

## **Precision Exams New Hampshire** (<http://www.precisionexams.com/newhampshire/>)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**April 5, 2016**

*Based on the presentation made by Melissa Ritchings and Mindy Ryan at the NHCTA PD held in Laconia, NH, on March 30, 2016*

#### **Q: What is the reason for using Precision Exams?**

A: First, some history. In 2014 the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) released an RFP seeking to contract with a third party vendor to provide online technical skill assessments for our secondary CTE students. Of the proposals submitted, Precision Exams was chosen due to their affordability, expertise, and the wide range of assessments they offer. Precision Exams was founded in 2006 as a spinoff of ProCert Labs, a quality assurance testing company for technical training and certification courseware. Whereas ProCert focused on industry, Precision was founded, in close collaboration with the Utah State Office of Education, specifically to focus on secondary student CTE assessments, and is used by several other states for that purpose, including Utah, Washington, and Indiana.

The need for third party technical skill assessments comes from the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006, commonly known as Perkins IV or just Perkins. One of the requirements for states under the Perkins act is to report student technical skill attainment as determined through technical skill assessments aligned with industry-recognized standards. These may be in the form of licenses, certifications, or third party assessments such as those offered by Precision Exams. Until this contract, New Hampshire's ability to fulfill this requirement was hampered by an inability to gather usable data in all but a few CTE programs, and there was no objective way for the NHDOE to verify that the data being reported for those programs were accurate. The introduction of a third party system that provides objective assessments for multiple programs we could not previously assess helps to defuse these issues.

In addition to providing more objective data for federal reporting, Precision Exams data can be used for in-state, local program improvement efforts.

#### **Q: Will using Precision Exams be required?**

A: Starting with SY 2016-2017, the use of Precision Exams will be required for those programs where the Bureau has identified a Precision Exams assessment that best aligns with the program's competencies. Not every program will have an assessment, and some programs will choose to continue using the assessments they've used in the past, such as ProStart for Culinary programs. But for those programs where a Precision assessment has been identified and no other approved assessment is in use, the Precision Exams assessment will be required.

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#### **Q: What about the assessments the NHDOE has accepted in the past? Are they still accepted?**

A: Yes. We will continue to accept the results of license, certification and assessment exams that we have accepted in the past. These include:

- The ASE Light Maintenance exam for Automotive Maintenance;
- ProStart for Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management;
- The American Welding Society's welding certification;
- Adobe's Final Cut Pro for digital media and other graphic design related programs;
- Firefighter I certification;
- Various computer science related certifications such as CISCO and CompTIA; and
- Project Lead the Way's end of course assessments.

Previously we accepted ServSafe as an approved technical skill assessment for Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management, but this has been phased out.

#### **Q: My program has no technical skill assessment, and nothing offered through Precision Exams. What do I do?**

A: If your program does not currently have an accepted technical skill assessment, or TSA, you are not required to submit technical skill attainment data. It is the expectation of the NHDOE, however, that eventually all programs will have an accepted TSA on which to report.

#### **Q: I use another assessment for my program that isn't in the pre-approved list, and nothing for my program is offered through Precision Exams. What do I do?**

A: You may still use your assessment, but the results of that assessment would not be reported to the NHDOE. If you believe the assessment you currently use is a good judge of student's technical skill attainment, instructions for how to submit that assessment to the Bureau for review are included later in this FAQ.

#### **Q: I use another assessment for my program that isn't in this list, but my program is also covered by Precision Exams. What do I do?**

A: You may still use your assessment, but you will also need to use the Precision Exams assessment for your program. Only the data for the Precision Exams assessment will be used for reporting purposes. If

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you believe the assessment you currently use is a better judge of student's technical skill attainment, please refer to the next question.

**Q: I know of or use another assessment that I think would be an appropriate gauge of technical skill attainment and would be beneficial for my students. What do I do?**

A: Please ask your CTE Director to submit to the Bureau of Career Development the name of the assessment and the rationale for why it would be an appropriate TSA for your program. The Bureau will review these suggestions and determine if the assessments involved meet certain criteria, such as sufficient rigor and usable data. If the assessment meets Bureau guidelines, it will be put on our list of approved TSAs.

**Q: Do I have to test all the students in my program?**

A: No. We only require that program concentrators take part in technical skill assessments. If you wish to test additional students you may do so, but only concentrator data will be reported.

**Q: Can I pre-test my students through Precision Exams?**

A: Yes. Our contract with Precision Exams provides 40,000 test "slots" per school year. On average, New Hampshire has approximately 10,000 CTE students. Using this logic, each CTE student in the state could sit up to four times for an exam through Precision and there would still be slots available.

**Q: Why can't I view the exam ahead of time to see if the content fits my program?**

A: Much like the SAT and other standardized tests, Precision Exams does not disclose its test questions. While the SAT releases previous years' tests for review, the questions included in Precision's exams do not necessarily change from year to year, making it impossible for them to release previous years' exams. Knowledge standards are provided on the Precision Exams site for all exams they offer, and Bureau staff reviewed these standards to identify which exams most closely align with New Hampshire's competency profiles. This alignment will continue over the next year to identify more exams that may be used by our programs. A list of currently aligned exams can be found on the Bureau's section of the NHDOE website.

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If the knowledge standards are not sufficient and you would like to see your program's actual exam, you will need to sign a Nondisclosure Agreement (NDA) with Precision Exams.

#### **Q: Am I allowed to proctor an exam to my own students?**

A: Yes. A teacher may proctor an exam to his or her own students. The proctor must be in the room while that exam is being taken and must move about the room throughout the exam to ensure that no improper testing behavior is taking place.

The Health Science exam hosted by Precision Exams is the only test that *requires* someone other than the teacher proctor the exam. The Health Science exam is produced by the National Consortium of Health Science Education, not Precision Exams itself, and it is the consortium that sets the rules for how their exam must be proctored.

All teachers, proctors, and administrative staff at the center should read and be familiar with [Precision Exams' Proctor Agreement](#), which can be found on the [Precision Exams New Hampshire portal](#) under "Training." This agreement outlines proctor procedures and access rules, including penalties should a user not abide by the requisite safeguards. All users are required to agree to the Proctor Agreement before their registration can be completed.

#### **Q: I have a student who requires a special accommodation when taking a test. What do I do?**

A: Per Precision Exams' Proctor Agreement, "Only students with a declared and properly authorized need in an IEP, IRP, 504, LEP, and ELL document may request special accommodations from Precision Exams." Proctor's should contact the Precision Exams help desk immediately before the exam to set up such accommodations. The help desk can be reached toll free at (800) 470-1215, Monday thru Friday from 7AM – 8PM EST.

#### **Q: If my students do poorly on this exam, what happens?**

A: Nothing. These exams are not being used for anything punitive. They should not affect a student's class grade or GPA, either positively or negatively. Furthermore, a center will not see its funding reduced because of poor student performance on a Precision Exams assessment.

While data pertaining to student performance on these exams will be used for federal reporting purposes, the primary use of such data in-state is for improvement and program quality. If one center's

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students do very well on an exam and another center's students in the same program do very poorly on the same exam, that should generate some questions. If both programs are using the same competencies, why are their students' results so different? Is it because one program has equipment the other doesn't? Is there something one program is doing that the other isn't? Does the exam focus on knowledge that's covered heavily in one center but not so heavily in the other? If so, is that exam a reasonable judge of technical skill attainment for that program statewide? All of these questions can help improve program quality, and also improve assessment quality.

We recognize that Precision Exams is an off the shelf product and won't be a perfect fit everywhere. The Bureau doesn't expect every student to score a 100%, but a great deal of useful information can be gleaned from comparison between programs, and within programs from year to year, to help guide program improvement efforts.

#### **Q: What is the incentive for my students to take part in this assessment and not opt out?**

A: At the moment, the "real world" incentives for taking this assessment are few. Students can receive a certificate indicating they've passed the skill assessment that they can use in college or job applications, but we recognize that may have limited value to your students. The Bureau would welcome suggestions from the field of what real-world incentives might encourage otherwise credulous students to take part in the assessment.