as either computer-based testing (CBT) or paper-based testing (PBT). 2) The vendor must provide evidence that a downloadable CBT option is available for use by correctional facilities. 3) The vendor must provide evidence that it is equipped with the connectivity and computing capacity to handle a high volume of HSE examination data. 4) The vendor must provide evidence that its PBT meets the same standards as the CBT in alignment, rigor, reliability, and validity. 5) The vendor must provide evidence of how it will securely ship the PBT examination and related materials to and from the test sites designated by the VDOE. 6) The vendor must provide guidelines that will ensure a secure method of scoring the PBT.
<p>Accessibility of the HSE Test:</p>	
<p>Registration process</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must describe the process for registration for CBT and PBT, including procedures for examinees needing accommodations and those in correctional facilities. 2) The vendor must confirm that the examinee is able to complete the entire registration process online, with the examinee’s chosen testing date and time confirmed during the online registration process. 3) The vendor must confirm that customer service support during the registration process is provided through phone and online options.
<p>Test Centers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must confirm that its HSE examination may be administered at any test center currently approved by VDOE. 2) The vendor must confirm its understanding that testing centers must be approved by VDOE to administer an approved HSE examination.
<p>Cost</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide an explanation and justification of its cost structure, including the pricing of services and the costs to the examinee, testing center, and the VDOE. 2) The vendor will provide to the testing centers and the VDOE a list of all costs for administering and scoring the CBT and PBT.
<p>Testing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must confirm that examinees are allowed the flexibility to take individual subtests without taking the complete HSE examination battery. 2) The vendor must provide evidence of the process to authenticate the examinee’s identity and eligibility to test. 3) The vendor must describe the process to ensure that anyone enrolled in public education will not be eligible to take the HSE examination until VDOE’s eligibility requirements are met.

Cancellations/No Shows	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence of a clear policy on testing cancellations, allowing for cancellations to occur within 24 hours of scheduled testing time, without penalty. 2) The vendor must provide evidence of guidelines for exceptions if someone is a “no show” to the testing center and the process to follow to reschedule at no additional cost.
Retakes	<p>The vendor must provide evidence of a clear policy regarding when an examinee may retake the HSE examination (e.g., the number of times a person may retake the examination in one year; wait time between retakes; costs of retakes).</p>
Accommodations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that it offers alternative forms of delivery for the HSE examination that accommodate those diagnosed with physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. The vendor must confirm that the available accommodations are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended. 2) The vendor must describe the step-by-step process to request accommodations for examinees who are eligible for testing accommodations. 3) The vendor must confirm sole responsibility for reviewing and approving examinees’ requests for accommodations. 4) The vendor must confirm that the validity of all allowable accommodations is supported and documented. 5) The vendor must describe the process for determining and providing appropriate assistive technology for eligible examinees. 6) The vendor must confirm that the determination of accommodations approval should be a timely process, completed in 30 days or less. 7) The vendor must confirm that it provides an appeals process to those who have been denied accommodations.
Scoring of Tests/Access to Scores	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide a description of how scoring will occur; examinations must be scored electronically for both CBT and PBT, utilizing human scorers as needed. 2) The vendor must confirm that examinees will have direct, online access to their examination scores within 24 hours of completion for CBT and within four days after the vendor’s receipt of answer sheets for PBT. 3) The vendor must provide evidence of procedures for quality control and quality assurance to verify scoring results. 4) The vendor must provide evidence of a score report that reflects the academic strengths of the graduate and a diagnostic report for the examinee who will need to retake the test. 5) The vendor must confirm that VDOE will have electronic access to all examinees’ scores in the state.
Suitability for Correctional Institutions, and City and Regional Jails	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide evidence that the delivery of the HSE examination is compatible with the administrative needs of city and regional jails, the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC),

	<p>and the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).</p> <p>2) The vendor must describe an alternative registration process for city and regional jails, the Virginia DOC, and the Virginia DJJ as their examinees cannot self-register.</p>
<p>Administration of the HSE Test:</p>	
<p>Technology</p>	<p>The vendor will provide a complete description of technology required to provide CBT.</p>
<p>Data Management</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor confirms that all data, current and historical, is the intellectual property of VDOE. 2) The vendor must provide evidence of how it will maintain all personally identifiable information (PII) in accordance with FERPA, state privacy laws, and current Virginia Information Security Standards (SEC 501). 3) The vendor must provide evidence of a data management system that produces analysis of scores, statistical and demographic reports, and any other customized, generated reports required by the VDOE. 4) The vendor must confirm that the data management system is available to the VDOE at all times, except for necessary maintenance. All regular system maintenance must be confined to non-business hours (7 p.m. to 6 a.m.). 5) The vendor must describe the technical assistance available with the use of the data management system. 6) The vendor will describe the levels of access to the data management system in accordance with VDOE regulations. 7) The vendor must describe how it will update and backup files in the database on a daily basis. 8) The vendor must describe a plan for how it will maintain all necessary configurations and data for file restorations. In the event files are lost, or if for any reason data files must be restored, the vendor must notify VDOE and restore the system to full operating capacity in a timely manner.

<p>Training: Teachers, Staff, Administrators</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must describe the plan to provide professional development, as it relates to testing, to the state at all levels , including teachers, examiners, local program administrators, and state staff. 2) The vendor must confirm that it will provide relevant training materials to the VDOE for review and approval before issuance. The VDOE reserves the right to edit and revise the materials as deemed necessary. 3) The vendor will assure that all training materials provided to state-supported adult education programs must be provided at no additional charge to the state or localities. 4) The vendor must describe the specific minimum qualifications for testing center personnel. 5) The vendor must describe the process to certify testing center personnel. 6) The vendor must provide test administration guidelines. 7) The vendor must describe how it will make the test administration guidelines available to each certified testing site.
<p>Transcripts/Certificates</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must confirm that the credentialing service used by the vendor is able to maintain all current and historical records for VDOE. 2) The vendor must confirm that the credentialing service used by the vendor will return, in a format that is agreeable to VDOE, all current and historical data to VDOE if there is a cancellation or termination of services. 3) The vendor must confirm that the credentialing service used by the vendor maintains all PII in accordance with FERPA, state privacy laws, and current Virginia Information Security Standards (SEC 501) and sign a Restricted Use Data Agreement (RUDA). 4) The vendor must confirm that the contract with the credentialing service identifies how all data will be provided to the credentialing service in a mutually approved format and in a timely manner. 5) The vendor must confirm that transcripts and certificates, both electronic and paper copies, will be given to all first- time passers free of charge. 6) The vendor must describe any fees that the credentialing service may charge to provide copies of transcripts or certificates. 7) The vendor must confirm that the credentialing service will provide electronic copies of transcripts and certificates within 48 hours of request. Paper copies of transcripts and certificates shall be received within five business days of request. 8) The vendor must provide a resolution process to address the concerns of a graduate who has requested a transcript or certificate and no records are found by the credentialing service. 9) The vendor must confirm that no changes or modifications can be made to the official state certificate without VDOE’s permission.

Classroom preparation materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor shall provide information on the examination’s content, format, and scoring process to VDOE. 2) The vendor must describe recommended study materials to prepare students to take the HSE examination.
Collection of Testing Fees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide a process of how testing fees will be collected during the registration process. 2) The vendor must describe its monthly reconciliation procedures with testing centers for the disbursements of testing center fees. 3) The vendor must describe the process to allow state-supported adult education programs the opportunity to purchase testing vouchers.
Vendor Quality	
Vendor Experience with Large-scale Assessment	<p>The vendor must provide evidence that it has a minimum of three years' proven experience of successfully providing services for large-scale (state or national), high-stakes testing programs. A high-stakes testing program is one which uses assessment results for high-stake decisions, such as federal and state educational accountability purposes, student graduation requirements, or qualification for entry into college.</p>
Technical Assistance For Testing Center Personnel	<p>The vendor must provide a technical assistance plan that includes 24-hour technical support to testing centers, designated personnel to be available during testing center operating hours, and a dedicated, toll-free, non-automated telephone number that testing centers can use to report technical problems during testing and expect to receive an immediate response.</p>
Customer Service for Examinees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The vendor must provide a comprehensive customer service plan for examinees, including a toll-free telephone number and online support, with an expectation that a response would be received within one business day following initial contact. 2) The vendor must provide procedures for state personnel to identify and communicate concerns of testing centers and examinees. 3) The vendor will provide the name(s) and telephone number(s) of the person(s) assigned to the resolution of specific issues (e.g., technology, registration, scoring, general issues, etc.).
Compliance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The approved HSE vendor(s) will comply with all of the criteria listed within these guidelines. 2) If an HSE vendor, once approved, does not comply, the VDOE has the right to remove the vendor from the list of vendors approved to administer an HSE examination in the Commonwealth of Virginia.