



NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
H. Martin Lancaster, President

January 8, 2007

Response Deadline: January 29, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Basic Skills Directors
Community Based Organization Directors

FROM: Randy L. Whitfield, Ed.D.
Associate Vice President, Basic Skills

SUBJECT: Assessment Procedures for the National Reporting System (NRS)

Attached is a draft of "Assessment Procedures for the National Reporting System (NRS)" which was written in conjunction with a subcommittee of the Basic Skills State Leadership Advisory Board. The document is to supplement the "North Carolina Assessment Policy," putting it in an easy-to-read question and answer document. Please review the document and make recommendations for changes no later than Monday, January 22, 2007.

Let me know areas that are unclear as well as areas that do not seem to be addressed. Once I get input from the field, I will send out a final copy to all programs.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 919/807-7132 or email me at whitfieldr@nccommunitycolleges.edu.

cc: Presidents
Senior Continuing Education Administrators

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Response Due: Monday, January 29, 2007

North Carolina

Assessment Procedures for the National Reporting System (NRS) General Assessment Protocols

1. Why do I have to use a standardized assessment instrument?

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) of the Workforce Investment Act, requires all states to test all Basic Skills/literacy students with a standardized test developed for adults. Local Basic Skills/literacy providers are required to assess students using standardized pre-post assessments included in the National Reporting System (NRS) to place students in educational levels and report gain measures for the National Reporting System (NRS).

2. Who needs to be assessed?

All students in programs funded by the North Carolina Community College System must be pre- and post-tested annually with an approved Basic Skills assessment (CASAS, TABE, BEST, BEST Plus, and WorkKeys). All students reported in the National Reporting System data submission must be tested (LEIS for community colleges; LiteracyPro for community-based organizations).

If a student is not given a pre- and post-assessment, the program cannot show student completion of a federal functioning level or movement to a higher level.

3. What are federal functioning levels?

Federal functioning levels are levels that states use to provide information to the federal government about student progress. The levels provide global descriptions of students' abilities in reading, writing, and/or math. The following are the federal functioning levels:

Adult Basic Education

Beginning Adult Basic Education Literacy

Beginning Basic Education

Low Intermediate Basic Education

High Intermediate Basic Education

Adult Secondary

Low Adult Secondary

High Adult Secondary

English as a Second Language

Beginning ESL literacy

Low Beginning ESL

High Beginning ESL

Low Intermediate ESL

High Intermediate ESL

Advanced ESL

4. What assessments may be used to determine federal functioning levels?

Allowable tests include the following: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), BEST, BEST Plus and WorkKeys. In addition, local programs are encouraged to use a variety of informal assessments to assist instructors/tutors in selecting appropriate teaching methods and materials.

No other tests may be used to determine federal functioning levels.

5. In what skill areas should students be assessed?

Students should be assessed in the academic area(s) most relevant to their needs. If a student is enrolled for the sole purpose of upgrading math skills, only the math test should be administered.

While the entire battery of tests is not required, programs may decide to give all the sub-tests to better plan instruction. If an entire battery is administered, students must be placed by their lowest test score.

6. Do I need to use locators and appraisals?

Assessment systems, such as TABE and CASAS, have a locator or appraisal component to be used to determine the most appropriate pre-assessment instruments for each student. The locator/appraisal should always be used prior to administering the pre-assessment battery. Locators or appraisals may NOT be used in place of pre-assessments to determine a scale score or grade equivalent for placement on an entry federal functioning level.

A locator or appraisal may be administered on the first day of class because it is not a lengthy assessment. Because the full assessment process may be overwhelming to some students, it is better to avoid giving all components of the test battery on that same day.

7. How do I match standardized assessment results to federal functioning levels?

The following chart should be used to determine the entry and exit federal functioning levels:

Beginning ABE Literacy	
<p>Test Benchmark: TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 0–1.9): Reading: 367 and below Total Math: 313 and below Language: 389 and below</p>	<p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 200 and below Math: 200 and below Writing: 200 and below</p>
Beginning Basic Education	
<p>Test Benchmark: TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 2–3.9): Reading: 368–460 Total Math: 314–441 Language: 390–490</p>	<p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 201–210 Math: 201–210 Writing: 201–225</p>
Low Intermediate Basic Education	
<p>Test Benchmark: TABE 9–10) scale scores (grade level 4–5.9): Reading: 461–517 Total Math: 442–505 Language: 491–523</p>	<p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 211–220 Math: 211–220 Writing: 226–242</p>
High Intermediate Basic Education	
<p>Test Benchmark: TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 6–8.9): Reading: 518–566 Total Math: 506–565 Language: 524–559</p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 221–235 Math: 221–235 Writing: 243–260</p>	<p><i>WorkKeys scale scores:</i> Reading for Information: 75–78 Writing: 75–77 Applied Mathematics: 75–77</p>
Low Adult Secondary Education	
<p>Test Benchmark: TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 9–10.9): Reading: 567–595 Total Math: 566–594 Language: 560–585</p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 226–245 Math: 236–245 Writing: 261–260</p>	<p><i>WorkKeys scale scores:</i> Reading for Information: 79–81 Writing: 78–85 Applied Mathematics: 78–81</p>
High Adult Secondary Education	
<p>Test Benchmark: TABE (9–10) scale scores</p>	<p><i>WorkKeys scale scores:</i> Reading for Information: 82–90</p>

(<i>grade level 11-12</i>): Reading: 596 and above Total Math: 595 and above Language: 586 and above <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 246 and above Math: 246 and above Writing: 271 and above	Writing: 86-90 Applied Mathematics: 82-90
Beginning ESL Literacy	
Test Benchmark: <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 180 and below Listening: 180 and Below	<i>Oral BEST</i> : 0-15 (SPL 0-1) <i>BEST Plus</i> : 400 and below (SPL 0-1) <i>BEST Literacy</i> : 0-7 (SPL 0-1)
Low Beginning ESL	
Test Benchmark: <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 181-190 Listening: 181-190 Writing: 136-145	<i>Oral BEST</i> : 16-28 (SPL 2) <i>BEST Plus</i> : 401-417 (SPL 2) <i>BEST Literacy</i> : 8-35 (SPL 2)
High Beginning ESL	
Test Benchmark: <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 191-200 Listening: 191-200 Writing: 146-200	<i>Oral BEST</i> : 29-41 (SPL 3) <i>BEST Plus</i> : 418-438 (SPL 3) <i>BEST Literacy</i> : 36-46 (SPL 3)
Low Intermediate ESL	
Test Benchmark: <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 201-210 Listening: 201-210 Writing: 201-225	<i>Oral BEST</i> : 42-50 (SPL 4) <i>BEST Plus</i> : 439-472 (SPL 4) <i>BEST Literacy</i> : 47-53 (SPL 4)
High Intermediate ESL	
Test Benchmark: <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 211-220 Listening: 211-220 Writing: 226-242	<i>Oral BEST</i> : 51-57 (SPL 5) <i>BEST Plus</i> : 473-506 (SPL 5) <i>BEST Literacy</i> : 54-65 (SPL 5-6)
Advanced ESL	
Test Benchmark: <i>CASAS scale scores</i> : Reading: 221-235 Listening: 221-235 Writing: 243-260	<i>Oral BEST</i> : 58-64 (SPL 6) <i>BEST Plus</i> : 507-540 (SPL 6) <i>BEST Literacy</i> : 66 and above (SPL 7)
Exit Criteria from Advanced ESL : CASAS Writing: 261 and above; CASAS Reading and Listening: 236 and above; Oral BEST: 65 and above (SPL 7); BEST Plus: 541 and above (SPL 7)	

8. When do I administer the pre-assessments?

Pre-assessments are administered during the student orientation process, before entering class at an assessment center, or within the first twelve hours of classroom instruction. It is not advisable to administer a complete set of pre-assessments on the student's first day.

9. How do I document student completion of a Federal Functioning Level or movement from one level to the next?

The only way to document that a student has completed a level or moved to a higher one is with documented pre- and post-assessment scores.

10. Are standardized assessments the only kind of assessment to be used in a classroom?

The North Carolina Community College System Office encourages local Basic Skills/literacy programs to use a variety of informal assessments to assist instructors/tutors in designing appropriate educational programs for adults. The use of instructor/tutor-made tests, unit tests, portfolios, applied performance assessments, and learner observations are encouraged to design and monitor learning opportunities.

These tests may not be used to determine completion of a Federal Functioning Level or movement from one level to the next.

Types of formal/informal assessments may be (but are not limited to):

- Computerized assessments
- End of unit tests from textbooks
- Informal reading inventories
- Portfolios
- Applied performance measures
- Learner observations
- Instructor/tutor-made assessments
- GED practice tests
- Other tests that help diagnose student learning needs and progress.

11. Where should assessment take place?

Assessments may take place in the classroom or in assessment centers; however, those environments should be well-lit, have comfortable seating and heating/cooling, and be free of distraction or noise. An instructor or test proctor has to be available for questions, timing, etc.

12. Are standardized assessments interchangeable?

Assessment scores from one standardized test are not interchangeable with another. You cannot pre-test with one instrument and post-test with another. For example, you cannot pre-test with CASAS ESL and post-test with BEST Plus.

13. What assessment form should be used to post-assess?

The parallel form of the assessment instrument used in pre-testing must be used in post-testing. For example, if you pre-test with TABE M, Form 9, then you must post-test with TABE M, Form 10.

14. How frequently should I post-test?

You should post-test according to manufacturer’s post-test guidelines. If post-testing occurs less than the manufacturer’s post-test guidelines, the program must keep written documentation which includes the reason for post-testing early. The written documentation must include evidence of why the students are expected to make gains on the test even though the post-test guidelines have not been followed.

15. What are the manufacturer’s post-test guidelines?

Recommended Timeframes for Pre- and Post-testing
Adult Education Assessments

Test Name	Recommended Pre- and Post-testing Timeframes	Contact/Notes
ACT/ Workkeys	We typically recommend that the student be involved in regular instruction that is offered by the institution. This would amount to a semester or quarter course.	Barb Ciha Placement Programs barb.ciha@act.org
BEST	110 – 235 hours to show SPL level gains, depending on the student’s starting level, intensity of the program, and other learner characteristics.	Bryan Woerner BEST Plus Operations Assistant Center for Applied Linguistics 4646 40th Street, NW Washington, DC 20016-1859 www.best-plus.net 1-866-845-BEST
BEST Plus	Minimum 100 hours of instruction	Bryan Woerner
BEST Literacy	Minimum 100 hours of instruction	Bryan Woerner
CASAS	70-100 hours (40 hours is the minimum)	From Linda Taylor, Director of Assessment Development, CASAS, 800-255-1036, ext.

	<p>Allow exceptions for courses with different schedules and intensity, e.g., allow more time for courses that meet infrequently or not intensively and for very intensive courses wait longer than the recommended number of hours to post-test.</p> <p>Programs offering high intensity courses (e.g., class meets more than 15 hours per week) may choose to test at the end of a semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction, even though the instructional intervention is more than 100 hours of instruction.</p> <p>Programs offering low intensity courses with less than 70 hours in a semester, quarter, term, or other block of instruction, may choose to post-test at the end of the instructional period.</p> <p>Programs may choose to assess students who indicate they are leaving the program before the scheduled post-test time, to maximize collection of paired test data.</p>	<p>186, ltaylor@casas.org, www.casas.org</p>
<p>TABE, Forms 9 and 10</p>	<p>For the TABE 9/10 research suggests 60 hours of instruction. As a matter of practicality, we counsel our customers not to test so frequently that they do not see students move to the next NRS level.</p>	<p>Michaeline M. Powell, District Manager CTB/McGraw-Hill mpowell@ctb.com 703.698.1325</p>

16. Are there any guidelines which test administrators must follow?

Quality control must be maintained for assessment procedures. Local program directors/coordinators may use the following assessment checklist to ensure correct assessment procedures have been followed.

Standardized Assessment Checklist	
Assessment Procedures for Test Givers	yes/no
1. The test giver has been trained in giving the assessment(s).	

2. The test giver has read the test manual(s).	
3. The test giver follows all directions in giving the assessment(s).	
4. The testing facility is quiet, has adequate lighting, and adequate space for test-takers.	
5. The test giver follows all directions, including strict adherence to time limits, etc.	
6. The tests are accurately scored and raw scores are converted to scale scores.	
7. Tests results are kept confidential.	
8. Test results are shared with test takers in a timely manner.	
9. Test answers are not shared with test takers, but the type of questions missed may help test takers to understand what they need to learn.	
10. Tests results are available for instructors and program staff.	
11. Test results are reported in LEIS or LiteracyPro in a timely manner (no later than quarterly).	

17. When should test data be entered in LEIS or Literacy Pro?

Testing data should be entered into LEIS (community colleges) and LiteracyPro (community-based organizations) on an on-going basis. Data should be entered no less than quarterly.

18. How many times annually must students be tested?

Students must be tested twice per year.

19. How will pre-post testing help with instruction?

Learners who are placed in an instructional level that is too easy or too difficult may be frustrated or bored. Many of these students will probably end up leaving the program. Students who are given inappropriate pretests will not have accurate baseline information for monitoring progress and designing an instructional program. Students who are inappropriately placed into GED and Adult High School levels will not achieve their goals within a reasonable time frame and may also drop out of the program.

The North Carolina Community College System encourages local Basic Skills/literacy programs to select the test series that they use based on a learner’s goals and the instructional focus of the program. Pre-tests should be administered as soon as possible after enrollment. Post-tests should be administered according to test manufacturers’ recommendations for the amount of instructional hours between pre- and post-tests or there should be written justification why post-tests are being administered in fewer than the recommended hours. Students who indicate they are leaving the program before the completion of the scheduled time between pre- and post-test may be post-tested before

they leave if there is evidence that progress has been made. Alternate test forms must be used for pre- and post-tests.

20. May I use the TABE Espanol to assess students who want to get take the GED in Spanish?

You may use the TABE Espanol to determine when it is appropriate to administer the GED tests, but you cannot use their scores to determine completion of an educational functioning level or movement from one educational functioning level to the next.

21. Where can I get training on administering assessments?

The North Carolina Community College System funds a cadre of CASAS trainers to provide training in CASAS for all community colleges, community-based organizations funded by NCCCS, and other non-profit agencies working with community colleges or community-based organizations funded by NCCCS. These trainers conduct annual training sessions in different regions of the state. In addition, NCCCS offers annual training sessions on other approved assessments, pending availability of trainers from assessment manufacturers. Check the Basic Skills Training Calendar on the community college system website for training opportunities or check with your local program director.

22. Which levels should be assessed with CASAS?

CASAS is appropriate for all levels of Basic Skills/literacy. Their English as a Second Language (ESL) assessment is appropriate for all levels of ESL.

23. What are the CASAS training requirements?

Training in CASAS assessment is required to ensure accurate use of tests, appropriate interpretation of learner results, and to maintain the integrity and quality of the assessment process. CASAS requires that minimally one person from each agency using the CASAS system successfully complete CASAS Implementation training. Once trained, this individual can train others within his or her respective agency but may not train outside that agency.

Separate CASAS Implementation trainings have been developed for ABE/ASE, ESL, and Employability Skills. These trainings focus on teaching participants to administer, score, and interpret CASAS reading, listening, and math assessments. Implementation trainings also address how to use the CASAS competency system as well as how to use CASAS resources, such as Quick Search, to facilitate instruction.

Separate trainings are available for CASAS Functional Writing, POWER (for developmentally disabled adults), Citizenship, and Workplace Speaking, among others. The North Carolina Community College System requires all local agencies to comply with the CASAS training policy presented above.

24. Which levels should be assessed with TABE?

The TABE assesses a wide range of basic skills and concepts adults need to live and work. TABE is appropriate for all levels of Basic Skills/literacy except Compensatory Education and English as a Second Language.

25. What are the TABE training requirements?

Training is required for all personnel who administer the TABE. Training must be conducted by someone who has been trained in administering the TABE (may be someone at the local level). Training may be in group sessions or individualized.

26. Which levels should be assessed with BEST?

The Basic English Skills Test (BEST), developed by CAL language testing professionals, is a unique measurement tool designed for adult ESL learners at the survival and pre-employment skills level. BEST and BEST Plus are appropriate for all levels of English as a Second Language.

Alternate Forms

BEST Plus is an adaptation of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) oral interview. The BEST was developed during the early 1980s to meet the need for reliable assessment of adult English learners' oral proficiency and literacy skills. Like the BEST, *BEST Plus* assesses interpersonal communication using everyday language.

27. What are the BEST training requirements?

Training is required for all personnel who administer the BEST. Training must be conducted by someone who has been trained in administering the BEST (may be someone at the local level). Training may be in group sessions or individualized.

28. Which levels should be assessed with WorkKeys?

WorkKeys is only appropriate for High Intermediate ABE, Low Adult Secondary, and High Adult Secondary.

29. What are the WorkKeys training requirements?

Training is required for all personnel who administer WorkKeys. Training must be conducted by someone who has been trained in administering the WorkKeys (may be someone at the local level). Training may be in group sessions or individualized.

30. What would happen if a local program does not follow the state's assessment guidelines?

Not following assessment guidelines could result in an audit exception (for colleges only) or the loss of federal funding.

For more information on Basic Skills/literacy assessment in North Carolina, please visit the System Office Basic Skills website at www.nccommunitycolleges.edu. Information about assessment will be under “Administration and Regulations.”

You may also contact Dr. Randy Whitfield at 919-807-7132 or whitfieldr@nccommunitycolleges.edu.