Test Security Standards

Question*: What are guidelines or standards for exam security for a regulatory agency?*

Answer: Exam security policies and procedures exist to prevent testing and scoring fraud and protect the integrity of the exam. For each procedure from test design to the score reporting process, regulatory agencies need to be vigilant in having clear, current, and published security policies in place.

The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* provides three standards regarding "test security:"

> ### Test Administration, Scoring & Reporting*:*
> **Standard 5.6:** *Reasonable efforts should be made to assure the integrity of test scores by eliminating opportunities for test takers to attain scores by fraudulent means. Examples include: exam design, candidate identification, seating charts, space between seats, continuous monitoring during exam, irregularity reporting, steps taken to minimize the possibility of breaches in test security, ensuring work products represent candidate's own work. (p. 64).*
> **Standard 5.7:** *Test users have responsibility of protecting security of test materials at all times including assuring that only individuals with legitimate need for access have access before and after administration; and if challenged, employing independent third party. (p. 64).*
> ### Responsibilities of Test Users:
> **Standard 11.7***: When tests are used for purposes of selection or licensure the need for rigorous protection of test security is obvious . . . . When tests are involved in litigation, inspection of the instruments should be restricted . . . to those who are legally or ethically obligated to safeguard test security. (p. 115).*

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) has a standard for security that needs to be met by organizations offering certification programs.   Accreditation requires compliance and documentation of security policies and practices as stated Standard 16:

> *The certification program must develop and adhere to appropriate, standardized, and secure procedures for the development and administration of assessment instruments. The fact that such procedures are in force should be published. Documentation of security includes: 1) Quality control procedures; 2) Security Procedures; and 3) Chief Examiner/Proctor/Invigilator material.*

Actual documents that regulatory agencies can use to demonstrate compliance are: 1) *Candidate Guides* with sections on security policy with rules of conduct for examinee; 2) *Proctor/Invigilator Instruction Manual for the Administration of Examinations* with specific information/details regarding keeping materials secure, handling candidates on test day, candidate identification*,* and candidate monitoring; 3) *Regulatory Agency Policy & Procedures Manual*; and 4) *Annual Report to Board of Directors.*

In sum, documentation must show that security procedures are in place to protect the confidentiality of exam materials and to ensure assessment instrument administration adheres to standardized best practice security procedures specified by the certification program sponsor.

An example of published test security policy can be found on the Educational Testing Service website for the GRE exam: http://www.ets.org/gre/institutions/about/security/.