The HiSET® High School Equivalency Test reflects college and career readiness

The HiSET® program from PSI is designed to align with the College- and Career-Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education released by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education in April 2013.

The panel that developed the standards adopted an approach that articulated the anchor standards in terms of a developmental sequence within five grade-level groupings to more closely reflect adult education levels of learning. The HiSET program incorporates these CCR anchor standards in grade grouping E (9–12) into the design specifications for the item pool and the assembled forms.

English-Language Arts (ELA)-Literacy

Table 1 on pages 3–4 provides an illustration of the CCR ELA/Literacy anchor standards (grades 11–12) that the HiSET Language Arts – Reading and Language Arts – Writing assessments measure. Both assessments align to specific standards of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in ELA. In addition, the Reading assessment includes a mix of both literary and informational texts as defined by the CCSS.

Aspects of Reading Comprehension Identified in the CCR Standards for Adult Education

The selection of reading materials and test questions for the HiSET program reflects three central emphases of the CCR Standards in ELA-Reading — **Complexity**, **Evidence** and **Knowledge**.

Complexity. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language

Text complexity is an important aspect of cognition in the assessment of reading. We drew the texts of the HiSET item pool from previously published works of authors recognized for their contributions to adult literature, both fiction and nonfiction. Although this is recognized as a shift in emphasis for adult education, we selected these materials precisely because they present engaging ideas that support comprehension questions with variety in terms of cognitive complexity. In addition, specific questions are targeted at vocabulary acquisition and the use of context to recognize or infer the meaning of complex, academic vocabulary. Informational texts cover topics in the natural and social sciences as well as history and government, so we cover aspects of the CCR Standards related to the processing of complex information in social studies and science.

Consistent with the recommendations of the CCSS, we use three different dimensions to describe the text complexity of the HiSET assessment — qualitative, quantitative and reader/task considerations. **Table 2** on page 5 summarizes the type of information available to help evaluate each dimension. The three dimensions are equally important in assembling a HiSET form, and we use the dimensions to provide a range of text complexity within a form and across forms so that the forms are as comparable as possible.

Testing and content experts review the text-based materials for four aspects of the qualitative dimension — level of meaning or purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity. We assemble each HiSET form to include a balance of these dimensions. For example, a single form would include a range of text types of increasing complexity and sophistication. We evaluate the quantitative dimensions through a combination of text-based indices (e.g., Lexile® Measures and traditional readability indices) and national passage-based statistics that address the relative difficulty of these materials for 11th- and 12th-grade students. In addition, we have reviewed the passages for accessibility, appropriateness of test complexity and appropriateness of topics.

Evidence. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational

A second key shift required by the CCR Standards is the prioritization of textual evidence. In the HiSET Language Arts – Reading test, questions require candidates to use evidence from the text to identify key ideas used to support the central argument or important details used to convey meaning in informational texts. Candidates see questions and answer choices that require them to weigh and consider the relative importance of specific text references in advancing understanding of an author's main idea or in making an inference about an author's implicit meaning. In the Language Arts – Writing test, prompts may require candidates to analyze an issue, state a position and bring specific evidence to bear in support of the stated position.

Knowledge. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

The final shift in the CCR Standards emphasizes literacy across the disciplines of science, social studies and technical subjects. In the HiSET Language Arts – Reading test, informational passages include topics drawn from the natural and social sciences and history. In addition, stimulus material in the Social Studies and Science tests require candidates to process complex information, to evaluate the relevance and validity of evidence presented in actual studies, and to differentiate conclusions and generalizations that evidence supports. Grounding such questions in content from across the disciplines is an important aspect of item development and selection criteria for the assembly of HiSET forms.

Table 1 – College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Adult Education ELA-Literacy – Grades 11–12		HiSET Assessment
CCR Anchor 1 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RI.11-12.1)	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 2 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RST.11-12.2)	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 3 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RI.11-12.3)	Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 4 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RI.11-12.4)	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 5 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RI.11-12.5)	Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 6 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RL.11-12.6)	Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 7 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RI.11-12.7)	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 8 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RI.9-10.8)	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and false reasoning.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 9 (CCSS.ELALiteracy.RL.11-12.9)	Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.	Language Arts – Reading
CCR Anchor 10 (Complexity Shift)	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently.	Language Arts – Reading

Table 1 – Common Core State Standards – English Language Arts Grades 11–12		HiSET Assessment
CCR Anchor 1 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. L.11-12.1)	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 2 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. L.9-10.2)	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 3 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. L.11-12.2)	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 4 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. L.11-12.3)	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 *reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 5 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. L.11-12.4)	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 6 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. L.11-12.6)	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college- and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 1 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. W.11-12.1)	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 2 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. W.11-12.2)	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 3 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. W.11-12.3)	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	Language Arts – Writing
CCR Anchor 4 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. W.11-12.4)	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)	Language Arts – Writing
CCCR Anchor 5 (CCSS.ELALiteracy. W.11-12.5)	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.	Language Arts – Writing

Table 2 – Dimensions of HiSET Text Complexity Table					
Dimension	Considerations for HiSET Forms				
Qualitative dimension		**Reading**	**Language Arts**	**Social Studies**	**Science**
	Levels of Meaning or Purpose	Includes a variety of literary and informational texts from simple meaning to multiple meanings	Includes a variety of literary and informational texts from explicitly stated to implicitly stated		
	Structure	Includes a variety of texts from simple to highly complex	Includes a variety of texts from simple to highly complex	Graphics and figures range from simple to complex	Graphics and figures range from simple to complex
	Language Conventionality and Clarity	Texts rely on a range of language conventionality and clarity from literal to figurative. We balance texts to represent this range within a given form of the HiSET			
	Knowledge Demands	No assumptions about readers' life experiences	No assumptions about readers' life experiences	Background content knowledge assumed	Background content knowledge assumed
Quantitative dimension	Lexile scores for text-based stimuli aligned to the college- and career-readiness ranges established by MetaMetrics® Traditional readability indices for text-based stimuli based on word length, frequency, and complexity Item-level and form-level difficulty indices collected from a nationally representative sample of 11th- and 12th-grade students				
Reader and task considerations	Student difficulty levels collected on nationally representative samples of 11th- and 12th-graders Professional judgments from educators on the appropriateness of the passages and stimuli included in the HiSET forms				

Mathematics

The CCR Mathematics standards reflect an emphasis on core aspects of the mathematics domain. Additionally, the approach stressed a developmental progression of content and skill complexity associated with the use of mathematics and quantitative thinking in vocational applications and adult life.

Table 3 on pages 6–7 indicates the sections of the CCSS Mathematics standards (grades 11–12) that the HiSET Mathematics test measures.

Aspects of Mathematics Identified in the CCR Standards for Adult Education

The selection of major content domains and test questions for the HiSET Mathematics test reflects three central emphases of the CCR Standards in mathematics — **Focus, Coherence** and **Rigor**.

Focus. Focusing strongly where the standards focus

The HiSET mathematics domains focus on core standards of Numbers and Operations on Numbers (Number and Quantity, Functions), Measurement/Geometry, Data Analysis/Probability/Statistics and Algebraic Concepts. Fluency developed in adult education programs that cover foundation skills in mathematics prepares candidates to solve HiSET problems in all domains represented in the assessment as problems are placed in contexts and may be solved with multiple and varied solution strategies.

Coherence. Designing learning around coherent progressions level to level

This shift in the CCR Standards reflects the observation that higher-level standards become extensions of previous learning for adult learners, rather than new concepts or ideas. The HiSET Mathematics assessment presents problems that represent the culmination of conceptual development in learning progressions that begin with foundation skills, numerical operations and patterns of quantitative thinking.

Rigor. Pursuing conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application — all with equal intensity.

The application of mathematical concepts to real-world contexts reflects this shift. Candidates must understand the application setting to solve problems that require more than the simple application of a set of procedures. HiSET questions in mathematics may often be approached from more than one perspective, and solution strategies may involve, for example, both algebraic thinking and numerical understanding of proportional relationships, ratios and even place value.

Table 3 – College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Adult Education Mathematics – Grades 11–12			HiSET Assessment
CCSS.Mathematics – Number and Quantity	**The Real Number System** • Extend the properties of exponents to rational exponents	• Use properties of rational and irrational numbers	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Number and Quantity	**Quantities** • Reason quantitatively and use units to solve problems		Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Number and Quantity	**The Complex Number System** • Perform arithmetic operations with complex numbers	• Represent complex numbers and their operations on the complex plane • Use complex numbers in polynomial identities and equations	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Algebra	**Seeing Structure in Expressions** • Interpret the structure of expressions • Write expressions in equivalent forms to solve problems		Mathematics

Table 3 – College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Adult Education Mathematics – Grades 11–12		HiSET Assessment
CCSS.Mathematics – Algebra	**Arithmetic with Polynomials and Rational Functions** • Perform arithmetic operations on polynomials • Rewrite rational expressions	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Algebra	**Creating Equations** • Create equations that describe numbers or relationships	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Algebra	**Reasoning with Equations and Inequalities** • Understand solving equations as a process of reasoning and explain the reasoning • Solve equations and inequalities in one variable • Solve systems of equations • Represent and solve equations and inequalities graphically	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Functions	**Interpreting Functions** • Understand the concept of a function and use function notation • Interpret functions that arise in applications in terms of the context • Analyze functions using different representations	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Functions	**Building Functions** • Build a function that models a relationship between two quantities	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Functions	**Linear, Quadratic, and Exponential Models** • Construct and compare linear, quadratic, and exponential models and solve problems • Interpret expressions for functions in terms of the situation they model	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Geometry	**Congruence** • Experiment with transformations in the plane	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Geometry	**Similarity, Right Triangles, and Trigonometry** • Prove theorems involving similarity	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Geometry	**Geometric Measurement and Dimension** • Explain volume formulas and use them to solve problems	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Geometry	**Modeling with Geometry** • Apply geometric concepts in modeling situations	Mathematics
CCSS.Mathematics – Statistics and Probability	**Interpreting Categorical and Quantitative Data** • Summarize, represent, and interpret data on a single count or measurement variable • Summarize, represent, and interpret data on two categorical and quantitative variables • Interpret linear models	Mathematics Science Social Studies

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