

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 for Educator 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 Subjects 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 Subjects 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 Subjects test before or after student teaching?

A candidate seeking a generalist certification may take the appropriate Core Subjects 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 Subjects test or is this something that was in the EC-6 Generalist test?

Pedagogy-based scenarios are not new to the Core Subjects tests. Both the Generalist and Core Subjects 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 Subjects tests?

The major difference between the Generalist and Core Subjects tests is that the Core Subjects 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 Subjects tests?

The EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subjects 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>.

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

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

TEA staff plans to implement the Core Subjects 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.

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9. What if I do not pass all of the portions of the Core Subjects test?

Candidates will be required to take the overall Core Subjects test (291 or 211) on their first attempt. There is no cost to take the overall test(s) during the data collection period. After the data collection period ends, the cost of the overall tests will be \$120. Candidates can retake the individual subject test(s) that they did not pass instead of retaking the entire test. The cost for taking each individual subject test will be \$60. Candidates will also have the option of retaking the overall Core Subjects test again if they choose. However, candidates retaking the overall Core Subjects tests will have to view all of the questions in all of the subject areas even if they passed one or more of those subject areas previously. A candidate who does not pass all sections of the Core Subjects test can also choose to take the EC-6 or 4-8 Generalist test. The candidate must pay the full amount of the Generalist test and take all parts of the entire test.

10. What is the rationale for placing a time limit on the individual sections of the EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subjects 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.

11. What is the rationale for almost doubling the number of questions on the EC-6 Core Subjects 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 was increased 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.

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12. What is the average amount of time an individual has to answer the questions on the Core Subjects 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 Subjects Content Area	Total Items	Section Time	Average Minutes 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 Subjects Content Area	Total Items	Section Time	Average Minutes 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

13. 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>.

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14. 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.

15. 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.

16. Do candidates have to pass all portions of the Core Subjects 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 Subjects Certification, the candidate must pass all portions of the appropriate Core Subjects test before he or she can be recommended for a probationary certificate.

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17. Why are PE, Health and Fine Arts included on the EC-6 Core Subjects 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 Subjects tests.

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

The option of dividing the EC-6 and 4-8 Core Subjects 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 Subjects tests are more rigorous, does the TEA staff expect there to be a teacher shortage in the elementary and middle school areas due to fewer teachers being certified because they cannot pass the Core Subjects 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 Subjects 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 Subjects test would not qualify an individual for the corresponding single subject 4-8 content certification.

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21. How long will the data collection period last?

The data collection period is currently scheduled to begin January 6 and end August 31, 2015 so that we can provide updates to the SBEC at the March, June, and August meetings. This time period may be extended if sufficient testing volumes and/or data is not collected during this time period.

22. What are the test codes and fees for the new Core Subjects tests during the data collection period?

Test Name	Test Code	Data Collection Period Fee
Core Subjects EC-6	291	No Charge
Core Subjects EC-6 — English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) & the Science of Teaching Reading (STR)	801	\$60
Core Subjects EC-6 — Mathematics	802	\$60
Core Subjects EC-6 — Social Studies	803	\$60
Core Subjects EC-6 — Science	804	\$60
Core Subjects EC-6 — Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education	805	\$60

Test Name	Test Code	Data Collection Period Fee
Core Subjects 4-8	211	No Charge
Core Subjects 4-8 — English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR)	806	\$60
Core Subjects 4-8 — Mathematics	807	\$60
Core Subjects 4-8 — Social Studies	808	\$60
Core Subjects 4-8 — Science	809	\$60

23. How long does a candidate have to wait between taking the Core Subjects tests?

There is a 45-day retake policy. If a candidate took Core Subjects EC-6 (291) and was unsuccessful on one or more of the individual tests (801, 802, 803, 804, and/or 805), the person would have to wait 45 days to retake the Core Subjects test or one or more of the individual tests. During the data collection period, there is no cost to retake 291 or 211 but there is a \$60 fee to retake individual tests.

24. How long does a candidate have to wait between taking a Core Subjects test and a Generalist test?

The 45-day retake policy only applies to registration for the same test(s). If a candidate took Core Subjects EC-6 (291) and was unsuccessful on one or more of the individual tests, the person would not have to wait 45 days to take the Generalist EC-6 test (191) because they are different tests.

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25. How long does a candidate have to wait between taking individual Core Subjects tests?

A candidate would have to wait 45 days between taking the same individual Core Subjects test(s). If a candidate took Core Subjects EC-6 (291) and was unsuccessful on Mathematics (802) and Science (804), the candidate does not have to take both individual tests on the same day. In this example, the candidate would have to wait 45 days to retake 802, but if the candidate did not want to take 804 on the same day, the candidate could register to take 804 at any time after the 45-day waiting period from taking the 291 test.

26. Can the Core Subjects tests be shortened by removing the field test items?

The number of operational (scored) and pretest (non-scored field test) items included in the Core Subjects tests are listed below.

EC-6 Core Subject Content Area	Operational Items	Pretest Items	Total Items	Section Time
English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) & the Science of Teaching Reading (STR)	65	10	75	105m
Mathematics	40	7	47	60m
Social Studies	35	6	41	35m
Science	45	7	52	40m
Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education	45	7	52	40m
TOTAL	230	37	267	4h 40m

4-8 Core Subject Content Area	Operational Items	Pretest Items	Total Items	Section Time
English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR)	65	9	74	115m
Mathematics	35	7	42	65m
Social Studies	35	7	42	50m
Science	35	7	42	50m
TOTAL	170	30	200	4h 40m

Removing the pretest items from the test forms would result in a slightly shorter test. However, removing them would also prevent ETS from gathering data on new questions to make sure they function and can contribute to valid scores. This poses a risk to the long-term validity of the assessment. Additionally, new items would need to be field tested, which would require candidates to participate in additional testing. When embedded pretest items are administered together with scored items, the same motivated candidates take both which results in reliable item statistics.

27. Will breaks be allowed between individual sections of the Core Subjects tests?

There are no scheduled breaks between the individual subject tests within the overall Core Subjects tests (211/291). Once the timer has started for an individual subject test, it cannot be stopped. Each individual subject test begins with informational screens that must be reviewed by the candidate. The timer will not begin until the candidate proceeds through those instructional screens.

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28. Are the Core Subjects tests going to be offered as PACT tests?

The Core Subjects tests will be included in the PACT route during the data collection period. Candidates will also be able to continue to take the current Generalist tests through the PACT route during this period.

29. What are the passing standards for the Core Subjects tests?

Passing standards for each of the individual Core Subjects tests were recommended by committees of stakeholders in May and August and approved by the SBEC at their October meeting.

Core Subjects EC-6 Test Name and Number		Recommended Cut Score	Total Number of Raw Score Points
801	English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR)/Science of Teaching Reading	Form A - 44 Form B - 43	65
802	Mathematics	Form A - 29 Form B - 29	40
803	Social Studies	Form A - 25 Form B - 25	35
804	Science	Form A - 31 Form B - 32	45
805	Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education	Form A - 28 Form B - 28	45

Core Subjects 4-8 Test Name and Number		Recommended Cut Score	Total Number of Raw Score Points
806	English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR)	Form A - 48 Form B - 48	65
807	Mathematics	Form A - 22 Form B - 21	35
808	Social Studies	Form A - 24 Form B - 23	35
809	Science	Form A - 26 Form B - 26	35

The recommended cut score represents the total number of scorable items that need to be answered correctly on a test form to obtain the minimum passing score of 240 on a certification test. Because no two forms are identical, the cut score may vary slightly from form to form to balance the overall difficulty of the test, yet maintain consistency in scoring.