

REVIEW OF NATIONAL LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS



MANDATE

It is the policy of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) that “all [national] licensure examinations appropriated for use in California professions regulated by DCA should be validated according to accepted technical and professional standards” (DCA Policy OPES 18-02). This validation includes a review of the examination’s development, administration, and security procedures, as well as a review of the examination content to assess its applicability to California practice.

REVIEW

If a national examination is used as part of the requirements for California licensure, the national examination program must be reviewed. This includes a review of the occupational analysis (OA) used as the basis for the national examination, including the percentage of California participants. To determine the suitability of the national examination content for California practice, a California-specific OA is conducted. The results of the California OA are compared with the results of the national OA.

In a review of a national examination program, the following factors must be considered:

- Methodology used to establish content-related validity.
- OA methodology, including sampling and the percentage of California participants.
- OA frequency.
- Method used to construct the examination outline.
- Method used to ensure that standards are set for entry-level practice.
- Item development process (subject matter experts (SMEs) used, editing methods, etc.).
- Size of item banks.
- Pass-point setting methodology.
- Examination security methods.
- Examination administration procedures.
- Examination reliability.
- Examination passing rates.
- Statistical performance of examinations.

DCA’s Office of Professional Examination Services (OPES) provides consulting services and technical assistance to DCA boards, bureaus, and committees to meet the validation requirements for licensure examinations.

STANDARDS

All aspects of licensure examination use, including occupational analysis, examination development, and validation, should adhere to accepted technical (psychometric) standards and professional guidelines (e.g., *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (2014)).

REVIEW OF NATIONAL LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS (CONTINUED)



PROCEDURE

First, the DCA licensing entity and OPES hold a planning meeting to discuss the national examination review. The discussion covers time lines, costs, roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Second, OPES develops an intra-agency contract. Third, the DCA licensing entity contacts the group developing the national examination; licensing entity staff will often have a relationship with this group. The licensing entity explains the nature of, and reasons for, the review; introduces OPES; and requests that the national examination developers identify a primary contact for the review. Finally, OPES contacts the national examination developers to begin the review.

LINKAGE STUDY

OPES performs a linkage study to compare the content of the national examination with the results of the California-specific occupational analysis. The purpose of the linkage study is to determine the extent to which the content of the national examination reflects critical California practice. When an occupational analysis is conducted on a national level, California practice must be appropriately represented in the analysis for the results to be valid for use in California.

SECURITY

The linkage study also determines whether a state-specific examination is recommended. If there is sufficient state-specific content, OPES will work with SMEs to develop an examination outline based on the California-specific content (e.g., state laws and regulations). The outline will minimize overlap with the national examination. The overall goal is to ensure assessment of critical entry-level knowledge without duplicating content and creating an unnecessary burden to examinees.

TIME LINE

OPES has a process in place to protect the security of the information necessary for the review. OPES will provide a nondisclosure agreement to be reviewed and approved by the national examination provider. If the national provider requests changes to the agreement, the changes are negotiated between the national provider and the DCA Legal Affairs Division. Upon project completion, OPES will prepare a report summarizing the results of the review.

National examination reviews typically take six to nine months to complete. Various factors affect the time line. The most common delays are nondisclosure agreement negotiations and the time necessary for the national provider to compile the requested information for OPES.

CONTACT

To learn more about these and other examination-related services, please contact OPES at (916) 575-7240.