

Q & A with the Florida Department of Education on the FTCE/FELE exams

What is the FDOE's response to the decrease in passing rates of participants taking the exam?

http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_ScoringReporting.asp

In response to various initiatives, the Department has engaged in test development activities to reflect an increase in rigor and complexity, both in content and passing scores. These examinations continue to be aligned with state-approved PK-12 student standards, as well as adopted State Board of Education (SBE) standards for teachers and administrators, where appropriate. A number of strategies were implemented by the Department during test development beginning in 2011, including:

- raising the cognitive complexity of the skills;
- addressing the diverse learner at every grade level;
- embedding state statutes into competencies and skills; and
- ensuring that content pedagogy is current and embedded in the skills, that pedagogical aspects of the skills are based on the measurable components of the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs), and that content is based on higher order/higher complexity skills and the Florida Standards.

As a result of these tests' increased rigor and other considerations, there have been changes in examinee pass rates as examinees and other stakeholders adjust to the new content and requirements for passing. This change was anticipated by the Department during the various stages of redevelopment for these examinations. Prior to making passing score recommendations to the SBE, the Department convened a committee of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) comprised of in-field PK-12 teachers, district leadership and college faculty who actually took the complete test, and based on their professional judgements, recommended the appropriate passing score for a beginning teacher. Similar committees of SMEs were also used throughout the entire development process for each test.

The Department calculated projected pass rate information for all assessments undergoing development prior to implementation. These projections were made available to Department leadership, as well as general stakeholders during the test development and rule development stages in an effort to forecast the potential effects of the aforementioned changes to selected examinations. Please see the "Test Redevelopment" sections of [General Knowledge \(GK\) Test](#) and [Florida Educational Leadership Examination \(FELE\)](#) for information regarding new passing scores and projected passing rates.

Why did the FDOE revise these tests in the first place?

See response above. When PK-12 student standards change, tests must also be revised to reflect these changes in standard. New teachers need to be assessed on relevant content standards before entering the PK-12 classroom.

Why did the FDOE change the cut off score for passing in some parts of these tests?

See response above. When tests are revised or redeveloped, passing scores must also be reviewed using the standards-based methodology established in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Council on Measurement in Education

(NCME), 2014). SBE rule also requires us to review passing scores not less than every five years.

What is the FDOE doing to provide support to test-takers prepping for these tests?

http://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_TestResources.asp

The role of the Florida Department of Education is to ensure the validity and reliability of the exam consistent with the standards and best practices in the field of assessment, not to prepare examinees to pass the tests. However, the Department does produce [test information guides](#) that provide a general overview of each examination. These guides are the only materials the Department endorses and are updated to reflect current test content and standards. They are intended to provide information to examinees taking an examination by presenting an overview of the content and format of the examination. The test information guides are not intended as all-inclusive sources of content or pedagogical knowledge, nor are they substitutes for college course work or experiential knowledge. Per the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, "Test takers should be provided in advance with as much information about the test, the testing process, the intended test use, test scoring criteria, [and] testing policy ... as is consistent with obtaining valid responses and making appropriate interpretations of test scores" (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014, p. 134).

Included in each test information guide, you will find the test blueprint, competencies and skills, and sample test items to help prepare for the examination. The test information guide also contains an annotated bibliography that lists text books and other resources that would address specific skills covered by the test. These references may be helpful when studying specific competencies for which you may have demonstrated weak performance, as identified by [mapping the test competencies and skills to your coursework](#) or in the "[Detailed Performance Analysis](#)" section of the score report you received after testing. The previously referenced curriculum mapping tool is also offered as a resource for university and college faculty to ensure direct alignment between course content and the test content to aid in preparing their students for the FTCE examinations. (Assistance in understanding score reports and individual scores can also be found in [Understanding Your Scores](#).) Note: The Florida Department of Education does not endorse these references as the only appropriate sources for review; many comparable texts currently used in state-approved teacher preparation programs also cover the competencies and skills that are tested on the examination.

The Department cannot specifically recommend other means of test preparation; however, various Educator Preparation Institutes (located at Florida colleges) offer courses to prepare for the FTCE.

We have heard from several test-takers who have taken the test multiple times only to fail one or more portions. In addition to being frustrated with failing the exam, these test-takers have raised concerns about how costly it is to take the exam and retake the exam, what is the DOE's response to people who believe the tests and retakes are a way for the state to profit off of students/teachers?

Prior to 2009, the Department received general revenue funding from the legislature to fund the FTCE testing program. However, in 2009, that funding source was no longer available. As such, the Department increased the cost of the FTCE examinations to support the cost of test development, test administration, and test scoring for the program. These costs reflect the

necessary funding required to maintain the FTCE testing program and allow computer-based testing on a readily available basis at 39 test sites in Florida and around the nation.

Would the FDOE consider reducing the costs of these tests since pass/fail rates suggest more people are having to retake the exams?

Please see response above.

Is the FDOE actively doing anything to address concerns raised about the failure rates as a result of the changes to these tests? If so, please explain.

The Department closely monitors examinee performance on a regular basis, and has internal quality control checks and processes to track trends and anomalies in the testing data that is received. In addition, the Department maintains a strong relationship with stakeholders, specifically the college and university faculty, to facilitate various partnerships. The Department will continue to maintain this relationship to assist faculty in preparing their students for the FTCE examinations, as well as to receive feedback and guidance from the program faculty regarding innovations in the field of education and changes to education content and best practices.