

Exam Project Workgroups – Summary of Exam Design Elements

Overall Purpose / Focus

- The exam should be designed to evaluate competency to provide entry-level, prevalent psychological services.
- Entry-level practice should be considered capable of providing some psychological services, but also knowing the limitations of a new practitioner. Candidates need to have general knowledge of all aspects of potential practice but do not need to be experts. Candidates should show they know how to identify salient issues present and start down the correct path of action.
- The exam should be designed to evaluate candidates from both APA and PC-SAS accredited programs, as well as individuals from unaccredited programs. The exam should not be designed to assess a particular curriculum or method of training, but should instead focus on ability to practice in the field.

Standard of Competency

- The exam should have entry-level focus common to all psychologists, including:
 - Assessments
 - Interventions
 - Ethics
 - Research
- Job task domains should focus on clinical practice, but should extend to other job task domains likely to be experienced by psychologists, such as:
 - Emergencies
 - Reviewing report data/records
 - Receiving a neuropsychology or other specialty report
 - Receiving a subpoena or court order
 - Being asked to consult / provide organizational advice
- The concept of protecting public safety should inform the definition of competency across domains.
- Details regarding what elements constitute psychological practice, and what competency in those practice entails, will be primarily developed through a job task analysis.
- The exam should incorporate competencies for both supervised and independent practice, with passing scores intentionally set for both levels of practice.

Job Task Analysis

- The job task analysis should focus on gathering input from psychologists in the field, with an emphasis on new(er) practitioners.

- The focus should be on actual, common practice areas. Stakeholders express a strong desire for the exam to reflect a clear connection to their practice in the field, as opposed to academic knowledge and training.
- The JTA should identify the common and core practice areas across the profession. While the core competencies may, and should, include areas all psychologists may experience, such as being involved in a legal proceeding or being asked principles of organizational human resources, the JTA should not seek to fully encompass all specialty areas of psychology, such as forensic practice or I/O.
- However, the job task analysis should also gather feedback from clinical programs to consider how practical domains align or misalign with clinical training standards.

Assessment Goals

- The exam should include an assessment of knowledge of core psychological principles.
- The exam should focus on application of knowledge in practice settings, not mere recitation.
- The exam should focus on high prevalence standards within the profession.
- The exam should focus on ability to integrate various psychological practice domains, rather than siloed content areas.
- The exam should focus on fundamentals of practice, such as
 - Critical thinking skills
 - Ability to learn/investigate new information
 - Ability to detect distractors/pseudoscience – evaluate information received.
 - Ability to describe next steps to be taken
 - Ability to come to judgments/conclusions
 - Process/method for assessment and diagnosis, instead of the correct diagnosis/answer
 - Understanding of limitations and self-care
 - Understanding of duties of care
- The exam should include assessment of softer skills (i.e. cultural awareness, personal interaction).

Assessment Methods

- All exam items must be objectively scorable.
- The assessment tools must be scalable to a national exam program.
- The exam should include multiple choice and other traditional question formats.
- The exam development team should consider incorporating more interactive and qualitative formats, while keeping objective scoring and validity in mind.

Exam Forms and Structure

- The structure of the exam (i.e. one section vs. multiple components) should be determined based on the definition of competency developed by the Job Task Analysis
- The JTA should identify the key areas of competency each candidate must show, and the exam form should ensure candidates meet competency in each area.
- The exam development team should start from the expectation that a single, comprehensive score is set for passing, but should consider whether any individual components are so important as to deserve their own passing score within the exam.
- The exam development team should consider the feasibility, once the exam structure is developed, of allowing candidates that fail a portion of the exam to retake only that portion.

Exam Delivery / Accommodations

- The exam should have guidance documents, practice tests, and other support material available to candidates.
- The exam should be available at national testing centers.
- The exam should have a remote proctoring option for a defined accommodation/disability or for especially rural candidates.
- The time limit for taking the exam should only be based on limitations necessary for secure testing administration.
- The exam should provide score reports to candidates with detailed information related to questions missed, such as underlying principles or concepts.
- While the initial rollout of the exam should be done in English, the exam program should look for opportunities in time to provide the exam in other languages.

Exam Validity / Review

- The exam must meet modern psychometric standards regarding test creation and validity.
- The exam must meet psychometric and regulatory standards for at least Texas, California, Florida, and New York, including any necessary independent review processes.
- The exam development process should incorporate a robust program for validations, including but not limited to beta testing, pilot testing, independent review, exam accreditation, and a validity assessments (i.e. content validity, concurrent validity, discriminant validity, and known group sampling).

Exam Analysis / Updates / Bias Review

- The exam program should include Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis to detect bias.

- The exam program should include bias sensitivity panels to review exam items prior to use.
- The exam program should incorporate substantial collection of demographic information from candidates to allow latent regression analysis to be done to identify differential performance factors.