

Multistate Standard-setting Technical Report

**PRAXIS™ PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR (0421)**

Licensure and Credentialing Research

Educational Testing Service

Princeton, New Jersey

April 2012

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To support the decision-making process for education agencies with regards to establishing a passing score, or cut score, for the Praxis™ Professional School Counselor (0421) test, research staff from Educational Testing Service (ETS) designed and conducted a two-panel, multistate standard-setting study. The study also collected content-related validity evidence to confirm the importance of the content specifications for entry-level school counselors.

### PARTICIPATING JURISDICTIONS

Panelists from 22 states and Washington, DC were recommended by their respective education agency to participate. The education agencies recommended panelists with (a) experience, either as school counselors or college faculty who prepare school counselors and (b) familiarity with the knowledge and skills required of beginning school counselors.

### RECOMMENDED PASSING SCORE

The recommended passing score for each panel, as well as the average passing score across the two panels, are provided to help education agencies determine an appropriate operational passing score. For the Praxis Professional School Counselor test, the recommended passing score<sup>1</sup> is 71 (out of a possible 110 raw-score points). The scaled score associated with a raw score of 71 is 156 (on a 100 – 200 scale).

### SUMMARY OF CONTENT SPECIFICATION JUDGMENTS

Panelists judged the extent to which the knowledge and skills reflected by the content specifications were important for entry-level school counselors. The favorable judgments of the panelists provided evidence that the content covered by the test is important for beginning practice.

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<sup>1</sup>Results from the two panels participating in the study were averaged to produce the recommended passing score.

<sup>2</sup>Jurisdictions that currently use one or more Praxis tests were invited to participate in the multistate standard-setting study.

The two, non-overlapping panels (a) allow each participating jurisdiction to be represented and (b) provide a replication of the judgment process to strengthen the technical quality of the recommended passing score. Twenty-two states and Washington, DC (see Table 1) were represented by 48 panelists across the panels. (See Appendix A for the names and affiliations of the panelists.)

*Table 1*  
*Participating Jurisdictions and Number of Panelists (Across Panels)*

Alabama (2 panelists)	Louisiana (1 panelist)
North Dakota (2 panelists)	Utah (2 panelists)
Arkansas (2 panelists)	Maine (3 panelists)
Nevada (1 panelist)	Vermont (1 panelist)
District of Columbia (3 panelists)	Missouri (3 panelists)
Ohio (2 panelists)	Washington (1 panelist)
Delaware (3 panelists)	Mississippi (3 panelists)
Rhode Island (1 panelist)	Wisconsin (3 panelists)
Hawaii (3 panelists)	Montana (1 panelist)
South Carolina (2 panelists)	West Virginia (2 panelists)
Kansas (2 panelists)	North Carolina (3 panelists)
Tennessee (2 panelists)	

The panels were convened in March 2012 in Princeton, New Jersey. For both panels, the same processes and methods were used to train panelists, gather panelists' judgments and to calculate the recommended passing scores.

The following technical report is divided into three sections. The first section describes the content and format of the test. The second section describes the standard-setting processes and methods. The third section presents the results of the standard-setting study.

The passing-score recommendation for the Praxis Professional School Counselor test is provided to each of the represented education agencies. In each jurisdiction, the department of education, the board of education, or a designated educator licensure board is responsible for establishing the final passing score in accordance with applicable regulations. The study provides a recommended passing score, which represent the combined judgments of two groups of experienced educators. The full range of a education agency's needs and expectations cannot likely be represented during the standard-setting study. Each jurisdiction, therefore, may want to consider the recommended passing score (as well as the separate panels' recommended passing scores) and other sources of information when setting the final Praxis Professional School Counselor passing score (see Geisinger & McCormick, 2010). A jurisdiction may accept the recommended passing score, adjust the score upward to reflect more stringent expectations, or adjust the score downward to reflect more lenient expectations. There is no *correct* decision; the appropriateness of any adjustment may only be evaluated in terms of its meeting the jurisdiction's needs.

Two sources of information to consider when setting the passing score are the standard error of measurement (SEM) and the standard error of judgment (*SEI*). The former addresses the reliability of the Praxis Professional School Counselor test score and the latter, the reliability of panelists' passingscore recommendation. The SEM allows a jurisdiction to recognize that a Praxis Professional School Counselor test score-any test score on any test-is less than perfectly reliable. A test score only approximates what a candidate *truly* knows or *truly* can do on the test. The SEM, therefore, addresses the question: How close of an approximation is the test score to the *true* score? The SEJ allow a jurisdiction to consider the likelihood that the recommended passing score from the current panels would be similar to the passing scores recommended by other panels of experts similar in composition and experience. The smaller the *SEI* the more likely that another panel would recommend a passing score consistent with the recommended passing score. The larger the *SEI*, the less likely the recommended passing score would be reproduced by another panel.

In addition to measurement error metrics (e.g., SEM, SEJ), each jurisdiction should consider the likelihood of classification error. That is, when adjusting a passing score, policymakers should consider whether it is more important to minimize a false positive decision or to minimize a false negative decision. A false positive decision occurs when a candidate's test score suggests he should receive a license/certificate, but his actual level of knowledge/skills indicates otherwise (i.e., the candidate does not possess the required knowledge/skills). A false negative occurs when a candidate's test score suggests that she should not receive a license/certificate, but she actually does possess the required knowledge/skills. The jurisdiction needs to consider which decision error may be more important to minimize.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PRAXIS PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR TEST**

The Praxis Professional School Counselor *Test at a Glance* document (ETS, in press) describes the purpose and structure of the test. In brief, the test measures whether entry-level school counselors have the knowledge and skills believed necessary for competent professional practice. A National Advisory Committee of expert practitioners and preparation faculty defined the content of the test, and a national survey of the field confirmed the content.

The two hour assessment contains 120 multiple-choice questions<sup>3</sup> covering four content areas: *Foundations* (approximately 22 questions); *Delivery of Services* (approximately 54 questions); *Management* (approximately 18 questions); and *Accountability* (approximately 26 questions)<sup>4</sup> The reporting scale for the Praxis Professional School Counselor test ranges from 100 to 200 scaled-score points.

The first national administration of the new Praxis Professional School Counselor test will occur in 2012-13 testing year.

<sup>3</sup> *Ten of the 120 multiple-choice questions are pretest questions and do not contribute to a candidate's score.*

<sup>4</sup> *The number of questions for each content area may vary slightly from form to form of the test.*