

Assessment 1: Praxis II Content Knowledge Scores

1. Assessment Description

Praxis II English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content Knowledge (0041) is a 120-question multiple choice test administered in two hours. This test is not a requirement for program completion but is a New Hampshire state certification requirement.

2. Alignment of Assessment with NCTE Standards

The following information on the alignment of Praxis II 0041 with NCTE standards is taken from the ETS website (www.ets.org/Praxis). The specific standards met by each of their topics have been added in bold.

I. Reading and Understanding Text (Focus on Standard 3.5)

- Paraphrasing, comparing, and interpreting (literally and inferentially) various types of texts, including fiction, poetry, essays, and other nonfiction (**Standard 3.3.3**)
- Identifying and interpreting figurative language and other literary elements, e.g., metaphor, simile, voice, point of view, tone, style, setting, diction, mood, allusions, irony, clichés, analogy, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, and foreshadowing (**Standard 3.5.4**)
- Identifying patterns, structures, and characteristics of literary forms and genres, e.g., elements of fiction and features of different poetic and prose forms and understanding how these patterns, structures, and characteristics may influence the meaning and effect of a work (**Standard 3.5.2**)
- Identifying major works and authors of American, British, and World literature from various cultures, genres, and periods (**Standard 3.5.1**), including literature for young adults (**Standard 3.5.3**)
- Situating and interpreting texts within historical/cultural contexts (**Standard 3.5.2**)
- Recognizing and identifying various instructional approaches to and elements of teaching reading and textual interpretation, e.g., cueing systems, activating prior knowledge, constructing meaning through context, and metacognitive strategies (**Standard 3.3**)

II. Language and Linguistics (Focus on Standard 3.1)

- Understanding the principles of language acquisition and development, including social, cultural, and historical influences and the role and nature of dialects (**Standards 3.1.1, 3, 4, 5**)
- Understanding elements of the history and development of the English language and American English, including linguistic change, etymology, and processes of word formation (**Standards 3.1.5, 7**)
- Understanding and applying the elements of traditional grammar, e.g., syntax, sentence types, sentence structure, parts of speech, modifiers, sentence combining, phrases and clauses, capitalization, and punctuation (**Standards 3.1.6, 7**)
- Understanding the elements of semantics, including ambiguity, euphemism, doublespeak, connotation, and jargon and how these elements affect meaning (**Standard 3.1.6**)

III. Composition and Rhetoric (Focus on Standards 3.2 and 3.4)

- Understanding and applying elements of teaching writing, including
 1. Individual and collaborative approaches to teaching writing, e.g., stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, evaluating) and how those stages work recursively (**Standards 3.2.3 and 3.4.1-2**)
 2. Tools and response strategies for assessing student writing, e.g., peer review, portfolios, holistic scoring, scoring rubrics, self-assessment, and conferencing (**Standard 3.2.5**)
 3. Common research and documentation techniques, e.g., gathering and evaluating data, using electronic and print media, and MLA and APA citations
- Understanding and evaluating rhetorical features in writing, including
 1. Purposes for writing and speaking and the role of the audience within varying **contexts** (**Standards 3.2.4 and 3.4.2**)
 2. Organization in a piece of writing and the creation and preservation of coherence (**Standard 3.4.1**)
 3. Strategies for the organization, development, and presentation of print, electronic, and visual media (**Standard 3.2.1-5**)
 4. Discourse aims, e.g., creative, expository, persuasive (**Standard 3.4.2**)
 5. Methods of argument and types of appeals, e.g., argumentative strategies, analogy, extended metaphor, allusion (**Standard 3.4.2**)
 6. Style, tone, voice, and point of view as part of rhetorical strategy (**Standard 3.4**)
 7. Recognition of bias, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and identifying stereotypes, inferences, and assumption (**Standard 3.2.5**)

3. Data Findings

Over the last three years, we have achieved an average 89% pass rate for the Content Knowledge test, thus meeting NCATE's pass rate requirement. (Our most recent year of data includes only 8 completers and so the qualifying pass rate is based on the average of three years of data.)

The high score in 2002-03 was not surprising. That particular group of candidates was, intellectually, very strong. The President, Vice-President, and Secretary of Sigma Tau Delta were in the class. The next year, however, the candidates were not as strong, and the English Department discussed how to prepare candidates better for this exam. While the department is more concerned about what it would identify as authentic assessment than it is about multiple choice tests, we understand that Praxis II Content Knowledge is required for certification in New Hampshire. While we would not base curricular decisions on this test, we have put our energies behind trying to prepare candidates for this exam. Dr. Jan Youga, the English Education faculty member, brought sample test questions to a department retreat so all faculty would be familiar with the format and level of difficulty of the questions. Faculty agreed to make a point of drawing candidates' attention to the type of information candidates need to know for the test, and Dr. Youga began giving her Methods students a 5-minute, 5-question practice test nearly every day so candidates would become familiar with the types of questions on the test and become more comfortable with retrieving the information they know from their coursework when it comes to them in this particular format. We were pleased with the

2004-05 results and hope the department's efforts will continue to help candidates pass this test.

4. Evidence for Meeting Standards:

The English Department faculty is aware of NCTE's position on the limited relevance of the Praxis II exam to meeting NCTE standards. However, we contend that the 100% pass rate in two out of the three past years provides some evidence of our candidates' ability to meet content knowledge standards. For example, 36% of the test covers questions on British, American, and World literature from various cultures, genres, and periods (**Standard 3.5.1**). Candidates must be able to identify authors, works, literary periods, and literary devices associated with particular periods. The questions are challenging and demand some genuine knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge. Also, 25% of the test is on language (**Standards 3.1.6, 7**), and a direct question about whether a particular construction is grammatically correct does, indeed, demonstrate knowledge of standard English.

5. Assessment Data

Praxis II Data 2002-2005

(ETS only provides numbers for completers if over 10)

Year	Content Area	Test	Completers	Passing	Pass Rate
2002-03	English	Content Knowledge			100%
2003-04	English	Content Knowledge			67%
2004-05	English	Content Knowledge			100%
3-Year		Content			89%