

2012

# Maine Department of Education, Adult Education Intake and Assessment Guidelines



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# ***Introduction***

This document provides Maine’s guidelines for carrying out the student intake process and for implementing a comprehensive state and local assessment policy using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) for Adult Basic Education (ABE), English Language Learners (ELL) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE/GED programs, including workforce and family literacy programs). This document also identifies key assessment policies that comply with Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and federal accountability requirements. The information that MDOE collects will help educators inform instruction, monitor progress, and demonstrate program performance.

These policy guidelines also include staff training and test security requirements for all staff that administer CASAS assessments and use the results from these assessments. *Training is essential for quality administration of the assessments. CASAS assessments cannot be administered by agencies that have not had a staff member attend training.*

# ***Intake and Goal Setting***

It is the state's requirement that programs will have an established student centered intake and goal-setting process aligned with the state's adult education standards and performance indicators.

Programs are required to use the MDOE approved Intake form. This form collects the data required by MDOE. Each program must have an intake process developed and in writing that identifies how the required form will be filled out, student's long term and short term goals will be established and when assessment will occur.

Program standards address setting of short-term goals for instruction and should be developed cooperatively with the teacher and learner. In setting these goals, it is important that a means of assessing the goal is identified to assure that the learner understands the target. Instructional goals should be re-evaluated on an on-going basis as the learner progresses. These goals should be on file with the instructors and adjusted as needed, students should be tracking their goals. This can be in form of a student portfolio.

Long term goals should be set as part of the Intake process. Long term goals should be based on the students identified post-secondary, career or life goals. **For example: get a HS credential and get a job, or go to college, get training to get a better job.** These goals should be recorded on the intake form and in the data base system. These goals should be monitored and modified and narrowed as the student becomes more aware of what their life goals are. For instance originally a goal might be to go to college, but then the student realizes s/he wants to be an accountant. The long term goals should be adjusted accordingly. Do not change original goal just add date and the modifications as the student zeros in on what they want to accomplish.

# ***Overview of the Purpose and Use of Assessment***

A learner is assessed at critical times during the educational process to:

- Help the learner understand their strengths and deficiencies and explore the available education options;
- Determine the appropriate program and instructional level for placement;
- Establish the learner's baseline skill level at the start of class;
- Identify learner's strengths and gaps so as to inform instruction;
- Monitor student learning in class and target instruction based on the learner's evolving need;
- Monitor skill gain after a period of instruction;
- Examine classroom and program performance for planning and improvement purposes;
- Promote program successes in the community;
- Evaluate the performance of programs across the state;
- Report data for state and federal accountability.

## **Use of Formal Assessments**

The MDOE requires local adult education agencies to assess all non-enrichment students using CASAS assessments. These tests are administered in a standardized fashion, and assessment results provide the basis for state and federal accountability reporting. See Appendix A for validity and reliability of CASAS assessments.

## **Use of Informal Assessments**

The MDOE encourages local adult education agencies to use a variety of informal assessments to assist in informing instruction. The use of teacher-made tests, unit tests, portfolios, applied performance assessments, and learner observations are encouraged to monitor learning and to inform instruction on a regular, ongoing basis.

# ***Introduction to the CASAS***

Programs funded by the Maine Department of Education are required to utilize standardized assessments developed by CASAS and encouraged to supplement their use with informal assessments. The Department prescribes the use of CASAS because:

- It is a comprehensive system that connects curriculum, assessment, and instruction – it is much more than a test and the results from assessment directly inform instruction;
- The CASAS curriculum framework is based on competencies and content standards that youth and adults need to function effectively in society;
- CASAS assessments measure an individual's ability to apply basic literacy, numeracy, and communication skills to perform the competencies – an overall improvement in literacy ability and not just gain within one facet of a basic skill is expected;
- CASAS assessments yield valid and reliable results and are approved for reporting progress through the National Reporting System (NRS) educational functioning levels (Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 2005);
- It offers selected response, constructed response, and performance-based assessment options for native and non-native speakers in modalities including reading, math, listening, writing, and speaking;
- It serves as the common assessment framework for providers funded through the adult education and the workforce-development systems;
- CASAS' consortium approach offers training and support to member states, and provides practitioners with opportunities for involvement in the test development process.

## **Training Requirements for Administering CASAS Assessments**

Training in CASAS assessment is required to ensure accurate use of tests, appropriate interpretation of learner results, and to maintain the integrity and quality of the assessment process. CASAS requires that minimally one person from each agency using the CASAS system successfully complete CASAS Implementation training. MDOE requires this initial training must be in-person with a state trainer. Online training can be used as a supplement but cannot replace the face-to-face training. Once trained, this individual can train others within his or her respective agency but may not train outside that agency.

All local agencies funded by the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) are required to comply with a CASAS recertification process to ensure that local personnel are current relative to assessment and product availability and are familiar with MDOE policy, guidelines, procedures, and accountability issues. **At a minimum, designated representatives from local programs must attend refresher training on CASAS every three years.** This can be done through either face-to-face or online training.

Separate CASAS Implementation trainings have been developed for ABE/ASE, ESL, and Employability Skills. These trainings focus on teaching participants to administer, score, and interpret CASAS reading and math assessments. Implementation trainings

also address how to use the CASAS competency system as well as how to use CASAS resources, such as Quick Search, to facilitate instruction.

The Maine Department of Education requires all local agencies to comply with the CASAS training policy presented above. For more information on the next training, please contact the state office at 207-624-6752.

**Purchasing Procedures for Each Assessment:** The Maine Department of Education requires programs to order CASAS assessments authorized for use in Maine directly from CASAS. The Maine Department of Education provides CASAS with a list of approved assessments to ensure that local adult education programs order appropriate materials.

## **Test Security Agreements**

The Maine Department of Education requires that all programs it funds sign an annual test security agreement. This agreement includes the following stipulations:

- The local adult education program director assumes responsibility for safeguarding all CASAS-developed assessment materials, including test administration manuals, and answer sheets (which contain marks or responses) and for the proper administration of CASAS assessments;
- All CASAS materials should be stored in a locked, preferably fireproof, file cabinet accessible to the program director or the director's designee(s);
- Staff who administer assessments should return all materials immediately after use to the program director or the director's designee(s);
- All answer sheets and writing samples are treated as confidential until destroyed;
- No duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form is permitted for any reason;
- Inventory information concerning CASAS materials will be supplied to the Maine Department of Education when requested;
- Defaced materials may not be destroyed unless authorized by the Maine Department of Education;
- Agencies may not use displays, questions, or answers that appear on any CASAS test to create materials designed to teach or prepare learners to answer CASAS test items. Instead, programs should use instructional resources provided by CASAS, such as Quick Search, sample test items and other support materials, to link curriculum, assessment and instruction.

## Assessments for Different Types of Learners

The Maine Department of Education requires agencies to select the test series based on a learner’s goals and the instructional focus of the program (general life and work skills, employability, and workplace).

**Table 1**

### CASAS Series Approved for Use by Maine DOE

	Employability Competency System	Life and Work	Life Skills	
<b>What basic skills are assessed in each series?</b>				
Reading	✓	✓	✓	<i>Standardized Multiple Choice</i>
Math	✓		✓	
Listening		✓		
<b>Which programs use what series?</b>				
ESL		✓		
ABE	✓	✓	✓	
ASE	✓	✓	✓	

## The Appraisal

In order to assess the student at an appropriate level, MDOE requires the appraisal be used to determine the pre-test to be administered. The Maine Department of Education requires local adult education agencies to use one of the following appraisals in the skill areas indicated in Table 2A and Table 2B or, if using the etest, the locator is required in lieu of an appraisal.

**Table 2A**

### **CASAS Appraisal Tests for ESL**

	<b>Form 20 or 80</b>
Reading	✓
Listening	✓

**Table 2B**

### **CASAS Appraisal Tests for ABE/ASE**

<b>Skills Areas</b>	<b>Employability Form 130</b>
Reading	✓
Math	✓

If it is determined that a student is unable to comprehend the appraisal, they should be given the CASAS Beginning Literacy assessment Form 27 or 28. This will count as both their appraisal and pre-test.

If using the computerized CASAS etest, the locator is required in lieu of an appraisal. The locator seamlessly moves an examinee into the correct pre-test. It provides immediate results and selects the next test automatically.

Appraisals may not be used as a pretest or to measure learner progress. Each CASAS test administration manual includes specific recommendations about which level of pretest to administer, based on the appraisal test score (see Suggested Next Test Charts). CASAS provides appraisals for reading, math, listening comprehension, writing, and speaking.

# ***Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities or Other Special Needs***

Accommodations in testing alter the conditions for administering a test or change the nature of an assessment instrument, allowing test takers with disabilities to demonstrate their skills and abilities more accurately. Proper accommodations meet the needs of examinees without changing what a test is intended to measure.

## **Local Adult Education Agencies**

Local agencies are responsible for providing fully accessible services and for ensuring that these services meet reasonable criteria. Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after diagnosis. The need to use an accommodation should be documented in official learner records, such as the Individual Program Education Plan (IPEP) or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the learner's ability to demonstrate performance on the test. The information can come from a doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, and other clinical records. Agencies can often contact the local division of vocational rehabilitation or a secondary school to request documentation of a disability.

## **Accommodations in Test Administration Procedures**

Local test administrators may provide or allow some accommodations in test administration procedures or environment for documented disabilities without contacting CASAS. Examples include accommodations in test time, giving supervised breaks, or providing a sign language interpreter for test administration directions only. It is not an appropriate accommodation in test administration procedures to read a CASAS reading test to a learner with low literacy skills or blindness. CASAS uses the same accommodations guidelines as the GED.

## **Use of Appropriate CASAS Test Forms**

CASAS test forms that are appropriate for learners with a disability include computer-based tests and large-print tests, such as the Employability Competency System (ECS) and Life and Work reading pre- and post-tests, and tests with enhanced print such as the Life Skills Beginning Literacy Reading Assessment. CASAS Functional Auditory and Braille tests in Levels A and B to measure basic literacy skills for learners who are blind or have a visual impairment are available.

The paper *Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using CASAS Assessment for Learners with Disabilities* provides more detailed information on providing accommodations. This document is available at [www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org).

# ***General Assessment Requirements***

## **Learners to be assessed**

**All learners, including distance learners (see Appendix D for definition of a distance learner),** enrolled in an academic program must be assessed using CASAS standardized assessments presented in Table 3. The only exception to this *may be* Maine College Transition (MCT) students. If an ACCUPLACER score determines a MCT student does not need remediation, they do not need to take a CASAS assessment. However, if the score shows the student needs remediation in math/reading or both, a CASAS assessment must be given in the area remediation is needed. It is strongly recommended that certificate, adult transition and workforce training students be assessed to ensure they are receiving any additional adult education services needed to meet their goals (see learner definitions in Appendix D) Students who are under 16 or a credit recovery student do not qualify for adult education services and therefore do not need to be assessed.

Programs must pre-and post-test at least 60% of their enrolled students each fiscal year. Programs will need to consider past performance in this area and develop an assessment process to address this requirement.

## **Assessments**

All assessments listed in Table 3 CASAS Series and in documentation related to Computer Based Assessments are approved for use and meet NRS requirements. If using the computerized CASAS etest, the locator is required in lieu of an appraisal. The locator seamlessly moves an examinee into the correct pre-test. It provides immediate results and selects the next test automatically.

## **Pre-Post Test Administration**

Following appraisal administration, learners should take a pretest as soon as possible upon entry into the program, within the first 12 contact hours, but before the occurrence of any substantial instructional intervention. For Distance Learners, direct contact hours to meet the teacher and staff, to verify identity and for orientation, goal setting and assessment are preferred. However, these twelve hours can also be a combination of actual contact (such as in-person classroom or one-on-one or small group instruction) and contact through telephone, video, teleconference or online communication, as long as these communications have an instructional purpose. These twelve hours must be verifiable and local programs must ensure they have the proper documentation of these twelve hours on file and must enter them into MaineSTARS.

Learners should be assessed in the areas that are the focus of instruction using the appropriate CASAS standardized test in reading, math, or listening comprehension. Students may be assessed in both reading and math, but it is only necessary to appraise and assess in their area of study.

Agencies should administer post-tests, using an alternate test form, after 70-100 hours of instruction or at the end of an educational term, whichever comes first. Students in distance education should be post-tested after the same amount of instructional time as other students. The instructional time will be determined based on proxy contact hours. Depending upon the curriculum, proxy contact hours may follow a Clock Time Model, Teacher-Judgment Model, or Learner Master Model. (See Appendix E)

When post-testing, stay within the same series (Life and Work or Employability Competency System) and only post-test at the same instructional level or no more than one instructional level higher than the pre-test (i.e. Life and Work level A pre-test must be followed by Life Work Level A post-test **or** by a Life and Work Level B post-test). Programs should follow the **Suggested Next Test** protocol.

Programs may assess individual learners who indicate they are leaving the program before the scheduled post-test time to maximize collection of pre and post test data. However, testing should not occur before at least 40 hours of instruction and then only in extenuating circumstances i.e. for very high-intensity programs (meeting 15 hours/week or more) or in cases of documented exceptional student progress or for Distance Learning students, upon completion of the defined curriculum.

Students who are post-tested between 5/15 and 6/30 of the current fiscal year may have their assessments used as pre-tests for the next fiscal year if the student returns to the program by October 1<sup>st</sup> of that fiscal year. **Example:** A student who is assessed on 5/18/10 and leaves the program to work during the summer, returning September 15, 2010 does not need to be reassessed in September.

## **Rationale for Use of the Pre and Post Tests**

Longitudinal data shows that students placed in an instructional level above or below their ability level leads to lack of engagement and retention. Learners who take an inappropriate level pretest may “top out” or score below the accurate range of the test level, and agencies will not have accurate baseline pretest information to inform instruction and monitor progress. Learners who have low skill levels and identify secondary diploma or GED as a goal will not achieve their goal within a reasonable timeframe and may become discouraged. Establishing short-term goals in addition to long-term goals enables the learner to document success leading to the long-term goal.

Federal reporting is based on learning gains and achievement of learner goals within a program year, although some longer-term learner goals are not reported until the learner exits the program. Factors that affect learning gains include intensity and duration of instruction, motivation of learners, competence of instruction, the link between learner goals and instruction, and other instructional factors.

“Stop outs” who return within 3 months of their most recent assessment do not need to be reassessed. However, any student who has been “stopped out” for more than 3 months needs to be reassessed. The only exception to this is the person who stopped out over the summer or the program was closed during the summer. The 3 month rule does not apply to students who have tested after 5/15 of the prior fiscal year when they come back in September.

Program personnel may wish to retest “stop outs” or students returning the following semester or reporting period if they have reason to believe that during the learner’s absence or over the summer recess a significant learning intervention occurred that may invalidate the learner’s previous assessment results. In such circumstances, retesting is always an option.

### **Required Pre-/Post-Match Percentages**

The Maine Department of Education requires that local adult education providers have a pre-post- match of no less than 60 percent each program year.

# ***Guidelines for Each CASAS Assessment***

## **Test Administration Manuals**

The Maine Department of Education requires that local adult education programs follow the test administration guidelines in each Test Administration Manual (TAM) published by CASAS for each test series used. All local adult education agencies must maintain copies of TAMs onsite for all assessments used. Test administration manuals provide quality control guidelines to ensure proper test use, administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. These manuals typically contain information about the following:

- The CASAS Assessment System
- Overview of CASAS Progress Testing
- Description of Tests
- Determining Pre- and Post-Test Level
- Test Security (See Section 3.F below)
- Instructions for Administering Tests
- Scoring
- Data Collection
- Interpretation of Results
- Curriculum Planning, Instruction, and Assessment
- Resources
- Testing Accommodations
- Skill Level Descriptors
- Suggested Next Test Charts
- Answer Keys and Score Conversion Charts (for converting raw scores to scale scores)
- Learner Profile Sheets
- Learner Performance by Competency
- Class Profile by Competency

Testing for all students should take place in a quiet, non-threatening, proctored environment. The area should have appropriate lighting and be free of distractions, preferably in a place that is separate from instruction. For Distance Learning students, it is permissible to arrange for remote testing locations that are more convenient as long as all other state requirements concerning assessment are met.

## **Information Included for Each Assessment**

**Table 3 A-C** CASAS Series approved for use by MDOE Funded programs provides information about which assessments are appropriate for which learner populations. Tables 3A through 3C — CASAS Test Forms by Skill Areas, Levels, and Series — are presented below. At each level multiple forms are listed; these are alternate forms for post-testing. In some instances an “X” follows a test form number (e.g., 81RX). These tests are extended range tests and may be used as an additional post-test within that

specified level (for example, 81 and 81RX are alternative forms for 81 all at level A). This table also lists the appropriate appraisal test(s) to accompany different CASAS test series.

Tables 3A -3C: CASAS Test Forms by Skill Areas, Levels, and Series

**Table 3A**

**Reading (R) (ABE/ABE/ESL)**

<i>Level</i>	<b>Life &amp; Work Series</b>	<b>ECS Series</b>	
Beg. Literacy	27 28	27 28	
A	81 82	11 12	
AX	81 X 82 X		
B	83 84	13 14 114	
BX			
C	85, 86* 185 186	15 16 116	<b>Secondary Assessment Series</b>
D	187 188	17 18	513 514

Appraisal	20, 80,	130
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\*workplace focused

**Table 3B**

**Math (M) (ABE/ASE)**

<i>Level</i>	<b>Life Skills Series</b>	<b>ECS Series</b>	<b>Secondary Assessment</b>
A	31 32	11 12	
B	33 34	13 14, 114	
C	35 36	15 16, 116	
D	37 38	17 18	505 506

Appraisal		130	
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**Table 3C**

**Listening (L) (ESL)**

<i>Level</i>	<i>Life and Work Series</i>
A	81 82
B	83 84
C	85 86
Appraisal	80

**Guidelines for Raw Score Conversion to Scale Scores and Using Scale Scores to Place Learners into NRS Levels**

Each CASAS Test Administration Manual (TAM) provides charts and guidelines for converting raw scores to scale scores. MDOE requires adult education agencies to use these as reference points. The CASAS scale has been subdivided into ranges that correspond to the NRS levels. When setting the EFL for students, NRS guidelines prescribe that learners whose pretests place them in different instructional categories (for example, reading and math) be placed in the area with the lower score, if the learner is to receive instruction in the skill related to the lower instructional level. **All students should be assigned an EFL based on the pre-test not the appraisal.**

**Table 4A**

**Educational Functioning Levels**

**English as a Second Language**

CASAS Scale	ESL Level	ESL Name	ABE Comparison
180 and below	1	Beginning ESL Literacy	1 Beginning ABE Literacy
181-190	2	Beginning ESL	
191-200	3	Low Intermediate ESL	
201-210	4	High Intermediate ESL	Beginning Basic Education
211-220	5	Low Advanced ESL	Low Intermediate Basic Education
221-235	6	High Advanced ESL	High Intermediate Basic Education

If an ESL student scores above 235 they are no longer an ESL student they are an ASE student.

**Table 4B****Adult Basic Education**

CASAS Scale	ABE Level	ABE Name
200 and below	1	Beginning Literacy
201-210	2	Beginning Basic Education
211-220	3	Low Intermediate Basic Education
221-235	4	High Intermediate Basic Education
236-245	5	Low Adult Secondary Education
246 or higher	6	High Adult Secondary Education

**Appendix B has the descriptors for each of these Educational Functioning Levels**

# ***Quality Control Procedures***

## **Entry of Assessment and Attendance Data**

The Maine Department of Education requires data be entered into MaineStars the Maine Adult Education data system at least monthly. For recording attendance of distance learners, refer to the Distance Learning Policy.

## **Quality Control Procedures**

The Maine Department of Education has quality control procedures in place to ensure that appropriate assessment procedures have been followed. These include data integrity checks and system logic to prevent inappropriate assessments being counted, resulting in incorrect scale score gains.

# ***Appendices***

# **Appendix A**

## **State intake form**

# Student Intake

The student Intake form is to be completed by staff through an interview with the prospective student.



Academic Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Local Program \_\_\_\_\_ Intake Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Intake Done by: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Previous Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Returning Student:  Y  N  
 SSN: \_\_\_\_\_ SSN is required for AEFLA, CT & WR students. Gender:  M  F  
 Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity:  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Is student Hispanic or Latino  Y  N  
 Town/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ If No, what is the student's race?  
 Telephone(s): (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_ (Other) \_\_\_\_\_ (choose one or more of the following)  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  American Indian or Alaskan Native  
 \_\_\_\_\_  Asian  
 \_\_\_\_\_  Black or African American  
 \_\_\_\_\_  Native Hawaiian or OPI  
 \_\_\_\_\_  White

EFL Level at Entry: \_\_\_\_\_ DOE Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Last School Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
 1  AEFLA (select one: \_\_ABE \_\_ASE \_\_ELL) Last Grade Completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 Select all that apply from the following: Last Grade Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3  College Transitions  
 4  Certificate Program Last Grade Attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
 5  Credit Recovery Scholastic Credentials:  HS Diploma  GED  
 6  EL Civics Date Achieved: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family Literacy  
 Workforce Training  
 WorkReady  
 Enrichment  
 Other

<b>Permissions</b> Permission to release SSN: <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N SSN Release Signature Date: _____ Permission to send for records: <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N Permission to release information? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	<b>Permanent Contact Information</b> Name: _____ Telephone: _____ Relationship: _____
--	--

**Health**  
 How is your hearing? \_\_\_\_\_ Is there anything you are aware of about yourself that it would be helpful for us to know to best serve you?  
 How is your vision? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you wear glasses?  Y  N

**Demographics**

**Participant Status at Intake**

Must select ONE employment item:

- Employed \_\_\_Part-time \_\_\_ Full-time
- Unemployed (looking for work)
- Not in Labor Force (not looking for work)
  
- On Public Assistance
- Living in Rural Areas\*
- In a Family Literacy Program
- In a Workplace Literacy Program
- Low Income
- Single Parent
- In a Program for the Homeless
- In a Correctional Facility
- In Other Institutional Settings
- In a Community Correctional Program
- Displaced Homemaker
- Dislocated Worker

\*Rural Residency Definition: Learner resides in rural area; that is, a place with population of less than 2,500 that is not near any metropolitan area with a population greater than 50,000, or in a city with adjacent areas of high density.

**Goals and Outcomes**

**Core Goals**

- Improve Basic Skills
- Obtain Diploma or GED
- Enter Post-Secondary or Training
- Enter Employment
- Retain/Improve Employment

**Achievable This Year**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

**Other Goals**

- Receive U.S. Citizenship
- Vote or Register to Vote
- Remove From Public Assistance

- 
- 
- 

**Family Literacy Goals**

- Increase Involvement in Child's Education
- Increase Involvement in Child's Literacy Experience

- 
- 

Long Term Goals:

**Assessments**

Date	Test Name	Area	Level	Form	Score	Grade Eq.	EFL Level	Used to Set EFL
								<input type="checkbox"/>
								<input type="checkbox"/>
								<input type="checkbox"/>
								<input type="checkbox"/>

**Supplemental Information**

**Additional Demographic Qualifiers**

- Y N Driver's License?
- Y N Car or reliable transportation?
- Y N U.S. Citizen?
- Y N Registered to vote?

**Are you involved in any of the following public assistance programs?**

- None
- Unemployment
- Food Stamps
- MaineCare
- TANF
- Migrant Worker
- Social Security
- Other

**How did you learn about this program?**

- Relative, friend, acquaintance
- Previously attended
- Advertisement
- Educational or other institution
- Career or employment center
- Work place
- Military recruiter
- Court of welfare mandate
- Other

**Native Language**

- English
- Chinese
- German
- Somali
- Other non-English
- Cambodian
- French
- Spanish
- Thai

Comments:

# **Appendix B**

## **CASAS Validity and Reliability**

## Validity

*The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999) states that validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores. There are various evidences of validity, with construct validity encompassing the overriding issue of proper use and construction of test items, and with content-related and criterion-related validity as subcomponents. Item content evidence is a measure of the extent to which test items measure what they are intended to measure. For a detailed discussion of CASAS content validity evidence, see the *CASAS Technical Manual*.

Criterion-related validity, sometimes referred to as predictive validity, assesses the ability or effectiveness of an instrument in predicting something it should theoretically be able to predict. CASAS created ABE Skill Level Descriptors (reading, math, and writing skills) to show a continuum of skills from beginning ABE through advanced adult secondary levels; CASAS also created ESL Skill Level Descriptors (listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills) for ESL from beginning literacy/pre-beginning ESL through proficient skills. Skill Level Descriptors provide general content information on how an adult learner's numerical scale score on a CASAS test in a specific skill area corresponds to the job-related and life skills tasks a person can generally accomplish.

Results from most CASAS tests are reported on a common numerical scale. This scale has been used successfully with more than three million adult and youth learners. The CASAS scale is divided into five broad levels: A (beginning literacy) to E (advanced secondary), each encompassing a range of scores. Levels A and B have been further subdivided to guide instructional placement and to monitor learner progress. Each level is defined by a CASAS scale score range with corresponding competency descriptors of performance in employment and adult life skills contexts.

The CASAS Skill Level Descriptors have been validated by expert teachers, members of the CASAS National Consortium, as well as through external validation studies. See the ***CASAS Technical Manual***, pages 57–70. During the late 1990s staff from the Center for Applied Linguistics and CASAS worked together to review and update the correlation between Student Performance Levels (SPLs) and CASAS levels to ensure that the NRS Skill Level Descriptors used for reporting learner gains were consistent with research already done in the field. Large-scale CASAS implementing states such as California, Connecticut, and Oregon participated in a national-level NRS advisory committee and provided guidance in the initial development and implementation of the NRS.

Once the NRS educational functioning levels were finalized, CASAS conducted a review and confirmed that the CASAS Skill Level Descriptors align with the skill levels of the NRS. The relationship among CASAS levels and score ranges and NRS Performance Levels is presented in Table 1 -. This table also shows how CASAS, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), SPLs, and years of schooling completed are related:

## Reliability

The *CASAS Technical Manual* provides data on the reliability of the item bank (Chapter 3) and specific test series (Chapters 4 and 5). The test administration manuals for each test series also contain information about reliability.

Reliability (test accuracy) has two major subcomponents — consistency and stability. For each scale score attained on a CASAS test, a standard error of measurement (SEM) is given. In addition to reporting a scale score for raw scores attained on a test, CASAS established a range of accuracy for each test form. For every score in the accurate range, a SEM for each scale score is given. For scale scores exceeding the accurate range, CASAS provides a usable, conservative scale score estimate. However, administrators are encouraged to administer a test at the next more difficult test level to obtain a more accurate scale score estimate. CASAS does not report scale scores for raw scores falling below the accurate range. In addition to the SEMs, the Test Information Function is displayed for each of the test forms in Chapters 4 and 5 of the *CASAS Technical Manual*.

CASAS uses the most currently researched and recommended methodology in educational measurement practice — Item Response Theory (IRT) — to establish indexes of item bank, test, and test score reliability. For indexes of consistency, CASAS tests for the unidimensionality of the item bank ensuring items all measure the same underlying construct. See pages 29 through 50 of the *CASAS Technical Manual* for results of these analyses. Traditional item statistics, including item point biserial correlations and their p-values, are presented for all the test series.

The test for item stability is found under “parameter invariance” (pages 51–52) and “differential item functioning” (pages 52–56). Parameter invariance analyses test whether the item difficulties have changed over time. The 2002 findings show that the item difficulties have maintained their relative difficulties since their original calibrations in the 1980s. Differential item functioning (DIF) tests whether the item difficulties change in the measurement of different kinds of learners, such as learners of different gender and different ethnicity. The findings show that the item difficulties have remained stable regardless of gender or ethnicity.

## Studies Conducted

Three claims of CASAS implementation were evaluated and upheld by the Program Effectiveness Panel, U.S. Department of Education (1993) for evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs. Each claim centered on adult learners in adult and alternative education programs. The degree of program implementation was determined by the adoption of key elements of the CASAS system. These key elements include identifying CASAS Competencies necessary for learners to meet their goals, linking these competencies to instructional materials using the CASAS Instructional Materials Quick Search, and linking these competencies to appropriate CASAS assessment tools. Learners within education programs that adopted the key elements demonstrated:

1. Significant learning gains
2. Increased hours of participation
3. Achievement of higher goal attainment compared to programs that have not adopted the key elements

Numerous studies such as the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (1991) have repeatedly confirmed this claim. In addition, two California studies, an Oregon study as well as a North Carolina study, among others, confirm these three claims (For a detailed literature review, refer to the CASAS Technical Manual.)

Another important study examined the relationship of CASAS to the 2002 version of the GED. This study used data from California, Iowa, Oregon, Kansas, and Hawaii (n = 4801). A clear monotonic increasing relationship was found between CASAS reading scores and GED reading scores and CASAS math scores and GED math scores. Moreover, a similar relationship was found between CASAS reading and overall GED results averaged across the five test content areas. (See the **CASAS Technical Manual**, pages 63–65.)

There have been a number of recent studies conducted across the United States to reaffirm that the content and competencies addressed in the initial development of the item banks are still valid and relevant to the current needs of learners, instructors, administrators, employers, and social service agencies:

- The Iowa Basic Skills Survey (IABSS), 1995
- Validation of Foundation Skills (Indiana Department of Education), 1996
- Targeting Education: The Connecticut Basic Skills Survey, 1997
- CABSS Report: California Adult Basic Skills Survey, 1999

Readers should refer to the *CASAS Technical Manual*, pages 24–26 and Appendix C, pages 213–225 for more detailed information about these validation studies.

For the past two years CASAS has undertaken the development of a content standards framework on behalf of CASAS National Consortium states. The project uses the expertise of adult education professionals across the country to determine the essential content standards in reading and math for ABE and ASE and in reading and listening for ESL. The project identifies the basic skills content standards at each NRS level embedded in CASAS Competencies and links them to appropriate CASAS assessments.

# **Appendix C**

## **Educational Functioning Level Descriptor**