

## Case-by-case exceptions for content knowledge assessments

### Guidance for teacher preparation programs

---

In 2019-20, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) convened an educator assessment system workgroup to examine educator assessment requirements, and produce recommendations for a more coherent and equitable assessment system. The workgroup represented a diverse stakeholder collective with significant knowledge, expertise, and perspective. Their recommendations are grounded in research and a shared agreement on what they believe to be the most equitable policy and practice.

This workgroup recommended a case-by-case exception process for content knowledge assessments. A case-by-case exception workgroup further delineated recommendations from policy and guidance. This guidance document provides information for the under RCW 28A.410.220 (3) and (4), and WAC 181-02-005.

It is critical for all candidates to have equal access to the teaching profession while receiving ample and consistent support from their programs. The case-by-case exception process is designed to allow programs to review their candidates' content knowledge using multiple forms of evidence, meeting standards and reflecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of candidates. This guidance includes considerations of the case-by-case exception review process; the review committee composition; alternative areas of evidence; and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) prompts for the case-by-case exception review process.

### Summary of the case-by-case exception process

Candidates must take the content knowledge assessment for a specific endorsement once in order to be eligible for the case-by-case exceptions process. Candidates not passing the content knowledge assessment are eligible for consideration for a case-by-case exception. A committee convened by the preparation program reviews alternative evidence, and if they determine the candidate has the requisite knowledge and skills, they can recommend the candidate for certification.

Candidates may also choose to retake the content knowledge assessment instead of going through the case-by-case exception process.

In this document:

- [Diversity, equity, and inclusion prompts](#)
- [What do preparation programs need to do](#)

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion prompts

Competence measured content knowledge assessments can be determined using other relevant, multiple measures that are aligned with the competencies in question. Below are prompts to frame your thinking as you consider and determine whether or not the candidate is eligible for a case-by-case exception using multiple measures. Programs should use these prompts through the review process.

### Prompts for programmatic considerations

1. Does the candidate already have knowledge and skills to pass the content knowledge assessment in the area that they seek to earn an endorsement(s), or do they need support to do so? What support will you put in place to ensure that candidates will become competent teachers?
2. Who knows this candidate well enough to advocate on their behalf? Does the committee have individuals who can advocate for underrepresented candidates and understand inherent cultural and linguistic bias in the standardized system?
3. Given the demographic differences in the program candidates, which candidates are most likely and least likely to pass the content knowledge assessment on the first try? What strategies are in place to disrupt this pattern at your program?
4. What are the programmatic learning experiences that directly align with the relevant components of the content knowledge competencies? How well were those components planned, enacted, and assessed by the program?

### Prompts for Individual candidate considerations

5. To what extent is there a discrepancy between the candidate's performance on the content knowledge assessment and the candidate's other demonstrations of content knowledge? Could a candidate's first language contribute to that discrepancy? Did the candidate's performance in the program lead you to believe that they would earn a passing score? Why or why not?
6. Would children, youth, and families be better served by having this candidate as a teacher?
7. What strengths does the candidate possess? Consider community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and potential to be an effective teacher in diverse learning environments.
8. To what extent does the candidate's race-ethnic-cultural-linguistic identity reflect the typical program candidate? Was the candidate afforded the opportunity to learn the competencies in question through a series of introduced, reinforced, and assessed learning experiences? Were those experiences responsive and reflective of the candidate's race-ethnic-cultural-linguistic identity?
9. How might individual, institutional, and systemic racism/bias have contributed to this candidate's score on the content knowledge assessment? How are you working to minimize racism/bias in your program?

## What do preparation program leaders need to do?

### Identify candidates eligible for case-by-case exceptions

Candidates must take the content knowledge assessment for a specific endorsement once in order to be eligible for the case-by-case exceptions process. Endorsements may not be added on a test-only basis through a case-by-case exception.

Candidates who have taken the content knowledge assessment in the current academic year and in prior years are eligible for consideration for the case-by-case exception process.

Preparation programs may choose to set, or not set, their own requirements regarding the total number of years a candidate has to complete a program, or the length of time a candidate has after completing the majority of requirements to complete remaining requirements such as assessments.

Candidates must meet all other requirements in order to be recommended for certification.

**Candidates from out-of-state programs:** The review of evidence for a case-by-case exception must be completed by a Washington state approved program. Washington state programs may choose to accept transfer candidates, including candidates from out-of-state programs, for review and recommendation through a case-by-case exception process.

Out-of-state candidates who do not yet hold a Washington residency certificate may be eligible for flexibility including a permit allowing them to serve as a teacher while they complete assessment requirements. These candidates should contact the OSPI certification office at [cert@k12.wa.us](mailto:cert@k12.wa.us) or (360) 725-6400 for details on permits and required assessments.

### Convene a committee

The preparation program provider must convene a committee of at least three individuals for review of case-by-case exceptions. Committee members should be familiar with the case-by-case exception process, and will want to closely consider the diversity, equity, and inclusion prompts below.

*The composition of this committee is at the discretion of the preparation program.*

In convening this committee, the preparation program will want to consider the following standing and/or ad hoc committee members:

- Faculty member(s) who possesses content expertise
- Other representatives from the preparation program
- Educator practitioners from the field, such as representative(s) from the school districts where candidates complete their field experience
- An individual who knows the candidate's knowledge and skills in an educational setting, such as an advisor or cooperating teacher
- Individuals who can advocate for underrepresented candidates and understand inherent cultural and linguistic bias in the standardized system.

### Review alternative evidence

Preparation program providers must review at least two forms of evidence to determine the candidate has the requisite knowledge and skills for that content knowledge assessment.

Preparation programs may use the following alternative forms of evidence for their review:

- Evidence submitted by candidate to demonstrate expertise in content knowledge; or
- Coursework; or
- Other forms of evidence as determined by the program provider.

For example, other forms of evidence might include letters of recommendation or documented observations of candidate's content knowledge in an educational setting, from candidates' mentors or supervisors.

### Recommend candidates

Preparation programs may only recommend candidates in endorsements they are approved to offer. Once the committee has determined that the candidate has demonstrated the requisite knowledge and skills through the case-by-case exception process, and the candidate has met all other endorsement requirements, the program may recommend the candidate through the OSPI certification office.

For questions on the recommendation process, please contact the OSPI certification office at [cert@k12.wa.us](mailto:cert@k12.wa.us).

### Maintain records

Preparation programs must record which candidates are being recommended through the case-by-case exception process. A data element regarding numbers of candidates in each endorsement area being recommended through the case-by-case exception process is being considered for inclusion in [annual data reporting](#).

## Resources

- [Testing barriers report](#)
- [Educator assessment report](#)

## References (DEI prompts)

Haberman, M., & Post, L. (1998). Teachers for multicultural schools: The power of selection. *Theory Into Practice*, 37(2), 96-104. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/1477290](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1477290)

Milner, H. (2012). Beyond a test score: Explaining opportunity gaps in educational practice. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(6), 693-718. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/23414665](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23414665)

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 69-91. Retrieved July 22,

2020, from

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.500.5873&rep=rep1&type=pdf>