

CRITERION REFERENCED PASSING SCORES

Criterion-referenced passing score applies standards for competent practice to all candidates regardless of the form of the examination administered. A criterion-referenced passing score increases the likelihood that candidates who pass the licensure examination have sufficient knowledge and experience to practice safely and competently. Proper test development and psychometric procedures are employed to make certain that no candidate is at an advantage or disadvantage.

As always, a candidate's score will be based on the number of questions answered correctly but the raw score will be converted to and reported as a scaled score. It should be noted that although the scaled score is consistent in meaning from one test form to another, it does not equal the number of items answered correctly.

The scaled (passing) scores for the examinations will be determined whenever a new examination is developed. Determining the scaled score is a group process that is composed of licensees (including newly licensed practitioners), referred to as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who represent all aspects of practice or profession, and a test development specialist. As new examinations are being developed, each test may vary slightly in difficulty, and the number of correct items required to pass a test may vary slightly from one test to another. Criterion-referenced passing scores ensure that form difficulty is taken into account in determining the passing score for an examination. This scoring methodology means that the number of correct items required to pass a test may vary slightly from one test form to another. In order to improve the comparability of scores across different test forms, raw scores will be converted and reports as *scaled scores*, ranging from 1 to 100. The minimum passing scaled score for the written and practical examinations will each be 75. In order to receive a license, candidates must achieve a scaled score of 75 on each part (written and practical) of the examination.

The level of ability required to pass a test is consistent across test forms and is reflected in the scaled score. For example, if Form A has a raw passing score of 72 and Form B has a raw passing score of 74, both raw passing scores will be converted to a scaled passing score of 75.

Because licensing examinations are known to vary in difficulty from one examination form to another, a fixed passing score or percentage does not represent the minimally acceptable competence for all administrations of an examination. By applying a criterion-referenced scoring methodology, a passing score is lowered for an examination containing a large number of difficult items/questions and raised for an examination containing a small number of difficult items/questions. Candidates who take a more difficult test would be placed at a disadvantage unless a criterion-referenced passing score is established. Thus, the passing score provides safeguards to both the candidate and the consumer.