

Core Subjects Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are the Generalist EC-6 and 4-8 tests changing?

HB 2012, 83rd Legislative session, 2013, directed the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC) to require a satisfactory level of examination performance in each core subject covered by the examination leading to the issuance of a generalist certificate. The EC-6 Core Subject test assesses five core subject areas (English Language Arts and Reading/The Science of Teaching Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts) and the 4-8 Core Subject test assesses four core subject areas (English Language Arts and Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies).

2. Would it be better for a candidate to take the Core Subject test before or after student teaching?

A candidate seeking a generalist certification may take the appropriate Core Subject test at such a time as his or her Educator Preparation Program (EPP) determines the candidate's readiness to take the test, or upon successful completion of the EPP, whichever comes first. The EPP will determine readiness through benchmarks and structured assessments of the candidates' progress throughout the preparation program.

3. Are pedagogy-based scenarios new to the EC-6 Core Subject test or is this something that was in the EC-6 Generalist test?

Pedagogy-based scenarios are not new to the Core Subject tests. Both the Generalist and Core Subject tests use multiple-choice questions that are designed to assess the candidate's knowledge of the content described in the test framework. In most cases, the candidate is expected to demonstrate more than just the ability to recall factual information. The candidate may be asked to think critically about the information, to analyze it, consider it carefully, compare it with other knowledge the candidate has or make a judgment about it. Some questions include introductory information such as a map, table, graph or reading passage that provides the information the question asks for, and many questions are placed in the context of the classroom. Tests may include audio and video stimulus materials such as a movie clip or some kind of animation, instead of a map or reading passage. Tests may also include interactive types of questions.

4. What are the major differences between the Generalist and Core Subject tests?

The major difference between the Generalist and Core Subject tests is that the Core Subject tests have enough questions within each core content area to provide a valid and reliable measure of each of the core content areas assessed. Additionally, each subject area will have its own passing score.

5. When can we begin taking the Core Subject tests?

The EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subject tests will be administered for the first time in January 2015. Test registration and preparation information can be found on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) website at <http://cms.texas-ets.org>.

Core Subjects Frequently Asked Questions

6. What test preparation materials are available for the Core Subject tests?

Core Subject Test at a Glance and Test Preparation Manuals were posted to the ETS website on September 12, 2014. Representative Forms will be available for EPPs in April 2015.

7. How long will the EC-6 and 4-8 Generalist tests be offered?

In February 2014, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) approved a two-year overlap policy that allows candidates seeking one of the current Generalist certificates to finish all certification requirements and be recommended for issuance of the appropriate certificate. The two-year overlap policy will apply not only to Generalist EC–6 and Generalist 4–8 specified in legislation, but will also include Bilingual Generalist EC–6, Bilingual Generalist 4–8, English as a Second Language (ESL) Generalist EC–6, and English as a Second Language (ESL) Generalist 4–8.

The following tests are currently scheduled to be administered for the last time on August 31, 2015:

- Generalist EC–6 (191)
- Generalist 4–8 (111)
- Bilingual Generalist EC–6 (192)
- Bilingual Generalist 4–8 (119)
- ESL/Generalist EC–6 (193)
- ESL/Generalist 4–8 (120)

Candidates passing any of the six tests listed above by August 31, 2015 must complete all remaining requirements for certification by August 31, 2017. An online application, fee and recommendation by an Educator Preparation Program, where applicable, must be received by October 30, 2017, in order to issue any of the current Generalist, Bilingual Generalist and ESL Generalist certificates.

8. What if I do not pass all of the portions of the Core Subject test?

Candidates will be required to take the overall test on their first attempt. The cost for taking the overall test the first time will be \$120. Candidates can retake the individual subject test(s) that they did not pass, instead of being required to retake the entire test. The cost for taking each subject test will be \$60. Candidates will also have the option of retaking the overall test again should they choose at a cost of \$120. With the current EC-6 and 4-8 Generalist tests, the candidate must pay the full amount of the test and take the entire test again.

9. What is the rationale for placing a time limit on the individual sections of the EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subject tests?

Each subject is allotted a set amount of time in order to provide comparability of scores between first-time test takers and those who retake single sections.

Core Subjects Frequently Asked Questions

10. What is the rationale for almost doubling the number of questions on the EC-6 Core Subject test and keeping the time limit at five hours?

The EC-6 test went from 140 to 267 questions and the 4-8 test went from 130 to 200 questions. The five-hour time limit remained the same for both tests. The number of items were increased in order to provide reliability in score reporting for each of the core subjects assessed. Each core subject area has its own passing score and required more items to provide reliability of classifying candidates into passed/not passed categories.

11. What is the average amount of time an individual has to answer the questions on the Core Subject tests?

The number of questions per section and amount of time allotted for each section of the Core Subjects test was the optimal amount allowed for the results to be valid and reliable without creating separate exams that would be an additional cost to the candidate. The following charts show the average amount of time in minutes for each item on the test by section.

EC-6 Core Subject Content Area	Total Items	Section Time	Average Time per Item
English Language Arts and Reading	75	105	1.4
Mathematics	47	60	1.3
Science	41	35	0.9
Social Studies	52	40	0.8
Fine Arts, Health, and Physical Education	52	40	0.8

4-8 Core Subject Content Area	Total Items	Section Time	Average Time per Item
English Language Arts and Reading	74	115	1.6
Mathematics	42	65	1.5
Science	42	50	1.2
Social Studies	42	50	1.2

12. How does a candidate receive an accommodation for a test?

Testing accommodations are available for test takers with disabilities or health-related needs who meet Educational Testing Service (ETS) requirements. All test takers requesting any accommodations must register by mail or fax through ETS Disability Services. If you are requesting accommodations for the first time or are changing the test you wish to take or the accommodations for which you have previously been approved, ETS Disability Services must review and approve your request before your test can be scheduled. Accommodations cannot be applied to a test that has already been scheduled. More information about testing accommodations can be found at <http://cms.texas-ets.org>.

Core Subjects Frequently Asked Questions

13. If a candidate receives an accommodation for a content test, does that same accommodation apply to a Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities test?

If a candidate has received approved accommodations from ETS within the last two years and the candidate's documentation is still current, a candidate may request the same accommodations for any TExES, TExMaT, TASC or TASC-ASL test during the 2014-15 testing year. If the candidate is registering for a different test, the accommodations ETS previously approved for the candidate within the last two years will be approved again if they are appropriate for the current test.

14. Are traditional and alternative certification programs held to the same standard when it comes to content tests?

The pass rate for traditional and alternative certification program state accountability and state accreditation purposes is based solely on the examinations required to obtain certification in the field(s) for which the candidate served his or her internship, student/clinical teaching, or practicum. Examinations not required for certification in that field or fields, whether taken before or after admission to an educator preparation program, are not included.

An individual must have a minimum of 12 semester credit hours in the subject-specific content area for the certification sought or a passing score on an approved content examination before he or she is eligible to enter an EPP. If an EPP uses a Pre-Admission Content Test (PACT) as the way for an individual to demonstrate content proficiency for possible admission into an EPP, the result of the PACT would not be included as part of the pass rate for accountability and accreditation purposes because the PACT is equivalent to the TExES certification test.

15. How is the TEA planning to address the Core Subject concerns of Educator Preparation Programs and teacher certification candidates?

TEA staff plans to implement the Core Subject tests in January 2015. However, in an effort to gather data on actual candidate test performance, a data collection period will be instituted where candidates will be allowed to take the new tests for the first time at no cost to them. During the data collection period, candidates who pass all parts of the Core Subjects tests would be allowed to use those results for issuance of certification pending completion of all requirements. During the data collection period, EPPs will not be held accountable for successful or unsuccessful attempts on the new Core Subjects tests. At the August 2015 SBEC meeting, TEA staff will update the board on test performance data, and if needed, recommend additional changes.

16. Do candidates have to pass all portions of the Core Subject tests before they can be recommended for a probationary certificate?

A candidate for a probationary certificate must meet the general certification requirements prescribed in Texas Administrative Code §230.11, which includes the successful completion of the appropriate examination for the educator certificate sought. If a candidate's internship assignment is going to be in a subject area or grade level that requires an EC-6 or 4-8 Core Subject Certification, the candidate must pass all portions of the appropriate Core Subject test before he or she can be recommended for a probationary certificate.

Core Subjects Frequently Asked Questions

17. Why are PE, Health and Fine Arts included on the EC-6 Core Subject test?

Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff presented an item during the October 2013 SBEC meeting that discussed plans to assess only the four core subject areas on both of the new tests for grades EC-6 and grades 4-8. Concerns were expressed during the meeting about Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts no longer being part of the EC-6 test and the impact this would have on districts attempting to assign educators in elementary settings across the state. In response to testimony during that meeting, the SBEC instructed TEA staff to explore options to retain the fifth domain on the new EC-6 test and to also find a way to retain passing performances on sections of both new tests to avoid candidates having to retake all sections at every testing event. During the February 2014 SBEC meeting, TEA staff provided an update on the new tests and confirmed the fifth domain, Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts was added back into the EC-6 test. If a separate test for PE, Health and Fine Arts were to be offered at this time, it could potentially double the registration cost for candidates and delay the implementation of the Core Subject tests.

18. Can the EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subject tests be divided into two tests?

The option of dividing the EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subject tests into two tests has been considered by TEA staff. At the August 2015 SBEC meeting, TEA staff will update the board on test performance data, and if needed, recommend additional changes which may include dividing the tests.

19. If the EC-6 and 4-6 Core Subject tests are more rigorous, does the TEA staff expect there to be a teacher shortage in the elementary and middle school areas due to less teachers being certified because they cannot pass the Core Subject test?

TEA staff does not expect to include elementary and middle school teaching assignments as a shortage area because the TEA staff are confident that our EPPs are going to be able to continue preparing candidates with the requisite knowledge and skills that entry-level educators in Texas public schools must possess. TEA staff will also continue collaborating with all of the stakeholders involved to ensure the highest level of educator preparation and practice.

20. If an individual only passes the English Language Arts and Reading, Mathematics, Science, or Social Studies portion of the 4-8 Core Subject test, would the individual be eligible for the English Language Arts and Reading 4-8, Mathematics 4-8, Science 4-8, or Social Studies 4-8 certifications?

The Core Subjects content areas contain competencies within each of the sections, but the competencies are not weighted differently nor do they specify the number of items from each of those competencies. With the 4-8 Content exams, each of the domains has a certain percent of items for each of them specifying the amount to be tested in that domain. Due to these limitations, TEA staff has determined that a passing score on a single subject of the 4-8 Core Subject test would not qualify an individual for the corresponding single subject 4-8 content certification.