New York State Regents Examination in Living Environment

2021 Technical Report

Prepared for the New York State Education Department
by Pearson

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This technical report for the Regents Examination in Living Environment, based on Standards 1 and 4 of the New York State Learning Standards for Mathematics, Science, and Technology, will provide New York State with documentation as to the purposes of the Regents Examination, as well as scoring information, evidence of both reliability and validity of the exam, scaling information, and guidelines for score reporting for the June 2021 administration. Chapters 1–5 detail results for the June 2021 administration. As the *Standards for Education and Psychological Testing* discusses in Standard 7, "The objective of the documentation is to provide test users with the information needed to help them assess the nature and quality of the test, the resulting scores, and the interpretations based on the test scores" (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 2014, p.123).[1] Please note that a technical report, by design, addresses technical documentation of a testing program; other aspects of a testing program (content standards, scoring guides, guide to test interpretation, etc.) are thoroughly addressed and referenced in supporting documents.

During the 2020–2021 school year, many students in New York State received entirely remote instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the U.S. Department of Education's decision not to approve the waiver requested by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to forego assessments in 2021, it was determined that to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Regents Examination in Living Environment would be administered in June 2021[2]. This examination was only to be administered where schools and districts could ensure the health and safety of students and teachers. Students receiving entirely remote instruction were not required to come to school for the sole purpose of taking the Regents Examination in Living Environment. Eligible students could be exempted from the associated diploma requirement for this Regents examination. Details of those exemptions can be found in the following documents: "Exemptions from Diploma Requirements and Cancellation of the August 2021 Administration of the New York State (NYS) High School Regents Examination Program in Response to the Ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic" and "Frequently Asked Questions Related to the June 2021 and August 2021 Exemptions from Diploma Requirements".

1.2 PURPOSES OF THE EXAM

The Regents Examination in Living Environment measures examinee achievement against the New York State Learning Standards. The exam is prepared by teacher examination committees and New York State Education Department (NYSED) subject matter and testing specialists. Further, it provides teachers and students with important information about student learning and performance against the established curriculum standards. Results of this exam may be used to identify student strengths and needs in order to guide classroom teaching and

[1] References to specific *Standards* will be placed in parentheses throughout the technical report to provide further context for each section.

[2] Typically, the Regents Examination in Living Environment is administered each school year in August, January, and June.

learning. The exam also provides students, parents, counselors, administrators, and college admissions officers with objective and easily understood achievement information that may be used to inform empirically based educational and vocational decisions about students. As a state-provided objective benchmark, the Regents Examination in Living Environment is intended for use in satisfying state testing requirements for students who have finished a course in Living Environment. A passing score on the exam counts toward requirements for a high school diploma, as described in the New York State diploma requirements: http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/currentdiplomarequirements2.pdf. Results of the Regents Examination in Living Environment may also be used to satisfy various locally established requirements throughout the state. For the 2020-2021 school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, eligible students could be exempted from the associated diploma requirement for this Regents examination. Details of those exemptions can be found here: http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/state-assessment/memo-june-august-2021-assessments.pdf and http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/state-assessment/faq-june-august-2021-assessments.pdf.

1.3 TARGET POPULATION (STANDARD 7.2)

The examinee population for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is composed of students who have completed a course in Living Environment. For the 2020-2021 school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those students who were receiving entirely remote instruction were not required to come to school for the sole purpose of taking a Regents examination. Moreover, this examination was only to be administered where schools and districts could ensure the health and safety of students and teachers. Eligible students were exempted from the associated diploma requirement for this Regents examination. Details of those exemptions can be found here: http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/state-assessment/memo-june-august-2021-assessments.pdf and http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/state-assessment/faq-june-august-2021-assessments.pdf.

Table 1 provides a demographic breakdown of all students who took the June 2021 Regents Examination in Living Environment. All analyses in this report are based on the population described in Table 1. Annual Regents Examination results in the New York State Report Cards are those reported in the Student Information Repository System (SIRS) as of the reporting deadline. As noted previously, for a typical year, the results would include those exams administered in August, January, and June; though for 2021, this assessment was administered only once, in June (see http://data.nysed.gov/). Typically, if a student takes the same exam multiple times in the year, only the highest score is included in these results. Item-level data used for the analyses in this report are reported by districts on a similar timeline, but through a different collection system.

When compared with the number of expected test takers based on recent examination administrations, approximately 20% of students took the Regents Examination in Living Environment due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 Total Examinee Population: Regents Examination in Living Environment

	June Admin.*	
Demographics	**Number**	**Percent**
All Students	48,627	100.00
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	235	0.48
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	4,205	8.65
Black/African American	3,902	8.02
Hispanic/Latino	7,350	15.12
Multiracial	1,296	2.67
White	31,636	65.06
English Language Learner		
No	47,288	97.25
Yes	1,339	2.75
Economically Disadvantaged		
No	32,782	67.42
Yes	15,845	32.58
Gender		
Female	24,340	50.06
Male	24,284	49.94
Student with a Disability		
No	43,724	89.92
Yes	4,903	10.08

*Note: Three students were not reported in the Race/Ethnicity and Gender groups; however, they are reflected in "All Students."

Chapter 2: Classical Item Statistics (Standard 4.10)

This chapter provides an overview of the two most familiar item-level statistics obtained from classical item analysis: item difficulty and item discrimination. The following results pertain to the operational Regents Examination in Living Environment items.

2.1 ITEM DIFFICULTY

At the most general level, an item's difficulty is indicated by its mean score in some specified group (e.g., grade level).

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{n} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i$$

In the mean score formula above, the individual item scores (x_i) are summed and then divided by the total number of students (n). For multiple-choice (MC) items, student scores are represented by 0s and 1s (0 = wrong answer, 1 = correct answer). With 0–1 scoring, the equation above also represents the number of students correctly answering the item divided by the total number of students. Therefore, this is also the proportion correct for the item, or the *p*-value. In theory, *p*-values can range from 0.00 to 1.00 on the proportion-correct scale.[3] For example, if a MC item has a *p*-value of 0.89, it means that 89 percent of the students answered the item correctly. Additionally, this value might suggest that the item was relatively easy and/or that the students who attempted the item were relatively high achievers. For constructed-response (CR) items, mean scores can range from the minimum possible score (usually zero) to the maximum possible score. To facilitate average score comparability across MC and CR items, mean item performance for CR items is divided by the maximum score possible so that the *p*-values for all items are reported as a ratio from 0.0 to 1.0.

Although the *p*-value statistic does not consider individual student ability in its computation, it provides a useful view of overall item difficulty and can provide an early and simple indication of items that are too difficult for the population of students taking the examination. Items with very high or very low *p*-values receive added scrutiny during all follow-up analyses, including item response theory analyses that factor student ability into estimates of item difficulty. Such items may be removed from the item pool during the test development process, as field testing typically reveals that they add very little measurement information. Items for the June 2021 Regents Examination in Living Environment show a range of *p*-values consistent with the targeted exam difficulty. Item *p*-values, presented in Table 2 and Table 3 for MC and CR items, respectively, range from 0.26 to 0.91, with a mean of 0.66. Table 2 and Table 3 also show a standard deviation (SD) of item score and item mean (Table 3, only).

2.2 ITEM DISCRIMINATION

At the most general level, estimates of item discrimination indicate an item's ability to differentiate between high and low performance on an exam. It is expected that students who perform well on the Regents Examination in Living Environment would be more likely to answer any given item correctly, while low-performing students (i.e., those who perform poorly on the

[3] For MC items with four response options, pure random guessing would lead to an expected *p*-value of 0.25.

exam overall) would be more likely to answer the same item incorrectly. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (also commonly referred to as a point-biserial correlation) between item scores and test scores is used to indicate discrimination (Pearson, 1896). The correlation coefficient can range from −1.0 to +1.0. If high-scoring students tend to get the item correct while low-scoring students do not, the correlation between the item score and the total test score will be both positive and noticeably large in its magnitude (i.e., above zero), meaning that the item is likely discriminating well between high- and low-performing students. Point-biserial values are computed for each answer option, including correct and incorrect options (commonly referred to as "distractors"). Point-biserial values for each distractor are an important part of the analysis. The point-biserial values on the distractors are typically negative. Positive values can indicate that higher-performing students are selecting an incorrect answer or that the item key for the correct answer should be checked.

Table 2 and Table 3 provide the point-biserial values for the correct response and three distractors (Table 2, only) for the June 2021 administration of the Regents Examination in Living Environment. The point-biserial values for correct answers are 0.21 or higher for all items, indicating that the items are discriminating well between high- and low-performing examinees. Point-biserial values for all distractors are either negative or close to 0, indicating that examinees are responding to the items as expected during item and rubric development.

Table 2 Multiple-Choice Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Item	Number of Students	*p*-Value	SD	Point-Biserial	Point-Biserial Distractor 1	Point-Biserial Distractor 2	Point-Biserial Distractor 3
1	48,627	0.44	0.50	0.21	-0.23	-0.06	0.03
2	48,627	0.59	0.49	0.38	-0.21	-0.11	-0.23
3	48,627	0.84	0.36	0.31	-0.14	-0.24	-0.18
4	48,627	0.78	0.42	0.51	-0.35	-0.24	-0.20
5	48,627	0.86	0.35	0.41	-0.28	-0.16	-0.24
6	48,627	0.70	0.46	0.44	-0.26	-0.24	-0.18
7	48,627	0.90	0.29	0.44	-0.28	-0.21	-0.23
8	48,627	0.87	0.34	0.38	-0.18	-0.24	-0.20
9	48,627	0.72	0.45	0.61	-0.29	-0.32	-0.34
10	48,627	0.91	0.29	0.43	-0.25	-0.20	-0.28
11	48,627	0.32	0.47	0.36	-0.21	-0.19	-0.11
12	48,627	0.70	0.46	0.39	-0.19	-0.28	-0.23
13	48,627	0.79	0.41	0.48	-0.15	-0.36	-0.23
14	48,627	0.63	0.48	0.49	-0.26	-0.33	-0.17
15	48,627	0.62	0.48	0.49	-0.23	-0.24	-0.24
16	48,627	0.81	0.39	0.53	-0.29	-0.26	-0.31
17	48,627	0.72	0.45	0.35	-0.11	-0.26	-0.24
18	48,627	0.86	0.34	0.44	-0.31	-0.23	-0.19

Item	Number of Students	*p*-Value	SD	Point-Biserial	Point-Biserial Distractor 1	Point-Biserial Distractor 2	Point-Biserial Distractor 3
19	48,627	0.73	0.45	0.46	-0.21	-0.27	-0.22
20	48,627	0.52	0.50	0.56	-0.23	-0.20	-0.33
21	48,627	0.82	0.38	0.47	-0.34	-0.23	-0.19
22	48,627	0.80	0.40	0.46	-0.23	-0.30	-0.21
23	48,627	0.50	0.50	0.23	-0.04	-0.23	-0.06
24	48,627	0.38	0.49	0.38	-0.25	-0.31	0.00
25	48,627	0.79	0.41	0.52	-0.24	-0.27	-0.32
26	48,627	0.86	0.35	0.45	-0.26	-0.22	-0.27
27	48,627	0.69	0.46	0.56	-0.28	-0.30	-0.30
28	48,627	0.49	0.50	0.42	-0.30	-0.16	-0.18
29	48,627	0.50	0.50	0.50	-0.20	-0.21	-0.28
30	48,627	0.72	0.45	0.35	-0.16	-0.16	-0.21
31	48,627	0.75	0.43	0.61	-0.29	-0.32	-0.34
32	48,627	0.81	0.39	0.46	-0.27	-0.26	-0.23
33	48,627	0.59	0.49	0.36	-0.16	-0.21	-0.17
34	48,627	0.38	0.49	0.45	-0.26	-0.07	-0.26
35	48,627	0.37	0.48	0.39	-0.17	-0.21	-0.12
36	48,627	0.43	0.50	0.51	-0.17	-0.35	-0.12
37	48,627	0.57	0.50	0.24	-0.08	-0.21	-0.10
38	48,627	0.58	0.49	0.43	-0.12	-0.25	-0.29
39	48,627	0.79	0.41	0.39	-0.25	-0.27	-0.16
40	48,627	0.54	0.50	0.34	-0.23	-0.03	-0.29
41	48,627	0.57	0.49	0.40	-0.23	-0.22	-0.11
42	48,627	0.56	0.50	0.46	-0.24	-0.22	-0.19
43	48,627	0.71	0.45	0.51	-0.20	-0.31	-0.26
47	48,627	0.86	0.34	0.43	-0.24	-0.27	-0.19
49	48,627	0.69	0.46	0.45	-0.21	-0.23	-0.26
50	48,627	0.86	0.34	0.45	-0.23	-0.31	-0.18
73	48,627	0.54	0.50	0.41	-0.16	-0.23	-0.21
74	48,627	0.51	0.50	0.54	-0.25	-0.26	-0.21
75	48,627	0.85	0.36	0.35	-0.21	-0.19	-0.15
76	48,627	0.58	0.49	0.43	-0.17	-0.18	-0.23
81	48,627	0.60	0.49	0.29	-0.09	-0.11	-0.18
82	48,627	0.58	0.49	0.50	-0.20	-0.31	-0.17

Table 3 Constructed-Response Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Item	Min. Score	Max. Score	Number of Students	Mean	SD	*p*-Value	Point-Biserial
44	0	1	48,627	0.70	0.46	0.70	0.43
45	0	1	48,627	0.80	0.40	0.80	0.43
46	0	1	48,627	0.61	0.49	0.61	0.55
48	0	1	48,627	0.64	0.48	0.64	0.51
51	0	1	48,627	0.58	0.49	0.58	0.48
52	0	1	48,627	0.60	0.49	0.60	0.57
53	0	1	48,627	0.42	0.49	0.42	0.44
54	0	1	48,627	0.71	0.45	0.71	0.47
55	0	1	48,627	0.69	0.46	0.69	0.62
56	0	1	48,627	0.85	0.36	0.85	0.53
57	0	1	48,627	0.78	0.42	0.78	0.42
58	0	1	48,627	0.75	0.43	0.75	0.39
59	0	1	48,627	0.84	0.37	0.84	0.48
60	0	1	48,627	0.74	0.44	0.74	0.52
61	0	1	48,627	0.88	0.32	0.88	0.47
62	0	1	48,627	0.69	0.46	0.69	0.60
63	0	1	48,627	0.82	0.38	0.82	0.54
64	0	1	48,627	0.88	0.32	0.88	0.43
65	0	1	48,627	0.80	0.40	0.80	0.45
66	0	1	48,627	0.83	0.37	0.83	0.49
67	0	1	48,627	0.42	0.49	0.42	0.51
68	0	1	48,627	0.47	0.50	0.47	0.44
69	0	1	48,627	0.80	0.40	0.80	0.41
70	0	1	48,627	0.45	0.50	0.45	0.58
71	0	1	48,627	0.33	0.47	0.33	0.46
72	0	1	48,627	0.48	0.50	0.48	0.33
77	0	1	48,627	0.68	0.47	0.68	0.37
78	0	1	48,627	0.40	0.49	0.40	0.51
79	0	1	48,627	0.38	0.49	0.38	0.41
80	0	1	48,627	0.26	0.44	0.26	0.45
83	0	1	48,627	0.56	0.50	0.56	0.54
84	0	1	48,627	0.58	0.49	0.58	0.61
85	0	1	48,627	0.74	0.44	0.74	0.55

2.3 DISCRIMINATION ON DIFFICULTY SCATTER PLOT

Figure 1 shows a scatter plot of item discrimination values (*y*-axis) and item difficulty values (*x*-axis). The distributions of *p*-value and point-biserial values, including mean, minimum, Q1, median, Q3, and maximum, are presented in Table 4.

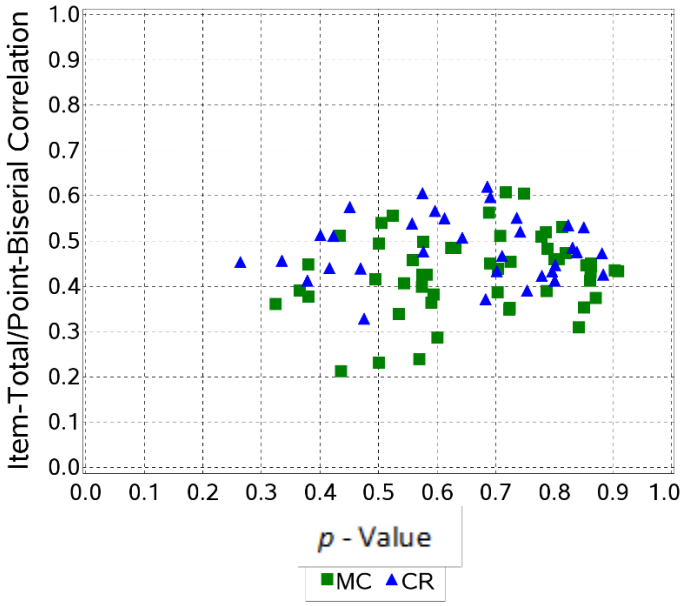

Figure 1 Scatter Plot: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics in *p*-value and Point-Biserial Correlation: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Statistics	Number of Items	Mean	Min.	Q1	Median	Q3	Max.
p-value	85	0.66	0.26	0.54	0.69	0.80	0.91
Point-Biserial	85	0.45	0.21	0.41	0.45	0.51	0.62

2.4 OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The *p*-values for the MC items range from about 0.32 to 0.91, while the *p*-values for the CR items (Table 3) range from about 0.26 to 0.88. From the difficulty distributions illustrated in the plot, it is indicated that a wide range of item difficulties appeared on the exam, which was one test development goal.

Chapter 3: IRT Calibrations, Equating, and Scaling (Standards 2 and 4.10)

The item response theory (IRT) model used for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is based on the work of Georg Rasch (Rasch, 1960). The Rasch model has a long-standing presence in applied testing programs. IRT has several advantages over classical test theory, and it has become the standard procedure for analyzing item response data in large-scale assessments. According to van der Linden and Hambleton (1997), "The central feature of IRT is the specification of a mathematical function relating the probability of an examinee's response on a test item to an underlying ability." Ability, in this sense, can be thought of as performance on the test and is defined as "the expected value of observed performance on the test of interest" (Hambleton, Swaminathan, and Rogers, 1991). This performance value is often referred to as θ. Performance and θ will be used interchangeably throughout the remainder of this report.

A fundamental advantage of IRT is that it links examinee performance and item difficulty estimates and places them on the same scale, allowing for an evaluation of examinee performance that considers the difficulty of the test. This is particularly valuable for final test construction and test form equating, as it facilitates a fundamental attention to fairness for all examinees across items and test forms.

This chapter outlines the procedures used for calibrating the operational Regents Examination in Living Environment items. Generally, item calibration is the process of assigning a difficulty, or item "location," estimate to each item on an assessment so that all items are placed onto a common scale. This chapter briefly introduces the Rasch model, reports the results from evaluations of the adequacy of the Rasch assumptions, and summarizes the Rasch item statistics.

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE RASCH MODEL

The Rasch model (Rasch, 1960) was used to calibrate multiple-choice items, and the partial credit model, or PCM (Wright & Masters, 1982), was used to calibrate constructed-response items. The PCM extends the Rasch model for dichotomous (0, 1) items so that it accommodates the polytomous CR item data. Under the PCM model, for a given item *i* with m_i score categories, the probability of person *n* scoring *x* (*x* = 0, 1, 2, ...m_i) is given by

$$P_{ni}(X = x) = \frac{\exp\sum_{j=0}^{x}(\theta_n - D_{ij})}{\sum_{k=0}^{m_i}\exp\sum_{j=0}^{k}(\theta_n - D_{ij})},$$

where θ_n represents examinee ability, and D_{ij} is the step difficulty of the j^{th} step on item *i*. D_{ij} can be expressed as $D_{ij} = D_i - F_{ij}$, where D_i is the difficulty for item *i* and F_{ij} is a step deviation value for the j^{th} step. For dichotomous MC items, the PCM reduces to the standard Rasch model, and the single step difficulty is referred to as the item's difficulty. The Rasch model predicts the probability of person *n* getting item *i* correct, as follows:

$$P_{ni}(X=1)=\frac{\exp(\theta_n - D_{ij})}{1+\exp(\theta_n - D_{ij})}.$$

The Rasch model places both performance and item difficulty (estimated in terms of log-odds or logits) on the same continuum. When the model assumptions are met, the Rasch model provides estimates of examinee performance and item difficulty that are theoretically invariant across random samples of the same examinee population.

3.2 SOFTWARE AND ESTIMATION ALGORITHM

Item calibration was implemented via the WINSTEPS 3.60 computer program (Linacre, 2005), which employs unconditional (UCON) joint maximum likelihood estimation (JMLE).

3.3 ITEM DIFFICULTY–STUDENT PERFORMANCE MAP

The distributions of the Rasch item logits (item difficulty estimates) and student performance are shown on the item difficulty-student performance map presented in Figure 2. This graphic illustrates the location of student performance and item difficulty on the same scale, along with their respective distributions and cut scores (indicated by the horizontal dotted lines). The figure shows more difficult items and higher examinee performance at the top and lower performance and easier items at the bottom.

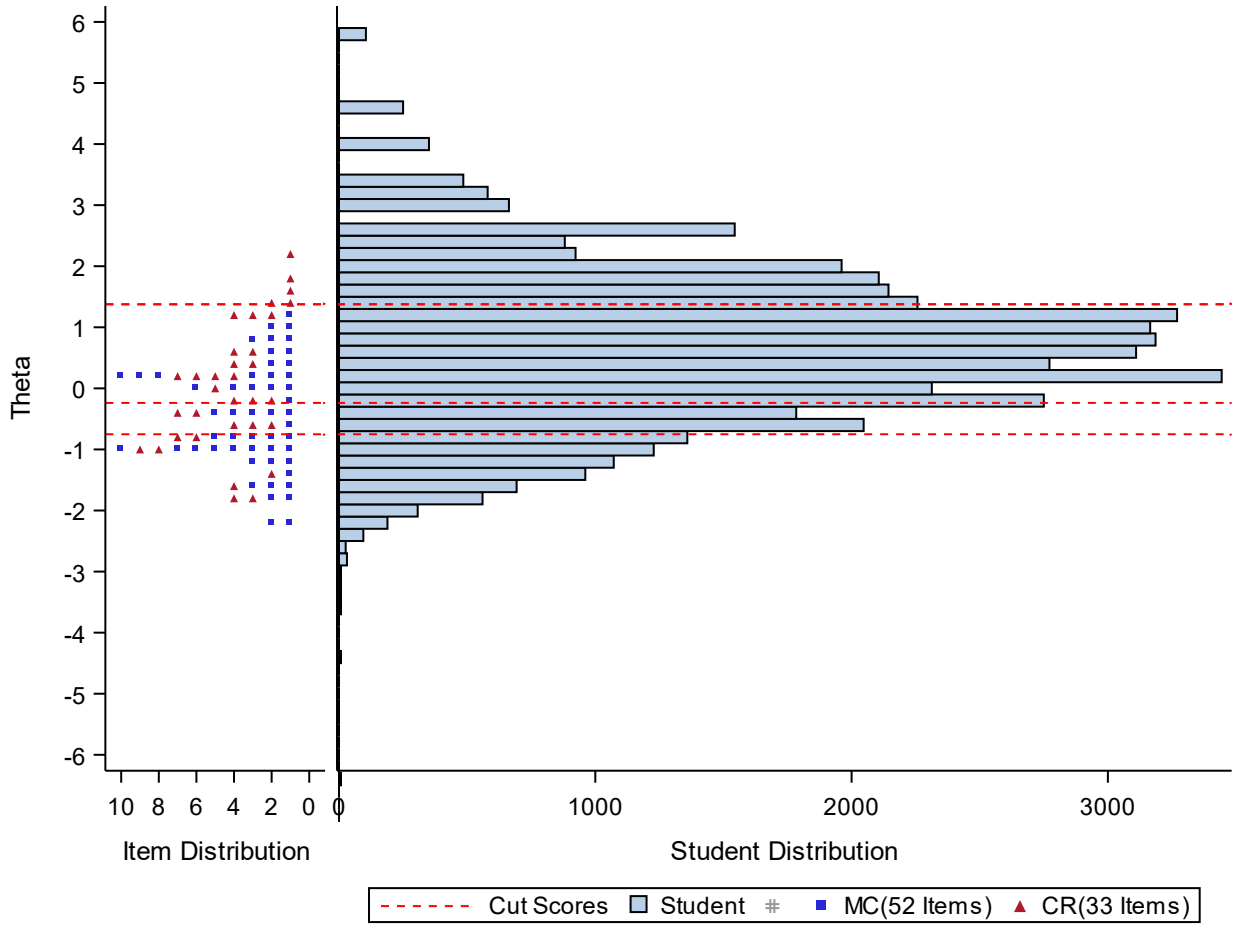

Figure 2 Student Performance Map: Regents Examination in Living Environment

3.4 CHECKING RASCH ASSUMPTIONS

Since the Rasch model was the basis of all calibration, scoring, and scaling analyses associated with the Regents Examination in Living Environment, the validity of the inferences from these results depends on the degree to which the assumptions of the model were met and how well the model fits the test data. Therefore, it is important to check these assumptions. This section evaluates the dimensionality of the data, local item independence, and item fit. It should be noted that only operational items were analyzed, since they are the basis of student scores.

Unidimensionality

Rasch models assume that one dominant dimension determines the differences in students' performances. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) can be used to assess the unidimensionality assumption. The purpose of the analysis is to verify whether or not any other dominant components exist among the items. If any other dimensions are found, the unidimensionality assumption would be violated.

A parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) was conducted to help distinguish components that are real from components that are random. Parallel analysis is a technique used to determine how many factors exist in principal components. For the parallel analysis of the Regents Examination in Living Environment, 100 random data sets of sizes equal to the original data were created. For each random data set, a PCA was performed, and the resulting eigenvalues stored. Then, for each component, the upper 95th percentile value of the distribution of the 100 eigenvalues from the random data sets was plotted. Given the size of the data generated for the parallel analysis, the reference line is essentially equivalent to plotting a reference line for an eigenvalue of 1.

Figure 3 shows the PCA and parallel analysis results for the Regents Examination in Living Environment. The results include the eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained for the first five components, as well as the scree plots. The scree plots show the eigenvalues plotted by component number and the results from a parallel analysis. Although the total number of components in the PCA is the same as the total number of items in a test, Figure 3 shows only the first 10 components. This view is sufficient for interpretation because the components are listed in descending eigenvalue order. The fact that the eigenvalues for components 2 through 10 are much lower than the first component demonstrates that there is one dominant component, showing evidence of unidimensionality.

Reckase (1979) proposed that the variance explained by the primary dimension should be greater than 20 percent to indicate unidimensionality. However, as this rule is not absolute, it is helpful to consider three additional characteristics of the PCA and parallel analysis results: 1) whether the ratio of the first to the second eigenvalue is greater than 3; 2) whether the second value is not much larger than the third value; and 3) whether the second value is not significantly different than those from the parallel analysis.

As shown in Figure 3, the primary dimension explained 21.19 percent of the total variance for the Regents Examination in Living Environment. The eigenvalue of the second dimension is less than one-third of the first, at 2.83, and the second value is not significantly different from the parallel analysis. Overall, the PCA suggests that the test is reasonably unidimensional.

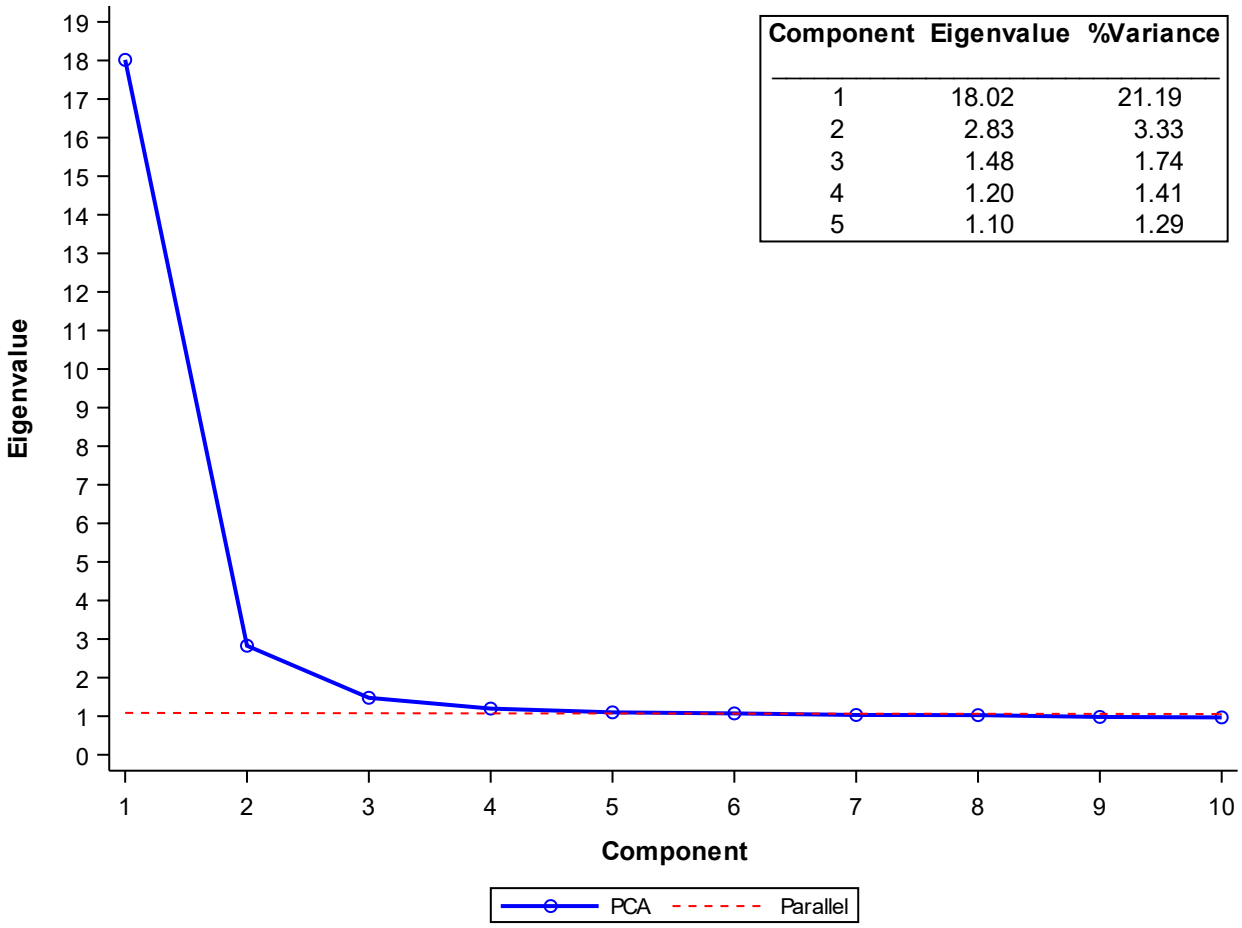

Figure 3 Scree Plot: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Local Independence

Local independence (LI) is a fundamental assumption of IRT. This means that, for statistical purposes, an examinee's response to any one item should not depend on the examinee's response to any other item on the test. In formal statistical terms, test X, which comprises items X_1, X_2, …X_n is locally independent with respect to the latent variable θ if, for all $x = (x_1, x_2, \ldots x_n)$ and θ,

$$P(\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{x} \mid \theta) = \prod_{i=1}^{I} P(X_i = x_i \mid \theta).$$

This formula essentially states that the probability of any pattern of responses across all items ($\mathbf{x}$), after conditioning on the examinee's true score (θ) as measured by the test, should be equal to the product of the conditional probabilities across each item (i.e., the multiplication rule for independent events where the joint probabilities are equal to the product of the associated marginal probabilities).

The equation on the previous page shows the condition after satisfying the strong form of local independence. A weak form of local independence (WLI) is proposed by McDonald (1979). The distinction is important because many indicators of local dependency are framed by WLI. For WLI, the conditional covariances of all pairs of item responses, conditioned on the abilities, are assumed to be equal to zero. When this assumption is met, the joint probability of responses to an item pair, conditioned on the abilities, is the product of the probabilities of responses to these two items, as shown below. Based on the WLI, the following expression can be derived:

$$P\left(X_i = x_i, X_j = x_j \mid \theta\right) = P\left(X_i = x_i \mid \theta\right) P\left(X_j = x_j \mid \theta\right).$$

Marais and Andrich (2008) point out that local item dependence in the Rasch model can occur in two ways that may be difficult to distinguish. The first way occurs when the assumption of unidimensionality is violated. Here, other nuisance dimensions besides a dominant dimension determine student performance (this can be called "trait dependence"). The second way occurs when responses to an item depend on responses to another item. This is a violation of statistical independence and can be called response dependence. By distinguishing the two sources of local dependence, one can see that while local independence can be related to unidimensionality, the two are different assumptions and therefore require different tests.

Residual item correlations provided in WINSTEPS for each item pair were used to assess the local dependence between the Regents Examination in Living Environment items. In general, these residuals are computed as follows. First, expected item performance based on the Rasch model is determined by using θ and item parameter estimates. Next, deviations (residuals) between the examinees' expected and observed performance are determined for each item. Finally, for each item pair, a correlation between the respective deviations is computed.

Three types of residual correlations are available in WINSTEPS: raw, standardized, and logit. It is noted that the raw score residual correlation essentially corresponds to Yen's Q_3 index, a popular statistic used to assess local independence. The expected value for the Q_3 statistic is approximately $-1/(k-1)$ when no local dependence exists, where k is test length (Yen, 1993). Thus, the expected Q_3 values should be approximately −0.01 for the items on the exam. Index values that are greater than 0.20 indicate a degree of local dependence that should be examined by test developers (Chen & Thissen, 1997).

Since the three residual correlations are very similar, the default "standardized residual correlation" in WINSTEPS was used for these analyses. Table 5 shows the summary statistics — mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and several percentiles (P_{10}, P_{25}, P_{50}, P_{75}, P_{90}) — for all the residual correlations for each test. The total number of item pairs (N) and the number of pairs with the residual correlations greater than 0.20 are also reported in this table. There are three item pairs with a residual correlation greater than 0.20. The mean residual correlations are slightly negative at −0.01 and the highest residual correlations are 0.27, suggesting that local item independence holds for most items on the Regents Examination in Living Environment.

Table 5 Summary of Item Residual Correlations: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Statistic Type	Value
N	3,570
Mean	-0.01
SD	0.03
Minimum	-0.11
P_{10}	-0.04
P_{25}	-0.03
P_{50}	-0.01
P_{75}	0.00
P_{90}	0.02
Maximum	0.27
>|0.20|	3

Item Fit

An important assumption of the Rasch model is that the data for each item fit the model. WINSTEPS provides two item fit statistics (INFIT and OUTFIT) for evaluating the degree to which the Rasch model predicts the observed item responses for a given set of test items. Each fit statistic can be expressed as a mean square (MnSq) statistic or on a standardized metric (Zstd with mean = 0 and variance = 1). MnSq values are more oriented toward practical significance, while Zstd values are more oriented toward statistical significance. INFIT MnSq values are the average of standardized residual variance (the difference between the observed score and the Rasch estimated score divided by the square root of the Rasch-model variance). The INFIT statistic is weighted by the θ relative to item difficulty.

The expected MnSq value is 1.0 and can range from 0.0 to infinity. Deviation in excess of the expected value can be interpreted as noise, or lack of fit, between the items and the model. Values lower than the expected value can be interpreted as item redundancy or overfitting items (too predictable, too much redundancy), and values greater than the expected value indicate underfitting items (too unpredictable, too much noise). Rules of thumb regarding "practically significant" MnSq values vary.

Table 6 presents the summary statistics of INFIT mean square statistics for the Regents Examination in Living Environment, including the number of items, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values.

The number of items within a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3] is also reported in Table 6. The mean INFIT value is 0.99, with 83 of 85 items falling in a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3]. As the range of [0.7, 1.3] is used as a guide for ideal fit, fit values outside of the range are considered individually. These results indicate that the Rasch model fits the Regents Examination in Living Environment item data well.

Table 6 Summary of INFIT Mean Square Statistics: Regents Examination in Living Environment

	INFIT Mean Square					
	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	[0.7, 1.3]
Living Environment	85	0.99	0.11	0.81	1.33	[83/85]

3.5 SCALING OF OPERATIONAL TEST FORMS

Operational test items were selected based on content coverage, content accuracy, and statistical quality. The sets of items on each operational test conformed to the coverage determined by content experts working from the learning standards established by the New York State Education Department and explicated in the test blueprint. Each item's classical and Rasch statistics were used to assess item quality. Items were selected to vary in difficulty in order to accurately measure students' abilities across the ability continuum. Appendix A contains the operational test map for the June 2021 administration of the Regents Examination in Living Environment. Note that statistics presented in the test map were generated based on the field test data.

All Regents Examinations are pre-equated, meaning that the parameters used to derive the relationship between the raw and scale scores are estimated prior to the construction and administration of the operational form. These field tests are administered to as small a sample of students as possible to minimize the effect on student instructional time throughout the state. The small n-counts associated with such administrations are sufficient for reasonably accurate estimation of most items' parameters.

The New York State Regents Examination in Living Environment has three cut scores, which are set at the scale scores of 55, 65, and 85. One of the primary considerations during test construction was to select items so as to minimize changes in the raw scores corresponding to these scale scores. Maintaining a consistent mean Rasch difficulty level from administration to administration facilitates this. For this assessment, the target value for the mean Rasch difficulty was set at −0.122. It should be noted that the raw scores corresponding to the scale score cut scores may still fluctuate, even if the mean Rasch difficulty level is maintained at the target value, due to differences in the distributions of the Rasch difficulty values among the items from administration to administration.

The relationship between raw and scale scores is explicated in the scoring table for the administration. The table for the June 2021 administration may be found in Appendix B. These tables are the end product of the following scaling procedure.

All Regents Examinations are equated back to a base scale, which is held constant from year to year. Specifically, they are equated to the base scale through the use of a calibrated item pool. The Rasch difficulties from the items' initial administration in a previous year's field test are used to equate the scale for the current administration to the base administration. For this examination, the base administration was the June 2004 administration. Scale scores from the June 2021 administration are on the same scale and can be directly compared to scale scores on all previous administrations back to the June 2004 administration.

When the base administration was concluded, the initial raw score-to-scale score relationship was established. Three raw scores were fixed at specific scale scores. Scale scores of 0 and 100 were fixed to correspond to the minimum and maximum possible raw scores. In addition, a standard setting had been held to determine the "passing" and "passing with distinction" cut scores in the raw score metric. The scale score points of 65 and 85 were set to correspond to those raw score cuts. A third-degree polynomial is required to fit a line exactly to four arbitrary points (e.g., the raw scores corresponding to the four critical scale scores of 0, 65, 85, and 100). The general form of this best-fitting line is:

$$SS = m3 * RS^3 + m2 * RS^2 + m1 * RS^1 + m0,$$

where SS is the scaled score, RS is the raw score, and m0 through m3 are the transformation constants that convert the raw score into the scale score (please note that m0 will always be equal to zero in this application, since a raw score of zero corresponds to a scale score of zero). A subscript for a person on both dependent and independent variables is not present for the sake of simplicity. The above relationship and the values of m1 to m3 specific to this subject were then used to determine the scale scores corresponding to the remainder of the raw scores on the examination. This initial relationship between the raw and scale scores became the base scale.

The Rasch difficulty parameters for the items on the base form were then used to derive a raw score-to-Rasch student ability (theta score) relationship. This allowed the relationship between the Rasch theta score and the scale score to be known, mediated through their common relationship with the raw scores.

In succeeding years, each test form was selected from the pool of items that had been tested in previous years' field tests, each of which had known Rasch item difficulty parameter(s). These known parameters were then used to construct the relationship between the raw and Rasch theta scores for that particular form. The Rasch difficulty parameters are all on a common scale, so therefore, the Rasch theta scores were also on a common scale with previously administered forms. The remaining step in the scaling process was to find the scale score equivalent for the Rasch theta score corresponding to each raw score point on the new form, using the theta-to-scale score relationship established in the base year. This was done via linear interpolation.

This process results in a relationship between the raw scores on the form and the overall scale scores. The scale scores corresponding to each raw score are then rounded to the nearest integer for reporting on the conversion chart (posted at the close of each administration). The only exceptions are for the minimum and maximum raw scores and the raw scores that correspond to the scaled cut scores of 55, 65, and 85.

The minimum (zero) and maximum possible raw scores are assigned scale scores of 0 and 100, respectively. In the event that there are raw scores less than the maximum with scale scores that round to 100, their scale scores are set equal to 99. A similar process is followed with the minimum score; if any raw scores other than zero have scale scores that round to zero, their scale scores are instead set equal to one.

With regard to the cuts, if two or more scale scores round to 55, 65, or 85, the lowest raw score's scale score is set equal to 55, 65, or 85 and the scale scores corresponding to the higher raw scores are set to 56, 66, or 86, as appropriate. If no scale score rounds to these critical cuts, then the raw score with the largest scale score that is less than the cut is set equal to the cut. The overarching principle, when two raw scores both round to either scale score cut, is that the lower of the raw scores is always assigned to be equal to the cut so that students are never penalized for this ambiguity.

Chapter 4: Reliability (Standard 2)

Test reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a test (Cronbach, 1951). It is a measure of the extent to which the items on a test provide consistent information about student mastery of a domain. Reliability should ultimately demonstrate that examinee score estimates maximize consistency and therefore minimize error or, theoretically speaking, that examinees who take a test multiple times would get the same score each time.

According to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, "A number of factors can have significant effects on reliability/precision, and in some cases, these factors can lead to misinterpretations of test scores, if not taken into account" (AERA et al., 2014, p. 38). First, test length and the variability of observed scores can both influence reliability estimates. Tests with fewer items or with a lack of heterogeneity in scores tend to produce lower reliability estimates. Second, reliability is specifically concerned with random sources of error. Accordingly, the degree of inconsistency due to random error sources is what determines reliability: less consistency is associated with lower reliability, and more consistency is associated with higher reliability. Of course, systematic error sources also exist.

4.1 RELIABILITY INDICES (STANDARD 2.20)

Classical test theory describes reliability as a measure of the internal consistency of test scores. The reliability (ρ_X^2) is defined as the ratio of true score variance (σ_T^2) to the observed score variance (σ_X^2), as presented in the equation below. The total variance contains two components: 1) the variance in true scores and 2) the variance due to the imperfections in the measurement process (σ_E^2). Put differently, total variance equals true score variance plus error variance.[4]

$$\rho_X^2 = \frac{\sigma_T^2}{\sigma_X^2} = \frac{\sigma_T^2}{\sigma_T^2 + \sigma_E^2}$$

Reliability coefficients indicate the degree to which differences in test scores reflect true differences in the attribute being tested, rather than random fluctuations. Total test score variance (i.e., individual differences) is partly due to real differences in the construct (true variance) and partly due to random error in the measurement process (error variance).

Reliability coefficients range from 0.0 to 1.0. The index will be 0.0 if none of the test score variances are true. If all test score variances were true, the index would equal 1.0. Such scores would be pure random noise (i.e., all measurement error). If the index achieved a value of 1.0, scores would be perfectly consistent (i.e., contain no measurement error). Although values of 1.0 are never achieved in practice, larger coefficients are more desirable because they indicate that the test scores are less influenced by random error.

Coefficient Alpha

Reliability is most often estimated using the formula for Coefficient Alpha, which provides a practical internal consistency index. Coefficient Alpha can be conceptualized as the extent to

[4] A covariance term is not required, as true scores and error are assumed to be uncorrelated in classical test theory.

which an exchangeable set of items from the same domain would result in a similar rank ordering of students. Note that relative error is reflected in this index. Excessive variation in student performance from one sample of items to the next should be of particular concern for any achievement test user.

A general computational formula for Coefficient Alpha is as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{N}{N-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}\sigma_{Yi}^2}{\sigma_X^2}\right),$$

where *N* is the number of parts (items), σ_X^2 is the variance of the observed total test scores, and σ_{Yi}^2 is the variance of part *i*.

4.2 STANDARD ERROR OF MEASUREMENT (STANDARDS 2.13, 2.14, 2.15)

Reliability coefficients best reflect the extent to which measurement inconsistencies may be present or absent. The standard error of measurement (SEM) is another indicator of test score precision that is better suited for determining the effect of measurement inconsistencies for the scores obtained by individual examinees. This is particularly so for conditional SEMs (CSEMs), discussed further below.

Traditional Standard Error of Measurement

The standard error of measurement is defined as the standard deviation of the distribution of observed scores for students with identical true scores. The SEM is an index of the random variability in test scores in test score units. Therefore it represents important information for test score users. The SEM formula is provided below.

$$SEM = SD\sqrt{1 - \alpha}$$

This formula indicates that the value of the SEM depends on both the reliability coefficient (the Coefficient Alpha, as detailed previously) and the standard deviation of test scores. If the reliability were equal to 0.00 (the lowest possible value), the SEM would be equal to the standard deviation of the test scores. If test reliability were equal to 1.00 (the highest possible value), the SEM would be 0.0. Therefore, a perfectly reliable test has no measurement error (Harvill, 1991). Additionally, the value of the SEM takes the group variation (i.e., score standard deviation) into account. Consider that a SEM of 3 on a 10-point test would be very different from a SEM of 3 on a 100-point test.

Traditional Standard Error of Measurement Confidence Intervals

The SEM is an index of the random variability in test scores reported in actual score units, which is why it has such great utility for test score users. SEMs allow statements regarding the precision of individual test scores. SEMs help place “reasonable limits” (Gulliksen, 1950) around observed scores through the construction of an approximate score band. Often referred to as confidence intervals, these bands are constructed by taking the observed scores, *X*, and adding and subtracting a multiplicative factor of the SEM. As an example, students with a given

true score will have observed scores that fall between ±1 SEM about two-thirds of the time.[5] For ±2 SEM confidence intervals, this increases to about 95 percent.

The Coefficient Alpha and associated SEM for the Regents Examination in Living Environment are provided in Table 7 .

Table 7 Reliabilities and Standard Errors of Measurement: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Subject	Coefficient Alpha	SEM
Living Environment	0.95	3.70

Assuming normally distributed scores, one would expect about two-thirds of the observations to be within one standard deviation of the mean. An estimate of the standard deviation of the true scores can be computed as:

$$\hat{\sigma}_T = \sqrt{\hat{\sigma}_x^2 - \hat{\sigma}_x^2(1-\hat{\rho}_{xx})} \ .$$

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement

Every time an assessment is administered, the score that the student receives contains some error. If the same exam were administered an infinite number of times to the same student, the mean of the distribution of the student's raw scores would be equal to the student's true score (θ), the score obtained with no error, and the standard deviation of the distribution of the student's raw scores would be the conditional standard error. Since there is a one-to-one correspondence between the raw score and θ in the Rasch model, we can apply this concept more generally to all students who obtained a particular raw score and calculate the probability of obtaining each possible raw score, given the students' estimated θ. The standard deviation of this conditional distribution is defined as the conditional standard error of measurement (CSEM). The computer program POLYCSEM (Kolen, 2004) was used to carry out the mechanics of this computation.

The relationship between θ and the scale score is not expressible in a simple mathematical form because it is a blend of the third-degree polynomial relationship between the raw and scale scores, along with the nonlinear relationship between the expected raw and θ scores. Further, as the exam is equated from year to year, the relationship between the raw and scale scores moves away from the original third-degree polynomial relationship to one that is also no longer expressible in a simple mathematical form. In the absence of a simple mathematical relationship between θ and the scale scores, the CSEMs that are available for each θ score via Rasch IRT cannot be converted directly to the scale score metric.

The use of Rasch IRT to scale and equate the Regents Examination does, however, make it possible to calculate CSEMs by using the procedures described by Kolen, Zeng, and Hanson

[5] Some prefer the following interpretation: If a student were tested an infinite number of times, the ±1 SEM confidence intervals constructed for each score would capture the student's true score 68 percent of the time.

(1996) for dichotomously scored items and extended by Wang, Kolen, and Harris (2000) to polytomously scored items. For tests such as the Regents Examination in Living Environment that have a one-to-one relationship between raw (θ) and scale scores, the CSEM for each achievable scale score can be calculated by using the compound multinomial distribution to represent the conditional distribution of raw scores for each level of θ.

Consider an examinee with a certain performance level. If it were possible to measure this examinee's performance perfectly, without any error, this measure could be called the examinee's "true score," as discussed earlier. This score is equal to the expected raw score. However, whenever an examinee takes a test, the observed test score always includes some level of measurement error. Sometimes, this error is positive, and the examinee achieves a higher score than would be expected, given the examinee's level of θ; other times, it is negative, and the examinee achieves a lower-than-expected score. If we could give an examinee the same test multiple times and record the observed test scores, the resulting distribution would be the conditional distribution of raw scores for that examinee's level of θ with a mean value equal to the examinee's expected raw (true) score. The CSEM for that level of θ in the raw score metric is the square root of the variance of this conditional distribution.

The conditional distribution of raw scores for any level of θ is the compound multinomial distribution (Wang et al., 2000). An algorithm to compute this can be found in Hanson (1994) and Thissen, Pommerich, Billeaud, and Williams (1995) and is also implemented in the computer program POLYCSEM (Kolen, 2004). The compound multinomial distribution yields the probabilities that an examinee with a given level of θ has of attaining each achievable raw (and accompanying scale) score. The point values associated with each achievable raw or scale score point can be used to calculate the mean and variance of this distribution in the raw or scale score metric, respectively; the square root of the variance is the CSEM of the raw or scale score point associated with the current level of θ.

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement Confidence Intervals

CSEMs allow statements regarding the precision of individual test scores. Like SEMs, they help place reasonable limits around observed scaled scores through the construction of an approximate score band. The confidence intervals are constructed by adding and subtracting a multiplicative factor of the CSEM.

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement Characteristics

The relationship between the scale score CSEM and θ depends both on the nature of the raw-to-scale score transformation (Kolen & Brennan, 2005; Kolen & Lee, 2011) and on whether the CSEM is derived from the raw scores or from θ (Lord, 1980). The pattern of CSEMs for raw scores and linear transformations of the raw score tend to have a characteristic "inverted-U" shape, with smaller CSEMs at the ends of the score continuum and larger CSEMs toward the middle of the distribution.

Achievable raw score points for these distributions are spaced equally across the score range. Kolen and Brennan (2005, p. 357) state, "When, relative to raw scores, the transformation compresses the scale in the middle and stretches it at the ends, the pattern of the conditional standard errors of measurement will be concave up (U-shaped), even though the pattern for the raw scores was concave down (inverted-U shape)."

Results and Observations

The relationship between raw and scale scores for the Regents Examinations tends to be roughly linear from scale scores of 0 to 65 and then concave down from about 65 to 100. In other words, the scale scores track linearly with the raw scores for the first quarter of the scale score range and then are compressed relative to the raw scores for the remaining three-quarters of the range, though there are slight variations. The CSEMs for the Regents Examinations can be expected to have inverted-U shaped patterns, with some variations.

Figure 4 shows this type of CSEM variation for the Regents Examination in Living Environment, in which the compression of raw score to scale scores around the cut score of 65 changes the shape of the curve slightly. This type of expansion and compression can be seen in Figure 4 by looking at the changing density of raw score points along the scale score range on the horizontal axis. Specifically, the greatest compression appears between scale scores of about 65 to 95.

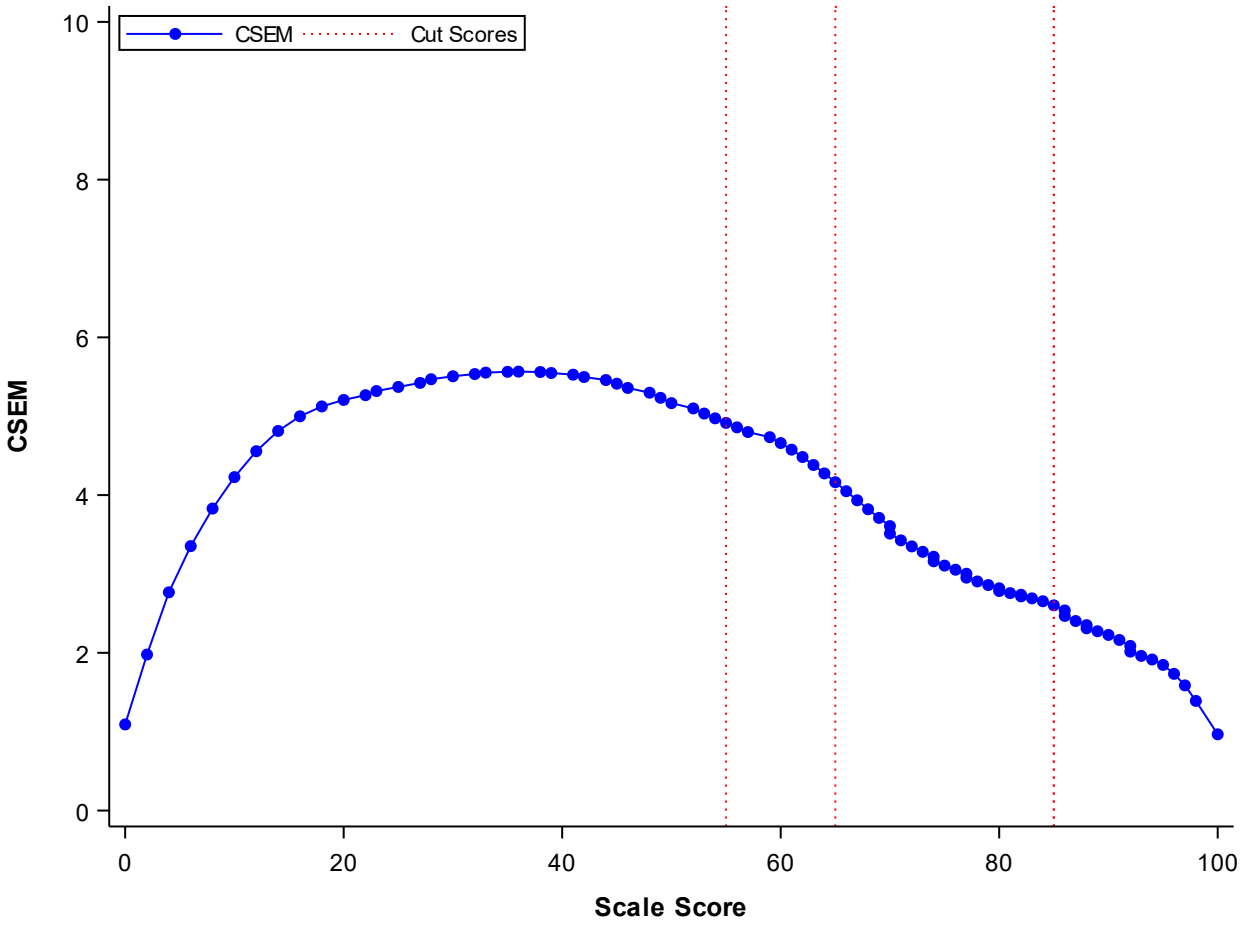

Figure 4 Conditional Standard Error Plot: Regents Examination in Living Environment

4.3 DECISION CONSISTENCY AND ACCURACY (STANDARD 2.16)

In a standards-based testing program, there is interest in knowing how accurately students are classified into performance categories. In contrast to the Coefficient Alpha, which is concerned with the relative rank-ordering of students, it is the absolute values of student scores that are important in decision consistency and accuracy.

Classification consistency refers to the degree to which the achievement level for each student can be replicated upon retesting by using an equivalent form (Huynh, 1976). Decision consistency answers the following question: What is the agreement in classifications between the two nonoverlapping, equally difficult forms of the test? If two parallel forms of the test were given to the same students, the consistency of the measure would be reflected by the extent to which the classification decisions based on the first set of test scores matched the decisions based on the second set of test scores. Consider the following tables:

		TEST ONE		
		LEVEL I	LEVEL II	MARGINAL
TEST TWO	LEVEL I	φ11	φ12	φ1●
	LEVEL II	φ21	φ22	φ2●
	MARGINAL	φ●1	φ●2	1

Figure 5 Pseudo-Decision Table for Two Hypothetical Categories

		TEST ONE				
		LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III	LEVEL IV	MARGINAL
TEST TWO	LEVEL I	φ11	φ12	φ13	φ14	φ1●
	LEVEL II	φ21	φ22	φ23	φ24	φ2●
	LEVEL III	φ31	φ32	φ33	φ34	φ3●
	LEVEL IV	φ41	φ42	φ43	φ44	φ4●
	MARGINAL	φ●1	φ●2	φ●3	φ●4	1

Figure 6 Pseudo-Decision Table for Four Hypothetical Categories

If a student is classified as being in one category based on Test One's score, how probable would it be that the student would be reclassified as being in the same category if the student took Test Two (a nonoverlapping, equally difficult form of the test)? This proportion is a measure of decision consistency.

The proportions of correct decisions, φ, for two and four categories are computed by the following two formulas, respectively:

$$\varphi = \varphi_{11} + \varphi_{22}$$

$$\varphi = \varphi_{11} + \varphi_{22} + \varphi_{33} + \varphi_{44.}$$

The sum of the diagonal entries — that is, the proportion of students classified by the two forms into the same achievement level — signifies the overall consistency.

Classification accuracy refers to the agreement of the observed classifications of students with the classifications made on the basis of their true scores. As discussed above, an observed score contains measurement error, while a true score is theoretically free of measurement error. A student's observed score can be formulated by the sum of the student's true score plus measurement error, or $Observed = True + Error$. Decision accuracy is an index to determine the extent to which measurement error causes a classification different than the one expected from the true score.

Since true scores are unobserved and decision consistency is computed based on a single administration of the Regents Examination in Living Environment, a statistical model using solely data from the available administration is used to estimate the true scores and to project the consistency and accuracy of classifications (Hambleton & Novick, 1973). Although a

number of procedures are available, a well-known method developed by Livingston and Lewis (1995) that implements a specific true score model is used.

Several factors might affect decision consistency and accuracy. One important factor is the reliability of the scores. All other things being equal, more reliable test scores tend to result in more similar reclassifications and less measurement error. Another factor is the location of the cut score in the score distribution. More consistent and accurate classifications are observed when the cut scores are located away from the mass of the score distribution. The number of performance levels is also a consideration. Consistency and accuracy indices based on four performance levels should be lower than those based on two performance levels. This is not surprising, since classification and accuracy using four performance levels would allow more opportunity to change performance levels. Hence, there would be more classification errors and less accuracy with four performance levels, resulting in lower consistency indices.

Results and Observations

The results for the dichotomies created by the three cut scores are presented in Table 8. For example, the statistics under "2/3" indicate the decision consistency and accuracy when the achievement levels are divided into two categories: one for the second and lower achievement level and the other for the third and higher achievement level. The tabled values are derived with the program *BB-Class* (Brennan, 2004) using the Livingston and Lewis method. Decision consistency ranges from 0.91 to 0.96, and the decision accuracy ranges from 0.94 to 0.97. Both decision consistency and accuracy values, based on individual cut points, indicate very good consistency and accuracy of examinee classifications, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Decision Consistency and Accuracy Results: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Statistic	1/2	2/3	3/4
Consistency	0.96	0.93	0.91
Accuracy	0.97	0.95	0.94

4.4 GROUP MEANS (STANDARD 2.17)

The examinee population for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is composed of students who have completed a course in Living Environment. For the 2020-2021 school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those students who were receiving entirely remote instruction were not required to come to school for the sole purpose of taking a Regents examination. Moreover, this examination was only to be administered where schools and districts could ensure the health and safety of students and teachers. Eligible students were exempted from the associated diploma requirement for this Regents examination. Details of those exemptions can be found here: http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/state-assessment/memo-june-august-2021-assessments.pdf and http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/state-assessment/faq-june-august-2021-assessments.pdf.

When compared with the number of expected test takers (based on recent examination administrations), approximately 20% of students took the Regents Examination in Living Environment due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, mean scale scores based on demographic variables (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) were not calculated, as the sample of students who took the June 2021 administration of the examination were not representative of all students enrolled in a Living Environment course during the 2020-2021 school year.

The overall mean scale score was computed based on all students who took the Regents Examination in Living Environment. The result is reported in Table 9.

Table 9 Mean: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Demographics	Number	Mean Scale Score	SD Scale Score
All Students	52,842	73.35	14.77

Chapter 5: Validity (Standard 1)

This exam measures examinee achievement against the New York State Learning Standards and was prepared by teacher examination committees and New York State Education Department subject matter and testing specialists. It provides teachers and students with important information about student learning and performance against the established curriculum standards. Results of this exam may be used to identify student strengths and needs to guide classroom teaching and learning. The exam also provides students, parents, counselors, administrators, and college admissions officers with objective and easily understood achievement information that may be used to inform empirically based educational and vocational decisions about students. As a state-provided objective benchmark, the Regents Examination in Living Environment is intended for use in satisfying state testing requirements for students who have finished a course in Living Environment. A passing score on the exam counts toward requirements for a high school diploma, as described in the New York State diploma requirements: http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/currentdiplomarequirements2.pdf. Results of the Regents Examination in Living Environment may also be used to satisfy various locally established requirements throughout the state.

The validity of score interpretations for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is supported by multiple sources of evidence. Chapter 1 of the *Standards for Educational Psychological Testing* (AERA et al., 2014) specifies five sources of validity evidence that are important to gather and document to support validity claims for an assessment:

- test content
- response processes
- internal test structure
- relation to other variables
- consequences of testing.

It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. One source of validity evidence often falls into more than one category, as discussed in more detail in this chapter. Nevertheless, these classifications provide a useful framework within the *Standards* (AERA et al., 2014) for the discussion and documentation of validity evidence. Therefore, they are used here. The process of gathering evidence of the validity of score interpretations is best characterized as ongoing throughout test development, administration, scoring, reporting, and beyond.

5.1 EVIDENCE BASED ON TEST CONTENT

The validity of test content is fundamental to arguments that test scores are valid for their intended purpose. It demands that a test developer provide evidence that test content is well-aligned within the framework and standards used in curriculum and instruction. Accordingly, detailed attention was given to this correspondence between standards and test content during test design and construction.

The Regents Examination in Living Environment measures student achievement on Standards 1 and 4 of the New York Learning Standards for Math, Science, and Technology. The Living Environment standards can be found at http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/science-learning-standards.

Content Validity

Content validity is necessarily concerned with the proper definition of the construct and evidence that the test provides an accurate measure of examinee performance within the defined construct. The test blueprint for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is, essentially, the design document for constructing the exam. It provides an explicit definition of the content domain that is to be represented on the exam. The test development process (discussed in the next section) is in place to ensure, to the extent possible, that the blueprint is met in all operational forms of the exam. Table 10 displays the targeted proportions of content standards and key ideas on the exam.

Table 10 Test Blueprint: Regents Examination in Living Environment

Content Strand	Approximate Weight (%)
Standard 1 (Analysis, Inquiry, and Design) Laboratory Checklist (Appendix A)	10—20
Standard 4	
Key Idea 1	13—17
Key Idea 2	9—13
Key Idea 3	8—12
Key Idea 4	6—10
Key Idea 5	13—17
Key Idea 6	10—14
Key Idea 7	11—13

Item Development Process

Test development for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is a detailed, step-by-step process of development and review cycles. An important element of this process is that all test items are developed by New York State educators in a process facilitated by state subject matter and testing experts. Bringing experienced classroom teachers into this central item development role serves to draw a strong connection between classroom and test content.

Only New York State-certified educators may participate in this process. The New York State Education Department asks for nominations from districts, and all recruiting is done with diversity of participants in mind, including diversity in gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and teaching experience. Educators with item-writing skills from throughout the state are retained to write all items for the Regents Examination in Living Environment, under strict guidelines that leverage best practices (see Appendix C). State educators also conduct all item quality and bias reviews to ensure that item content is appropriate to the construct being measured and fair for all students. Finally, educators use the defined standards, test blueprint targets,

and statistical information generated during field testing to select the highest quality items for use in the operational test.

Figure 7 summarizes the full test development process, with steps 3 and 4 addressing initial item development and review. This figure also demonstrates the ongoing nature of ensuring the content validity of items through field test trials and final item selection for operational testing.

Initial item development is conducted under the criteria and guidance provided by the Department. Both multiple-choice and constructed-response items are included in the Regents Examination in Living Environment in order to ensure appropriate coverage of the construct domain.

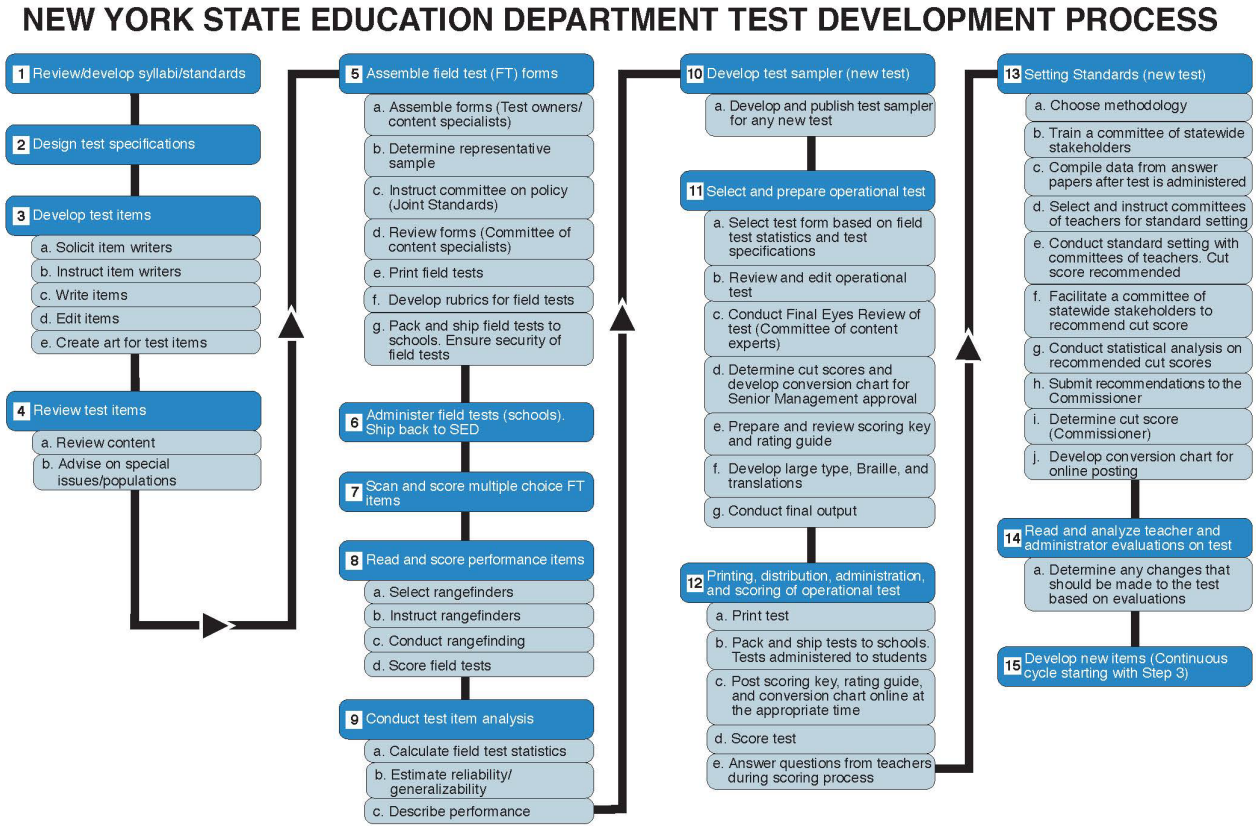

Figure 7 New York State Education Department Test Development Process

Item Review Process

The item review process helps to ensure the consistent application of rigorous item reviews intended to assess the quality of the items developed and identify items that require edits or removal from the pool of items to be field tested. This process allows high-quality items to be continually developed in a manner that is consistent with the test blueprint.

All reviewers participate in rigorous training designed to assist in a consistent interpretation of the standards throughout the item review process. This is a critical step in item development because consistency between the standards and what the items are asking examinees is a

fundamental form of evidence of the validity of the intended score interpretations. Another integral component of this item review process is to review the scoring rules, or "rubrics," for their clarity and consistency in what the examinee is being asked to demonstrate by responding to each item. Each of these elements of the review process is in place, ultimately, to target fairness for all students by targeting consistency in examinee scores and providing evidence of the validity of their interpretations. Following these reviews, only items that are approved by an assigned educator panel move forward for field testing.

Specifically, the item review process articulates the four major item characteristics that the New York State Education Department looks for when developing quality items:

1. language and graphical appropriateness
2. sensitivity/bias
3. alignment of measurement to standards
4. conformity to the expectations for the specific item types and formats (e.g., multiple-choice questions and 1-point constructed-response questions).

Each section of the criteria includes pertinent questions that help reviewers determine whether an item is of sufficient quality. Within the first two categories, criteria for language appropriateness are used to help ensure that students understand what is asked in each question and that the language in the question does not adversely affect a student's ability to perform the required task. Similarly, sensitivity/bias criteria are used to evaluate whether questions are unbiased, inoffensive, and not disadvantageous to any given subgroup(s).

The third category of item review, alignment, addresses how each item measures a given standard. This category asks the reviewer to comment on key aspects of how the item addresses and calls for the skills demanded by the standards.

The fourth category addresses the specific demands for different item types and formats. Reviewers evaluate each item to ensure that it conforms to the given requirements. For example, multiple-choice items must have, among other characteristics, one unambiguously correct answer and several plausible, but incorrect, answer choices.

Ongoing attention is also given to the relevance of the standards used to guide curriculum and assessment. Consistent with a desire to assess this relevance, the New York State Education Department is committed to ongoing standards review over time and periodically solicits thoughtful, specific responses from stakeholders about individual standards within the New York State P–12 Standards.

5.2 EVIDENCE BASED ON RESPONSE PROCESSES

The second source of validity evidence is based on examinee response processes. This standard requires evidence that examinees are responding in the manner intended by the test items and rubrics, and that raters are scoring those responses in a manner that is consistent with the rubrics. It is important to control and monitor whether or not construct-irrelevant variance in response patterns has been introduced at any point in the test development, administration, or scoring processes.

The controls and monitoring in place for the Regents Examination in Living Environment include the item development process, with attention paid to mitigating the introduction of construct-irrelevant variance. The development process described in the previous sections details the process of and attention given to reducing the potential for construct irrelevance in response processes by attending to the quality and alignment of test content to the test blueprint and to the item development guidelines (Appendix C). Further evidence is documented in the test administration and scoring procedures, as well as in the results of statistical analyses, which are covered in the following two sections.

Administration and Scoring

Adherence to standardized administration procedures is fundamental to the validity of test scores and their interpretation, as such procedures allow for adequate and consistently applied conditions for scoring the work of every student who takes the examination. For this reason, guidelines contained in the *School Administrator's Manual* (http://www.nysed.gov/state-assessment/test-manuals) have been developed and implemented for the New York State Regents testing program. All secondary-level Regents Examinations are administered under these standard conditions to support valid inferences for all students. These standard procedures also cover testing students with disabilities who are provided testing accommodations consistent with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Accommodation Plans (504 Plans). Full test administration procedures are available at http://www.nysed.gov/state-assessment/high-school-regents-examinations.

The implementation of rigorous scoring procedures directly supports the validity of the scores. Regents test-scoring practices therefore focus on producing high-quality scores. Multiple-choice items are scored via local scanning at testing centers, and trained educators score constructed-response items. There are many studies that focus on various elements of producing valid and reliable scores for constructed-response items, but generally, attention to the following all contribute to valid and reliable scores for constructed-response items:

1. Quality training (Hoyt & Kerns, 1999; Lumley & McNamara, 1995; Wang, Wong, & Kwong, 2010; Gorman & Rentsch, 2009; Schleicher, Day, Bronston, Mayes, & Riggo, 2002; Woehr & Huffcutt, 1994; Johnson, Penny, & Gordon, 2008; Weigle, 1998)
2. Detection and correction of rating bias (McQueen & Congdon, 1997; Congdon & McQueen, 2000; Myford & Wolfe, 2009; Barkaoui, 2011; Patz, Junker, Johnson, & Mariano, 2002)
3. Consistency or reliability of ratings (Congdon & McQueen, 2000; Harik, Clauser, Grabovsky, Nungester, Swanson, & Nandakumar, 2009; McQueen & Congdon, 1997; Myford & Wolfe, 2009; Mero & Motowidlo, 1995; Weinrott & Jones, 1984)
4. Rubric designs that facilitate consistency of ratings (Pecheone & Chung, 2007; Wolfe & Gitomer, 2000; Cronbach, Linn, Brennan, & Haertel, 1995; Cook & Beckman, 2009; Penny, Johnson, & Gordon, 2000; Smith, 1993; Leacock, Gonzalez, & Conarroe, 2014).

The distinct steps for operational test scoring include close attention to each of these elements and begin before the operational test is selected. After the field test process, during which many more items than appear on the operational test are administered to a representative sample of students, a set of "anchor" papers representing student responses across the range of possible responses for constructed-response items is selected. The objective of these "range-finding" efforts is to create a training set for scorer training and execution, the scores from which are used to generate important statistical information about the item. Training scorers to produce reliable and valid scores is the basis for creating rating guides and scoring ancillaries to be used during operational scoring.

To review and select these anchor papers, New York State educators serve as table leaders during the range-finding session. In the range-finding process, committees of educators receive a set of student papers for each field-tested question. Committee members familiarize themselves with each item type and score a number of responses that are representative of each of the different score points. After the independent scoring is completed, the committee reviews and discusses their results and determines consensus scores for the student responses. During this process, atypical responses are important to identify and annotate for use in training and live scoring. The range-finding results are then used to build training materials for the vendor's scorers, who then score the rest of the field test responses to constructed-response items. The final rating guides for the June 2021 administration of the Regents Examination in Living Environment are located at http://www.nysedregents.org/LivingEnvironment/.

During the range-finding and field test-scoring processes, it is important to be aware of and to control for sources of variation in scoring. One possible source of variation in constructed-response scores is unintended rater bias associated with items and examinee responses. The rater is often unaware of such bias, so this type of variation may be the most challenging source of variation in scoring to control and measure. Rater biases can appear as severity or leniency in applying the scoring rubric. Bias also includes phenomena such as the halo effect, which occurs when good or poor performance on one element of the rubric encourages inaccurate scoring of other elements. These types of rater bias can be effectively controlled by training practices with a strict focus on rubric requirements.

The training process for operational scoring by New York State educators begins with a review and discussion of actual student work on constructed-response test items. This helps raters understand the range and characteristics typical of examinee responses, as well as the kinds of mistakes that students commonly make. This information is used to train raters on how to consistently apply key elements of the scoring rubric across the domain of student responses.

Raters then receive training consistent with the guidelines and ancillaries produced after field testing and are allowed to practice scoring prior to the start of live scoring. Throughout the scoring process, there are important procedures for correcting inconsistent scoring or the misapplication of scoring rubrics for constructed-response items. When monitoring and correction do not occur during scoring, construct-irrelevant variation may be introduced. Accordingly, a scoring lead may be assigned to review the consistency of scoring for the lead's

assigned staff against model responses and to be available for consultation throughout the scoring process.

Attention to the rubric design also fundamentally contributes to the validity of examinee response processes. The rubric specifies what the examinee needs to provide as evidence of learning based on the question asked. The more explicit the rubric (and the item), the clearer the response expectations are for examinees. To facilitate the development of constructed-response scoring rubrics, NYSED training for writing items includes specific attention to rubric development as follows:

- The rubric should clearly specify the criteria for awarding each credit.
- The rubric should be aligned to what is asked for in the item and correspond to the knowledge or skill being assessed.
- Whenever possible, the rubric should be written to allow for alternative approaches and other legitimate methods.

In support of the goal of valid score interpretations for each examinee, such scoring training procedures are implemented for the Regents Examination in Living Environment. Operational raters are selected based on expertise in the exam subject and are assigned a specific set of items to score. No more than approximately one-half of the items on the test are assigned to any one rater. This increases the consistency of scoring across examinee responses by allowing each rater to focus on a subset of items. It also ensures that no one rater is allowed to score the entire test for any one student. This practice reduces the effect of any potential bias of a single rater on individual examinees. Additionally, raters are not allowed to score the responses of their own students.

Statistical Analysis

One statistic that is useful for evaluating the response processes for multiple-choice items is an item's point-biserial correlation on the distractors. A high point-biserial on a distractor may indicate that students are not able to identify the correct response for a reason other than the difficulty of the item. A finding of poor model fit for an item may also support a finding that examinees are not responding in the way in which the item developer intended. As documented in Table 2, the point-biserial statistics for distractors in the multiple-choice items all appear to be negative or close to zero, indicating that examinees are not being drawn to an unintended construct.

5.3 EVIDENCE BASED ON INTERNAL STRUCTURE

The third source of validity evidence comes from the internal structure of the test. This requires that test developers evaluate the test structure to ensure that the test is functioning as intended. Such an evaluation may include attention to item interactions, tests of dimensionality, or indications of test bias for or against one or more subgroups of examinees detected by differential item functioning (DIF) analysis. Evaluation of internal test structure also includes a review of the results of classical item analyses, test reliability, and the IRT scaling and equating.

The following analyses were conducted for the Regents Examination in Living Environment:

- item difficulty
- item discrimination
- differential item functioning
- IRT model fit
- test reliability
- classification consistency
- test dimensionality.

Item Difficulty

Multiple analyses allow for an evaluation of item difficulty. For this exam, *p*-values and Rasch difficulty (item location) estimates were computed for MC and CR items. Items for the Regents Examination in Living Environment show a range of *p*-values consistent with the targeted exam difficulty. The item *p*-values range from 0.26 to 0.91, with a mean of 0.66. The difficulty distribution illustrated in Figure 1 shows a wide range of item difficulties on the exam. This is consistent with general test development practice, which seeks to measure student ability along a full range of difficulty. Refer to Chapter 2 of this report for additional details.

Item Discrimination

How well the items on a test discriminate between high- and low-performing examinees is an important measure of the structure of a test. Items that do not discriminate well generally provide less reliable information about student performance. Table 2 and Table 3 provide point-biserial values on the correct responses; Table 2 also provides point-biserial values on the three distractors. The values for correct answers are 0.21 or higher for all items. Additionally, all distractor values are negative, indicating that examinees are responding to the items as expected during item and rubric development.

Differential Item Functioning

Differential item functioning (DIF) was conducted for gender, race/ethnicity, needs/resource capacity (NRC) categories, and ELL status based on the data for the June 2021 administration. DIF data are only available after the administration due to the fact that all Regents examinations are pre-equated, meaning that the parameters used to derive the relationship between the raw and scale scores are estimated prior to the construction and administration of the operational form. The Mantel-Haenszel (Mantel & Haenszel, 1959) and standardized mean difference (Dorans & Schmitt, 1991) methods were used to detect items that may function differently for any of these subgroups. The Mantel-Haenszel χ^2 is a conditional mean comparison of the ordered response categories for reference and focal groups combined over values of the matching variable score. “Ordered” means that a response earning a score of “1” on an item is better than a response earning a score of “0,” a “2” is better than “1,” and so on. “Conditional,” on the other hand, refers to the comparison of members from the two groups who received the same score on the matching variable — the total test score in our analysis. The results of these analyses were examined by NYSED content specialists to identify potential systematic issues that could be addressed in future item writing.

IRT Model Fit

Model fit for the Rasch method used to estimate location (difficulty) parameters for the items on the Regents Examination in Living Environment provides important evidence that the internal structure of the test is of high technical quality. The number of items within a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3] is reported in Table 6. The mean INFIT value is 0.99, with 83 of 85 items falling in a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3]. As the range of [0.7, 1.3] is used as a guide for ideal fit, fit values outside of the range are considered individually. Overall, these results indicate that the Rasch model fits the Regents Examination in Living Environment item data well.

Test Reliability

As discussed, test reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a test (Cronbach, 1951). It is a measure of the extent to which the items on a test provide consistent information about student mastery of the domain. Reliability should ultimately demonstrate that examinee score estimates maximize consistency and therefore minimize error or, theoretically speaking, that examinees who take a test multiple times would get the same score each time. The reliability estimate for the Regents Examination in Living Environment is 0.95, showing high reliability of examinee scores. Refer to Chapter 4 of this report for additional details.

Classification Consistency and Accuracy

A decision consistency analysis measures the agreement between the classifications based on two nonoverlapping, equally difficult forms of the test. If two parallel forms of the test were given to the same students, the consistency of the measure would be reflected by the extent to which the classification decisions based on the first set of test scores matched the decisions based on the second set of test scores. Decision accuracy is an index to determine the extent to which measurement error causes a classification different from that expected from the true score. High decision consistency and accuracy provide strong evidence that the internal structure of a test is sound.

For the Regents Examination in Living Environment, both decision consistency and accuracy values are high, indicating very good consistency and accuracy of examinee classifications. Decision consistency ranged from 0.91 to 0.96, and the decision accuracy ranged from 0.94 to 0.97. Both decision consistency and accuracy values based on individual cut points indicate very good consistency and accuracy of examinee classifications.

Test Dimensionality

In addition to model fit, a strong assumption of the Rasch model is that the construct measured by a test is unidimensional. Violation of this assumption might suggest that the test is measuring something other than the intended content and indicate that the quality of the test structure is compromised. A principal components analysis was conducted to test the assumption of unidimensionality, and the results provide strong evidence that a single dimension in the Regents Examination in Living Environment is explaining a large portion of the variance in student response data. This analysis does not characterize or explain the dimension, but a reasonable assumption can be made that the test is largely unidimensional and that the dimension most present is the targeted construct. Refer to Chapter 3 for details of this analysis.

Considering this collection of detailed analyses of the internal structure of the Regents Examination in Living Environment, strong evidence exists that the exam is functioning as intended and is providing valid and reliable information about examinee performance.

5.4 EVIDENCE BASED ON RELATIONS TO OTHER VARIABLES

Another source of validity evidence is based on the relation of the test to other variables. This source commonly encompasses two validity categories prevalent in the literature and practice — concurrent and predictive validity. To make claims about the validity of a test that is to be used for high-stakes purposes, such as the Regents Examination in Living Environment, these claims could be supported by providing evidence that performance on this test correlates well with other tests that measure the same or similar constructs. Although not absolute in its ability to offer evidence that concurrent test score validity exists, such correlations can be helpful for supporting a claim of concurrent validity if the correlation is high. To conduct such studies, matched examinee score data for other tests measuring the same content as the Regents Examination in Living Environment are ideal. However, the systematic acquisition of such data is complex and costly.

Importantly, a strong connection between classroom curriculum and test content may be inferred by the fact that New York State educators, deeply familiar with both the curriculum standards and their enactment in the classroom, develop all content for the Regents Examination in Living Environment.

In terms of predictive validity, time is a fundamental constraint on gathering evidence. The gold standard for supporting the validity of predictive statements about test scores requires empirical evidence of the relationship between test scores and future performance on a defined characteristic. To the extent that the objective of the standards is to prepare students for meeting graduation requirements, it will be important to gather evidence of this empirical relationship over time.

5.5 EVIDENCE BASED ON TESTING CONSEQUENCES

There are two general approaches in the literature to evaluating consequential validity. Messick (1995) points out that adverse social consequences invalidate test use mainly if they are due to flaws in the test. In this sense, the sources of evidence documented in this report (based on the construct, internal test structure, response processes, and relation to other variables) serve as a consequential validity argument as well. This evidence supports conclusions based on test scores that social consequences are not likely to be traced to characteristics or qualities of the test itself.

Cronbach (1988), on the other hand, argues that negative consequences could invalidate test use. From this perspective, the test user is obligated to make the case for test use and to ensure appropriate and supported uses. Regardless of perspective on the nature of consequential validity, it is important to caution against uses that are not supported by the validity claims documented for this test. For example, use of this test to predict examinee scores on other tests is not directly supported by either the stated purposes or the development process and research conducted on examinee data. A brief survey of websites of New York State universities and colleges finds that, beyond the explicitly defined use as a testing

requirement toward graduation for students who have completed a course in Living Environment, the exam is most commonly used to inform admissions and course placement decisions. Such uses can be considered reasonable, assuming that the competencies demonstrated in the Regents Examination in Living Environment are consistent with those required in the courses for which a student is seeking enrollment or placement. Educational institutions using the exam for placement purposes are advised to examine the scoring rules for the Regents Examination in Living Environment and to assess their appropriateness for the inferences being made about course placement.

As stated, the nature of validity arguments is not absolute, rather it is supported through ongoing processes and studies designed to accumulate support for validity claims. The evidence provided in this report documents the evidence to date that supports the use of the Regents Examination in Living Environment scores for the purposes described.

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Appendix A: Operational Test Map

Table A.1 Test Map for June 2021 Administration

Position	Item Type	Max. Points	Weight	Standard	Key Idea	PI	Mean	Point-Biserial	RID	INFIT
1	MC	1	1	4	1	1.3a	0.39	0.27	0.6564	1.20
2	MC	1	1	4	6	6.1d	0.46	0.32	0.2807	1.16
3	MC	1	1	4	1	1.2b	0.79	0.41	-1.5055	0.98
4	MC	1	1	4	6	6.2a	0.71	0.42	-0.9778	1.02
5	MC	1	1	4	3	3.1b	0.84	0.43	-1.8924	0.91
6	MC	1	1	4	1	1.2i	0.68	0.41	-0.8277	1.04
7	MC	1	1	4	7	7.1b	0.85	0.48	-2.1137	0.88
8	MC	1	1	4	1	1.1d	0.78	0.47	-1.5247	0.96
9	MC	1	1	4	2	2.0	0.69	0.57	-0.8941	0.85
10	MC	1	1	4	2	2.1j	0.87	0.45	-2.2782	0.89
11	MC	1	1	4	3	3.1e	0.31	0.21	1.0659	1.26
12	MC	1	1	4	5	5.2g	0.71	0.43	-1.0322	1.08
13	MC	1	1	4	4	4.1b	0.69	0.54	-0.9076	0.92
14	MC	1	1	4	4	2.1e	0.59	0.51	-0.3370	1.00
15	MC	1	1	4	4	4.0	0.56	0.50	-0.2049	1.01
16	MC	1	1	4	5	5.3a	0.69	0.50	-0.8986	0.91
17	MC	1	1	4	2	2.2e	0.61	0.36	-0.4651	1.14
18	MC	1	1	4	4	4.1h	0.82	0.43	-1.7567	0.94
19	MC	1	1	4	2	2.0	0.66	0.43	-0.7544	1.04
20	MC	1	1	4	6	6.3b	0.44	0.39	0.3836	1.08
21	MC	1	1	4	7	7.1c	0.71	0.52	-1.0237	0.95
22	MC	1	1	4	5	5.2a	0.74	0.47	-1.2321	0.99
23	MC	1	1	4	7	7.1b	0.47	0.31	0.2867	1.29
24	MC	1	1	4	6	6.1c	0.30	0.33	1.1490	1.13
25	MC	1	1	4	7	7.3b	0.68	0.55	-0.8495	0.88
26	MC	1	1	4	6	6.1g	0.74	0.45	-1.2142	1.03
27	MC	1	1	4	2	2.1a	0.58	0.48	-0.3128	0.98
28	MC	1	1	4	5	5.1d	0.39	0.41	0.6279	1.04
29	MC	1	1	4	5	5.3b	0.50	0.46	0.0918	1.07
30	MC	1	1	4	5	5.1e	0.70	0.35	-0.9634	1.12
31	MC	1	1	Appendix A			0.65	0.55	-0.6662	0.87
32	MC	1	1	Appendix A			0.76	0.40	-1.3430	1.01
33	MC	1	1	Appendix A			0.58	0.41	-0.2979	1.08
34	MC	1	1	4	1	1.1a	0.35	0.42	0.8760	1.04
35	MC	1	1	4	1	1.1d	0.33	0.40	0.9782	1.06
36	MC	1	1	4	1	1.1a	0.36	0.47	0.7790	0.96

Position	Item Type	Max. Points	Weight	Standard	Key Idea	PI	Mean	Point-Biserial	RID	INFIT
37	MC	1	1	4	1	1.2h	0.53	0.29	-0.0799	1.20
38	MC	1	1	1	2	2.3a	0.54	0.49	-0.0935	0.96
39	MC	1	1	1	1	1.3b	0.70	0.40	-0.9619	1.02
40	MC	1	1	4	5	5.1g	0.45	0.34	0.3445	1.16
41	MC	1	1	4	5	5.1f	0.47	0.43	0.2335	1.05
42	MC	1	1	4	5	5.0	0.51	0.38	0.0349	1.10
43	MC	1	1	4	7	7.1c	0.58	0.50	-0.3253	0.96
44	CR	1	1	Appendix A			0.56	0.43	-0.2168	1.03
45	CR	1	1	Appendix A			0.71	0.40	-0.9778	1.02
46	CR	1	1	4	4	4.0	0.44	0.53	0.3629	0.91
47	MC	1	1	1	3	3.1a	0.74	0.46	-1.1938	0.94
48	CR	1	1	4	3	3.1g	0.57	0.55	-0.2531	0.89
49	MC	1	1	4	3	3.1g	0.68	0.43	-0.8277	1.01
50	MC	1	1	4	3	3.1g	0.79	0.46	-1.5038	0.91
51	CR	1	1	4	3	3.1f	0.26	0.45	1.3911	0.99
52	CR	1	1	4	4	4.1f	0.48	0.51	0.2216	1.00
53	CR	1	1	4	4	4.1b	0.41	0.42	0.5668	1.06
54	CR	1	1	1	1	1.3b	0.53	0.51	-0.0164	1.01
55	CR	1	1	4	1	1.2a	0.65	0.57	-0.7080	0.90
56	CR	1	1	4	6	6.1a	0.57	0.59	-0.2829	0.84
57	CR	1	1	4	7	7.2b	0.42	0.54	0.4716	0.92
58	CR	1	1	4	7	7.3b	0.47	0.51	0.2113	0.95
59	CR	1	1	4	7	1.1d	0.65	0.55	-0.6613	0.88
60	CR	1	1	4	7	7.2b	0.49	0.56	0.1554	0.89
61	CR	1	1	4	7	7.2b	0.67	0.55	-0.7859	0.88
62	CR	1	1	4	7	7.2c	0.47	0.58	0.2482	0.87
63	CR	1	1	4	1	1.1d	0.64	0.55	-0.6425	0.88
64	CR	1	1	4	6	6.0	0.66	0.61	-0.7709	0.83
65	CR	1	1	4	6	6.1d	0.57	0.58	-0.2341	0.90
66	CR	1	1	4	6	6.1g	0.56	0.61	-0.1831	0.86
67	CR	1	1	4	5	5.2f	0.30	0.57	1.2391	0.85
68	CR	1	1	4	5	5.2f	0.40	0.55	0.6613	0.92
69	CR	1	1	4	3	3.0	0.59	0.53	-0.3415	0.91
70	CR	1	1	4	2	2.2c	0.23	0.53	1.5752	0.84
71	CR	1	1	4	2	2.1h	0.25	0.46	1.3948	0.94
72	CR	1	1	4	3	3.1e	0.29	0.47	1.1527	0.96
73	MC	1	1	Lab		1	0.53	0.33	-0.0607	1.16
74	MC	1	1	Lab		1	0.49	0.46	0.1157	1.01
75	MC	1	1	Lab		2	0.69	0.37	-0.9065	1.07
76	MC	1	1	Lab		3	0.39	0.48	0.6989	1.02
77	CR	1	1	Lab		3	0.31	0.42	1.1470	1.10

Position	Item Type	Max. Points	Weight	Standard	Key Idea	PI	Mean	Point-Biserial	RID	INFIT
78	CR	1	1	Lab		1	0.20	0.50	1.7625	0.87
79	CR	1	1	Lab		1	0.26	0.46	1.4001	0.94
80	CR	1	1	Lab		1	0.16	0.44	2.1224	0.94
81	MC	1	1	Lab		5	0.69	0.29	-0.9404	1.27
82	MC	1	1	Lab		1	0.49	0.40	0.1928	1.16
83	CR	1	1	Lab		2	0.24	0.52	1.6364	0.89
84	CR	1	1	Lab		2	0.30	0.50	1.1657	0.95
85	CR	1	1	Lab		2	0.41	0.56	0.5374	0.89

Appendix B: Raw-to-Theta-to-Scale Score Conversion Table

Table B.1 Score Table for June 2021 Administration

Raw Score	Ability	Scale Score
0	-6.1918	0.000
1	-4.9715	2.330
2	-4.2551	4.851
3	-3.8264	7.187
4	-3.5155	9.412
5	-3.2692	11.592
6	-3.0637	13.726
7	-2.8863	15.822
8	-2.7295	17.890
9	-2.5884	19.883
10	-2.4596	21.813
11	-2.3409	23.735
12	-2.2303	25.578
13	-2.1266	27.353
14	-2.0287	29.132
15	-1.9358	30.916
16	-1.8472	32.631
17	-1.7623	34.272
18	-1.6808	35.884
19	-1.6022	37.516
20	-1.5262	39.098
21	-1.4524	40.602
22	-1.3808	42.076
23	-1.3109	43.512
24	-1.2428	44.966
25	-1.1761	46.378
26	-1.1107	47.708
27	-1.0466	49.055
28	-0.9835	50.412
29	-0.9214	51.705
30	-0.8602	52.996
31	-0.7998	54.208
32	-0.7400	55.400
33	-0.6809	56.620
34	-0.6224	57.730
35	-0.5642	58.871
36	-0.5065	60.009
37	-0.4492	61.101
38	-0.3921	62.142
39	-0.3352	63.186
40	-0.2785	64.241
41	-0.2219	65.185
42	-0.1654	66.127
43	-0.1088	67.080
44	-0.0522	68.029
45	0.0045	68.877
46	0.0614	69.791
47	0.1184	70.606
48	0.1758	71.419
49	0.2335	72.227
50	0.2916	73.020
51	0.3502	73.808
52	0.4092	74.590
53	0.4690	75.262
54	0.5293	76.014
55	0.5904	76.739
56	0.6523	77.402
57	0.7152	78.132
58	0.7791	78.852
59	0.8441	79.560
60	0.9104	80.227
61	0.9781	80.861
62	1.0473	81.577
63	1.1182	82.313
64	1.1910	82.980
65	1.2659	83.642
66	1.3432	84.303
67	1.4230	85.035
68	1.5058	85.763
69	1.5920	86.476
70	1.6820	87.182
71	1.7763	87.882
72	1.8756	88.573
73	1.9807	89.291
74	2.0928	90.057
75	2.2130	90.817
76	2.3433	91.559
77	2.4859	92.293
78	2.6443	93.070
79	2.8232	93.880
80	3.0302	94.695
81	3.2781	95.497
82	3.5906	96.338
83	4.0208	97.152
84	4.7387	98.033
85	5.9601	100.000

Appendix C: Item Writing Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS

1. The item should focus on a single issue, problem, or topic stated clearly and concisely in the stem.

2. The item should be written in clear and simple language, with vocabulary and sentence structure kept as simple as possible.

3. The stem should be written as a direct question or an incomplete statement.

4. The stem should not contain irrelevant or unnecessary detail.

5. The stem should be stated positively. Avoid using negatively stated stems.

6. The phrase *which of the following* should not be used to refer to the alternatives. Instead use *which* followed by a noun.

7. The stem should include any words that must otherwise be repeated in each alternative.

8. The item should have one and only one correct answer (key).

9. The distractors should be plausible and attractive to students who lack the knowledge, understanding, or ability assessed by the item.

10. The alternatives should be grammatically consistent with the stem.

11. The alternatives should be parallel with one another in form.

12. The alternatives should be arranged in logical order, when possible.

13. The alternatives should be independent and mutually exclusive.

14. The item should not contain extraneous clues to the correct answer.

15. Items should be written in the third person. Use generic terms instead of proper nouns, such as first names and brand names.

CHECKLIST OF TEST CONSTRUCTION PRINCIPLES

(Multiple-Choice Items)

		YES	NO
1.	Is the item significant?		
2.	Does the item have curricular validity?		
3.	Is the item presented in clear and simple language, with vocabulary kept as simple as possible?		
4.	Does the item have one and only one correct answer?		
5.	Does the item state one single central problem completely in the stem? (See Helpful Hint below.)		
6.	Does the stem include any extraneous material ("window dressing")?		
7.	Are all responses grammatically consistent with the stem and parallel with one another in form?		
8.	Are all responses plausible (attractive to students who lack the information tested by the item)?		
9.	Are all responses independent and mutually exclusive?		
10.	Are there any extraneous clues due to grammatical inconsistencies, verbal associations, length of response, etc.?		
11.	Were the principles of Universal Design used in constructing the item?		

HELPFUL HINT

To determine if the stem is complete (meaningful all by itself):

1. Cover up the responses and read just the stem.

2. Try to turn the stem into a short-answer question by drawing a line after the last word. If it is not a good, short-answer item, then there may be a problem with the stem.

3. The stem must consist of a statement that contains a verb.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE ITEMS

1. The item should focus on a single issue, problem, or topic stated clearly and concisely.

2. The item should be written with terminology, vocabulary and sentence structure kept as simple as possible. The item should be free of irrelevant or unnecessary detail.

3. The item should be written in the third person. Use generic terms instead of proper nouns such as first names and brand names.

4. The item should not contain extraneous clues to the correct answer.

5. The item should assess student understanding of the material by requiring responses that show evidence of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation.

6. When a stimulus is used, an introduction is required.

7. The item should clearly specify what the student is expected to do to provide an acceptable response.

8. A group of constructed-response items should be arranged in logical sequence, and each item should test different knowledge, understandings, and/or skills.

9. The stimulus should provide information/data that is scientifically accurate.

10. The source of each stimulus must be clearly identified for all material that is not original.

11. The introduction, stimulus (when used), item, student answer space, and rating guide must correspond.

12. The rating guide must provide examples of correct responses.

13. The rating guide and items should clearly specify if credit is allowed for labeling units. If no credit is allowed for units, the unit should be provided within the student answer space.

14. The rating guide should specify the acceptable range for numerical responses.