National Council on Measurement in Education Position Statement on

Test Security for Large Scale Educational, Credentialing, and Workplace Testing

Rigorous and effective policies and practices are necessary to protect the security of test content and the integrity of test scores. Test security violations undermine the validity of intended score interpretations and uses, which can lead to faulty decisions based on test scores. Compromising test security hurts everyone, including students whose test scores may determine program placement, and their families; teachers, education leaders, and policymakers who make resource allocation and other educational decisions based on test data; candidates for credentials; the public that relies on licensure and certification testing for protection and safety; employers who rely on tests for hiring and job placement decisions; and individuals seeking employment or promotion.

Test security violations include cheating, such as when examinees copy answers from one another; cuing, such as when test administrators or others guide examinees to correct responses during test administration; and using bribery and other motivations to encourage someone to change examinees' incorrect responses to correct ones or to change their test scores. Other types of security breaches include impersonating examinees, stealing test content, and exposing test content before or after an administration (e.g., posting or discussing content on social media).

Threats to test score integrity include when test administrators and scorers have a conflict of interest with examinee interests (e.g., teachers and their students, professional certification preparation programs and their trainees); provide unwarranted or inappropriately implemented test accommodations; or exclude some examinees from test participation to inflate overall group performance.

A comprehensive system of test security includes policies, practices, and procedures to prevent or minimize threats to test security; to detect and investigate suspected, alleged, or discovered violations; and to resolve all investigations. Resolution of a possible security violation may include closing an investigation with no finding, implementing penalties against violators, and collecting compensation for loss of exposed content and other damages. Test sponsors should develop and implement such comprehensive systems and implement those policies, practices, and procedures to resolve possible security breaches. Comprehensive test security programs can be fully effective only if all individuals and groups involved in test development, delivery, analysis, and reporting participate proactively in protecting security, report threats to or violations of test security, and support investigation and resolution efforts.

NCME recommends the following.

(1) Test sponsors and their vendors should collaborate to develop and implement comprehensive test security systems that, to the maximum extent feasible, ensure the security of test content, ensure that tests are administered securely and as prescribed, follow up on and resolve any suspected violations, and protect the integrity of examinee test scores.

(2) Test sponsors and their vendors should analyze examinee response and performance data to identify potential irregularities and possible misconduct. They should investigate irregularities and possible misconduct, remedy security weaknesses, and resolve any security violations to discourage future misconduct.

(3) Test administrators and testing program coordinators and managers should take actions to prevent threats to security and report possible threats or violations of test security; they should follow instructions from test developers and sponsors for protecting test security and administering tests as prescribed.

(4) Examinees should prepare for and take tests honestly in fairness to themselves, other examinees, and to the individuals and institutions responsible for making appropriate decisions based on test scores.

(5) Anyone related to or who works with examinees should encourage them not to cheat, steal content, or otherwise expose secure content so as to protect the meaningful use of test scores.

(6) Legislative bodies, governmental agencies, and professional organizations that sponsor, require, or regulate tests should require testing programs to develop and implement policies, practices, and procedures to protect, prevent threats to, and follow up on and resolve possible threats to or violations of test security.

NCME's position statement on test security is consistent with the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014); the resource paper *Testing and Data Integrity in the Administration of Statewide Student Assessment Programs* (National Council on Measurement in Education, 2012); *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* (Joint Committee on Testing Practices, 2004); the US Department of Education's *Peer Review of State Assessment Systems: Non-Regulatory Guidance for States* (US Department of Education, 2015 September 25); and policies and recommended practices promulgated by the Association of Test Publishers, Council of Chief State School Officers, and National Association of State Boards of Education.

References

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. (2014). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Joint Committee on Testing Practices. (2004). *Code of fair testing practices in education*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Available at http://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/fair-testing.pdf.

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US Department of Education (2015 September 25). *U. S. Department of Education Peer Review of State Assessment Systems: Non-Regulatory Guidance for States*. Available at https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/assessguid15.pdf.

About NCME: The National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) is a professional organization for individuals involved in assessment, evaluation, testing, and other aspects of educational measurement. Members are involved in the construction and use of standardized tests; new forms of assessment, including performance-based assessment; program design; and program evaluation. NCME

members include university faculty; test developers; state and federal testing and research directors; professional evaluators; testing specialists in business, industry, education, community programs, and other professions; licensure, certification, and credentialing professionals; graduate students from educational, psychological, and other measurement programs; and others involved in testing issues and practices.

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