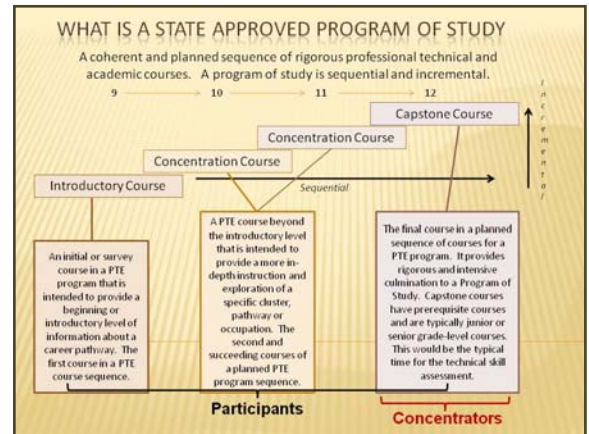


**Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education
An Overview of Technical Skill Assessment for State Approved PTE Programs**

Updated: September 14, 2009

Reference: IDAPA 55.01.01 (<http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/rules/idapa55/55index.htm>)

It all starts with the Program of Study (POS). A POS is a coherent and planned sequence of professional technical courses that leads to an occupational outcome and identifies postsecondary and employment options. Think of it like a college major. A program of study is incremental and designed to introduce, develop and reinforce academic and technical skills in an occupational field or career cluster. Generally in the final course of a program of study (aka capstone course) an assessment of technical skills is conducted.



What are technical skills? Technical skills generally refer to the knowledge and skills necessary to perform certain job functions in an occupation or group of occupations. Sometimes they are referred to as “hard skills” and they do not necessarily include all skills needed to be successful on the job. Word processing and spreadsheet applications are widely used technical skills in many occupations.

What is a technical skill assessment (TSA)? A TSA is the process of documenting the technical knowledge and skills developed by the student. The TSA should be based on nationally validated, industry-based skill standards. To ensure reliability and validity of test results it is always recommended for the TSA to be administered by someone other than the instructor (test center, certified school proctor, third-party vendor, etc.).

Which TSA should I use? The TSA you choose will depend on the program(s) of study you offer at your school. A list of state approved TSA’s is available at www.pte.idaho.gov/Perkins/PerkinsHome.htm. Make sure the TSA is appropriate and aligned with the curriculum by reviewing the “assessment blueprint” for the objectives it covers. The state list does not include all program areas or programs of study.

- TSA’s that meet the new requirements as set forth in the Perkins Act include:
 1. National or state licensure exam
 2. Industry recognized certification exam
 3. A nationally validated exam (e.g. NOCTI, SkillsUSA Work Force Ready System)
- TSA’s that are not approved
 1. A final exam or assessments administered by the instructor
 2. A final exam for a dual credit course
 3. A final exam for a technical course being articulated through a tech prep agreement
 4. A student organization competitive event
 5. An assessment developed and administered by a local advisory committee (e.g. senior project)

What if my program does not have a TSA on the state approved list? In this case you need to work with your advisory committee and/or the state program manager to identify an appropriate TSA for your “program of study”. When a TSA is identified, complete the TSA Application for State Approval and submit to SDPTE.

What if I can’t find a TSA for my program of study? Frustration may exist because curriculum alignment will likely need to take place in programs where the curriculum is directed by the instructor and not based on national or industry standards. TSA’s document how well students perform against industry standards and provide valid and reliable information for program improvement. It is your duty, in consultation with the advisory committee and state PTE program manager, to select the assessment most closely aligned to your program of study. Contact the state program manager if you are having trouble finding an assessment.

What is the deadline for identifying a TSA for my program(s) of study? Schools will identify the state approved TSA for each program of study by **October 15, 2009**.

When do I report on program completers who take a TSA? Schools will report annually the number and percentage of program concentrators (completers) who take a TSA. For 2009-2010 the school will develop a plan for increasing the number and percentage of concentrators (completers) who take a TSA.

Which students are to take the TSA? The TSA is to be taken by all PTE concentrators (completers) enrolled in capstone courses. Connect the TSA with a capstone course so it is part of the course requirements.

Isn't this teaching to the test? No, it is teaching to the standard.

What if my program doesn't have any concentrators? A capstone course should have concentrators (completers). If you don't offer a capstone course, then you probably have an issue with your program(s) of study. For PTE programs, program concentrators (completers) are viewed in the same way as the graduation rate for the school at large. A quality indicator for PTE programs (and schools) is the rate that students complete. Immediate attention to the program of study is required if your program doesn't have any (or many) concentrators/completers.

Why are we doing this? We have been reporting on technical skill attainment for many years. Previously we measured technical skill attainment using grade point average (GPA). GPA is no longer used as a performance indicator under the new Perkins legislation.

Can you give me an example of a state approved TSA? TSA's are available for many program areas through third-party vendors like NOCTI (www.nocti.org) and the SkillsUSA Work Force Ready System (www.workforcereadysystem.org). For some programs a licensure or certification exam would serve as the appropriate TSA. Several examples are provided below.

Program Name	CIP	Source of Assessment	Assessment Name	Level		Estimated Cost
				Sec	PostSec	
Computer Network Support Technician	11.0901	Cisco	Minimum of one (1) exam required from the CCENT	Yes	Yes	
Administrative Assistant	52.0401	NOCTI	Administrative Assisting #4001	Yes	Yes	\$18.50 written; \$22 written & performance
Automotive Technology	47.0604	NATEF	ASE Automobile/Light Truck Certification Test Series	Yes	Yes	\$36 registration fee plus \$27 per test (8 tests)
Diesel Technology	47.0605	National Automotive Technicians Educational	Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), ASE Medium/Heavy		Yes	\$36 registration fee plus \$27 per test (7 tests total)
Marketing and Management	52.1401	A*S*K Business Institute (MarkEd & DECA)	Minimum of One (1) Exam Required	Yes	Yes	The cost ranges from \$17-\$30 per test.
Medical Assistant	51.0801	American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)	CMA (AAMA) National Certification Exam	No	Yes	Members \$125; others \$250.
Welding Technology	48.0508	American Welding Society	AWS QC10, AWS EG2.0, Level I—Entry Welder	Yes	Yes	

When do I administer the TSA? The time to administer the TSA to students is a local decision. There is not a testing window. The Perkins Performance Measures are due about June 1 annually so plan accordingly. For each year's report the program will need to show that it is: (1) assessing more concentrators; and (2) those that take the assessment are passing the assessment at the state performance level (71.5% for this year).

Who pays the cost of the test? The cost of test administration will be the responsibility of the student and/or school. Schools may use state or federal PTE funds to pay for test administration. One strategy is to charge a course fee to cover the cost of assessment. Schools could incentivize student performance by providing partial or total reimbursement for passing the assessment.

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