

Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment

Information derived in part from *NRS Implementation Guidelines*
< <http://www.nrsweb.org/docs/ImplementationGuidelines.pdf>> and
State Assessment Policy Guidelines

<http://www.nrsweb.org/docs/Assessment%20policy%20guidance%20revised%20final%20May%202006a.doc>

1. Who needs to be assessed?

All students in the state adult education program will be assessed with state designated assessments. All students that will be included in the state's NRS data submission must be tested. Exceptions may be made for students who are unable to understand or respond to the test due to low literacy or English proficiency or due to disability. However, programs must provide some alternative assessment for such students.

2. How is educational gain measured?

The NRS approach to measuring educational gain is to define a set of *educational functioning levels* at which students are initially placed based on their abilities to perform literacy-related tasks in specific content areas. After a set time period or number of instructional hours set by the State, students are again assessed to determine their skill levels. If their skills have improved sufficiently to be placed one or more levels higher, an "advance" is recorded for that student.

3. What are the educational functioning levels?

The NRS divides educational functioning into six levels for both ABE and ESL. The levels for ABE are beginning literacy, beginning basic education, low and high intermediate basic education, and low and high adult secondary education. Each ABE level has a description of basic reading, writing, numeracy, and functional and workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The six ESL levels are beginning literacy, low beginning ESL, high beginning ESL, low and high intermediate ESL, and advanced ESL. The ESL levels describe speaking and listening skills and basic reading, writing, and functional workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The skill descriptors illustrate the types of skills students functioning at that level are likely to have. The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at that level but provide examples to guide assessment and instruction. For a copy of the educational functioning levels, click [here](#).

4. When should students be pre-tested?

Programs should administer the initial assessment to students at a uniform time shortly after enrollment. This time should be set by State policy and apply to all students to improve test comparability among students. If available, programs should administer a locator test for guidance on the appropriate pretest to use.

5. How is the entry EFL determined?

To assist in placement decisions, test benchmarks are provided for each level. You can download the test benchmarks by clicking [here](#).

Using the results of the initial pre-test, programs should place students at the appropriate NRS educational functioning level. Not all of the skill areas described in the level descriptors needs to be used to place students, but the skills used should be the areas **most relevant to the students' needs and the program's curriculum**. If multiple skill areas are assessed and the student has differing abilities in each area, however, **NRS policy requires that the program place the student according to the lowest skill area**.

6. When should students be post-tested?

Just as programs should administer the initial assessment to students at a uniform time, the State also should establish a time for post-testing. This time may be after a set number of instructional hours or months of instruction and should be long enough after the pretest to allow the test to measure gains. As noted earlier, local programs must conduct posttests with the parallel form of the same assessment used to place the student. Click [here](#) for a copy of test publisher's guidelines for post-testing.

7. What assessment form should be used for post-testing?

Assessments designed for multiple administrations on the same students, such as for pre- and post-testing, have different but equivalent versions or forms. Pre- and post-testing must use **different** forms. In addition, some tests, such as TABE, have different forms for student proficiency levels. When using such a test, programs must follow the test publisher's guidelines in selecting the correct test form for each student.

8. How is level gain or the exit EFL determined?

Educational gain is determined by comparing the student's initial educational functioning level with the educational functioning level measured by the post-test. Students **must** be post-tested in the same content area that was used to determine their entry EFL. For example, if math was their lowest sub-test score upon entry (and therefore used to determine the entry EFL), the math post-test score **must** be used to determine educational gain.

It is important to note that *if a student is not post-tested, then no advancement can be determined for that student*. The student must remain in the same level as initially placed for NRS reporting.

9. Are standardized assessments interchangeable?

The assessment scores of one standardized instrument are not comparable to those of another. In assessing student educational gains within a program year, switching from one instrument for pre-assessment to another for interim or post-assessment is **NOT ALLOWED**. For example, programs may not use TABE for the pre-assessment and CASAS for the post-assessment.

10. How do I assess distance education students?

Students in distance education should be post-tested after the same amount of instructional time as other students, according to the state's approved NRS assessment policy. States that choose to develop proxy contact hours using one of the approved models will use the proxy contact hours to measure the posttest time for distance education students. For example, if the state's assessment policy requires post-testing after 80 contact hours, programs must post-test distance education students after 80 proxy contact hours, as determined by the state model.

States that choose not to collect and report proxy contact hours must develop procedures for determining the appropriate time for post-testing students in distance education and may use one of the proxy contact hour models or another appropriate method, as long as the post-testing time is after the same amount of instructional time as other students. The state will describe the methodology it employed for determining posttest time and procedures for post-testing distance education students in its state assessment policy.

Programs must administer all pre- and post- assessments used to measure educational gain of distance education students for NRS reporting in person, at a proctored program site within the state that meets NRS assessment policy. Assessments not conducted through face-to-face interaction with a trained test administrator in a secure setting are not allowed for NRS reporting.