

CHAPTER 20: TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC SKILLS (TAAS) EXIT LEVEL

Overview

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), first administered in 1990, was last administered to students enrolled in grades 3–8 in the spring of 2002. Spring 2002 also marked the final administration of the TAAS exit level test to a full cohort of students enrolled in grade 10. As of spring 2003, all eligible grade 10 students are required to take the TAKS tests.

Commissioner’s rules were adopted in 2003 to clarify whether students should pass TAAS exit level grade 10 or TAKS exit level grade 11 to fulfill graduation testing requirements. Students who were in grade 9 or higher on January 1, 2001, must pass the TAAS exit level tests given in mathematics, reading, and writing. Accelerated students who were in grade 8 on January 1, 2001, and were scheduled to graduate by September 1, 2004, have TAAS as a graduation testing requirement. Students who were in grade 8 or lower on January 1, 2001, and who graduate after September 1, 2004, are required to pass the TAKS exit level tests in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies to meet graduation requirements.

Students for whom TAAS is the graduation requirement who have yet to pass all three sections of the assessment were able to retake any or all sections of the TAAS exit level test during the 2006–2007 school year. The test was also available for newly enrolled students for whom TAAS is the graduation requirement. There were four administrations of the TAAS exit level test during the 2006–2007 school year: October 2006, February 2007, April 2007, and July 2007. During this period 2,186 TAAS tests were administered.

TAAS tests will continue to be made available on a quarterly basis for those students who have not met graduation testing requirements. Students who are no longer enrolled in high school but wish to continue to test may do so as out-of-school examinees. See Chapter 7: Test Administration Procedures for more information.

TAAS Test Development

The TAAS test development process is outlined in detail in the 2001–2002 *Technical Digest*, which is available on the TEA Student Assessment Division website. Because the TAAS tests administered during 2006–2007 were built using previously field-tested items from the TAAS item bank, no field testing or educator reviews took place during the 2006–2007 school year.

TAAS performance standards, performance results, and raw score conversion tables can be found on the TEA Student Assessment Division website.

TAAS Exit Level: Written Composition Scoring

All TAAS written compositions were scored at the PEM scoring center in Austin. For each scoring session, TEA and senior PEM staff monitored training and scoring.

Scorers

For all 2006–2007 TAAS exit level retests, only scorers who had previously worked successfully on a previous TAAS exit level project were invited to score these assessments. A pool of two to 8 scorers and supervisors completed the scoring on each of the four retests scheduled since October 2006.

Training Guides and Sets

Since the test administration of October 2004, TAAS writing prompts used successfully in previous administrations have been used for retests. Training materials prepared for those administrations have been used to retrain these experienced readers. They consist of a response guide, containing four annotated anchor responses for each score point in order, from one to four.

There are three split sets; each contained four close-call papers that defined the “line” between two score points. There was one split set for the 1/2 line, one for the 2/3 line, and one for the 3/4 line. Training Sets A, B, and C each contained ten randomly mixed responses representing score points one to four. Training Set D contained fifteen randomly mixed responses representing score points one to four.

There was one qualifying set containing twenty randomly mixed responses representing score points one to four. Each of these scorers had previously qualified on this prompt.

A total of ninety-three responses were employed in each set of training materials used for the 2006–2007 administrations of TAAS exit level.

Exit Level Score Verification

Since the spring 1992 exit level scoring session, TEA’s contractors have used a score-verification procedure to evaluate all responses that received a score of one during the holistic scoring process. A team of readers receives special training on the 1/2 line using 1s and 2s from the holistic guide, split sets, and practice sets. If any response reviewed by a member of the specialist team is thought to be higher than a score of one, it is read by the specialist coordinator and the scoring director or project monitor. If all agree, they make the final decision on the score of the response. If it involves an issue that should be brought to the attention of TEA, the response is sent to TEA for a final scoring decision.

Validity Packets

For all 2006–2007 exit level retest administrations, time constraints required some procedural modifications. Because the number of individuals being tested in TAAS continues to decrease, the periods required to score TAAS have become very brief. In place of validity packets, TEA and senior PEM staff identified responses that were used in roomwide discussions of scoring decisions. During these brief scoring periods, several such responses were presented to the group.

Score Reliability

Throughout the years, PEM has reported on the reliability of the TAAS essay scoring process. Reliability is expressed in terms of reader agreement and correlation between first and second readings. The vast experience of the reader pool for the 2007 administrations of TAAS exit level is reflected in the table below, which summarizes reader agreement rates. The reader agreement rate is expressed in terms of absolute reader agreement (the first reader’s score equals the second reader’s score). As can be seen from Table 21, the in scores from two readers is 86% or higher. After three readings, the agreement is, for all practical purposes, 100%.

Table 21. Reader Agreement Rates

Administration	Responses	Agreement Rate (%) After Two Readings	Number of Third Readings	Agreement Rate (%) After Three Readings
October 2006	546	86	76	99.9
February 2007	501	89	55	99.9
April 2007	308	99	1	100
July 2007	228	100	0	100

