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POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE LETTER: ASSESSMENT FOR ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS

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1. Overview

1.1. Summary

The Rhode Island Adult Education Assessment Policy establishes the need for and purpose of the assessment policy, specifies general and testing requirements for in-person and distance learning programs, identifies guidelines for proctored administration of approved assessments and determination of educational functioning levels based on test results, and defines training requirements. The final section of the policy discusses learning disabilities screening and college readiness assessments.

1.2. Need for Assessment Policy

Local adult education programs must assess students using standardized pre- and post-assessments to report educational gains for the National Reporting System (NRS). To promote the quality of these assessment data, the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) at the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), U.S. Department of Education (DOE) requires each state to develop and subsequently submit annually a written assessment policy. The policy is to describe the assessments local programs may use, when local programs are to administer pre- and post-tests, training requirements associated with assessments, their administration, and reporting requirements. State implementation of effective assessment policy will result in high quality assessment data from local programs.

1.3. Purpose of the Assessment Policy

The purpose of the state assessment policy is to provide guidance to programs relative to their assessment responsibilities in meeting state and federal accountability requirements. This policy does not address other types of classroom- or program-based assessments. Programs are encouraged to continue to use multiple ways to assess progress and achievement and use this information to inform teaching and provide learners with feedback. In addition, the state assessment policy aims to provide guidance to each funded provider in developing a local written assessment policy and procedures document that adheres to the state policy.

1.4. State Context

Assessment data can be used for both accountability purposes and to inform curriculum and instruction. As for accountability, NRS requirements for assessment emphasize the need for valid and reliable assessments for measuring achievement of literacy and language skills for adult

students, tied to NRS levels. The use of valid and reliable instruments ensure what is intended to be measured, is measured (i.e., literacy, language, mathematics, etc.) and consistently measured each time an assessment is administered.

Programs can and are encouraged to also use assessments for instructional purposes in determining at what level of instruction the student shall begin and what skills and proficiencies must be achieved. Using standardized tests provides uniformity in determining entry levels and progress.

2. General Guidelines

2.1. Definition of Students to Be Assessed

Students to be assessed are all eligible adults according to Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, P.L. 105-220. Specifically, adults who are eligible for adult education services:

- are 16 years of age or older;
- are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law;
- lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society;
- do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.

2.2. State Assessments Permitted

Programs can use one of the NRS-approved assessments listed below. Programs must use approved standardized assessments for placement of participants into Educational Functioning Levels and to measure and report progress. All students that will be included in the state's NRS data submission must be tested. Exceptions may be made for students who are unable to understand or respond to the test due to low literacy or English proficiency or due to disability. However, the programs must provide some alternative assessment for such students.

Using approved-NRS assessments uniformly statewide, allows for comparability across programs within the state, which is critical now that funding is increasingly tied to NRS outcomes. It ensures consistency.

Both NRS and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Adult Education Office currently approve the following assessments:

For ESL

- CASAS (Life Skills, Employability, and Life and Work)
- BEST Literacy
- BEST Plus (Computer Administered or Print Based)

For ABE/ASE

- CASAS (Life Skills, Employability, Life and Work, Secondary Assessment)

CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) is a competency, outcome-based system for assessing adult basic reading, math, listening, writing, and speaking skills. The intended population is adults functioning at or below a high school level in attaining the basic literacy skills to function effectively on the job, in the community, and in the family. Consultation and training are required for implementation of the system. More information is available at: <http://www.casas.org>.

Best Plus (Basic English Skills Test) is a revision of the oral interview section of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which discriminates among the levels of English language proficiency described in the Student Performance Levels (SPLs). The intended population is adult English language learners who may or may not have received an education in their native language or in English, but who need to function in day-to-day life in the U.S. Conversation language skills, including speaking and listening are measured/tested. A six-hour training workshop in administering and scoring the test is required for all test administrators. Additional information is available at: <http://www.cal.org/BESTplus>.

2.3. State Training Requirements

Assessment data should inform program decision-making and program improvement decisions. Program service providers will be trained on the assessment policy, how it should inform curricula and instruction, and collection of quality data for the NRS. New program staff will be expected to receive training on the assessment and goal setting policies as well as intake and orientation processes within three weeks of hire. Assessment-specific training will be expected at its first availability. All new staff are also required to take the introductory NRS online course titled “What is the NRS?” (course is located at <http://www.nrsweb.org/trainings/online.aspx>) within three weeks of hire and to attend the new staff orientation provided by the Professional Development Center.

The OAE shall provide trainings that will include National Reporting System (NRS) policy, definitions of measures, and accountability policies. Training sessions will also be offered for data collection in the Comprehensive Adult Literacy Information System (CALIS), NRS follow-up, and Data Analysis. These trainings will address how programs use data to make programmatic decisions – gathering, analyzing, compiling, and reporting data. Programs will be responsible for ensuring instructors and appropriate staff understand how to collect data and analyze to inform curricula and instruction.

Programs shall identify appropriate individuals to administer and score assessments. Training will be scheduled by the Professional Development Center (PDC) for the CASAS and BEST Plus assessments. Programs shall keep records of which staff attended training and who conducted the training.

2.4. Local Assessment Policy Requirement

Each funded provider must develop a local written assessment policy and procedures document that adheres to the state policy. This required local assessment policy must include:

- a description of assessments the staff in the local program may use;
- when the local program expects its staff to administer pre- and post-tests; and
- training requirements local staff must meet associated with approved assessments, their administration, and reporting requirements.

The local assessment policy shall be shared with staff and participants and take into account the provider’s instructional delivery system, the intensity and duration of instruction, and the student population served. Local programs must train all staff on their local assessment policy and keep records (e.g., attendance records) that demonstrate that each staff member participated in such training. In addition, local programs shall only use trained and certified proctors to administer assessments to ensure appropriate test administration in a proctored environment.

In addition to incorporating relevant state assessment requirements, local program assessment policies can integrate assessment-related information contained in the Rhode Island Program Quality Indicators developed by Governor Carcieri’s Adult Literacy Task Force. This information

can assist programs with defining elements to include in their assessment policy and procedures. Please find below two of the program quality indicators for Assessment of Learner Performance and Ongoing Assessment produced by one of the Governor's Adult Literacy Task Force committees and refined by a program staffed work group. The standards below are for assessment of learner performance and ongoing assessment.

Standard: The program has a process for the assessment of student progress that is consistent with state policy and guidelines, based on an understanding of the learning process, ongoing, and purposeful.

- Assessment tools and procedures reflect an understanding of the complexities of language, literacy, and numeracy acquisition and use.
- Assessment tools and procedures are aligned with instructional approaches, curricula, and statewide standards.
- Assessment procedures use a variety of evaluation tools for specific purposes.
- Students are actively involved in the assessment of their own progress and develop self-assessment strategies to monitor their own performance and growth.
- Assessment results are shared with the learner and documented and reported according to state guidelines.

Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to):

- Documentation of assessment procedures and tools and rational for their use
- Student work samples, self-assessments and test results in student file, goal or educational plan, portfolio, etc.
- Teacher and student observations and reflections in journals, etc.
- Completed and dated outcome reports to funder on file

Standard: Program staff and students use on-going formal and informal assessment to inform teaching and learning.

- Ongoing assessment of student progress is shared with the student
- Students evaluate and give feedback to the program

Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to):

- Student files, portfolios, etc.
- Teacher notes, progress reports, student/teacher conference notes, etc.
- Student surveys, evaluations, etc.

3. Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of Approved Assessments

As indicated above, programs can use one of the NRS-approved assessments listed below. Programs must use approved standardized assessments for placement of participants into Educational Functioning Levels and to measure and report progress. All students that will be included in the state's NRS data submission must be tested. Exceptions may be made for students who are unable to understand or respond to the test due to low literacy or English proficiency or due to disability. However, the programs must provide some alternative assessment for such students.

ESL	ABE/ASE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CASAS (Life Skills, Employability, and Life and Work) ▪ BEST Plus (Computer Administered or Print Based) ▪ BEST Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CASAS (Life Skills, Employability, Life and Work, Secondary Assessment)

3.1 Testing Requirements Applicable to All Approved Assessments

3.1.1. Pre- assessment Requirements

Local programs must adhere to these pre-testing requirements:

- All participants shall be pre-tested with an NRS- and OAE-approved assessment prior to completing 12 hours of instruction.
- To determine the appropriate assessment to administer, adult educators should talk with participants during the intake process about educational and career goals, expectations, and instructional practices (including curricula).
- Pre-testing shall be done before instruction begins, but after intake.
- Pre-test dates and participation start dates shall be at maximum within a month from each other.
- While the NRS requires students receive 12 hours of instruction before they may be reported as enrolled, it is important to capture all student enrollments, including those students who have received fewer than 12 hours. The participant who meets eligibility requirements is officially enrolled upon the completion of intake and orientation, an NRS- and OAE-approved pre-test, initial goal setting (because goal setting should be ongoing), and one hour of instruction. (See above.)
- Post test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pre-test for the next semester or reporting period, provided that the interim does not exceed 90 days from that last attendance date. Similarly, the most recent assessment results for “stop-outs” returning to adult education classes may be used, provided that the last test administered does not exceed 90 days from the last attendance date.

3.1.2. Post- assessment Requirements

Local programs must adhere to these post-testing requirements:

- Progress (interim) and post-tests should be routine components of a program’s instructional process.
- Participants shall be pre- and post-tested with an NRS- and OAE-approved assessment.
- At least 70% of participants [of participants who have completed at least 12 hours of instruction] must have a pre- and post-test during this fiscal year. It is not necessary to post-test 70% of participants in each level, as long as 70% of the total number of participants is post-tested. In computing this percentage, those pre-testing in the high ASE are excluded from both the numerator and denominator.
- Programs shall test participants at least once after the pre-test within a given fiscal year.
- Depending on the provider’s instructional delivery system, the intensity and duration of instruction (i.e., 15 hours per week for 20 weeks or 4 hours per week for 50 weeks), and the

student population served, programs are encouraged to test participants more often and according to publisher's guidelines.

- CASAS recommends assessment after approximately 70-100 hours of instruction, with the following exceptions:
 - ✓ Programs offering high intensity courses (for example, a class that meets more than 15 hours per week) may choose to test at the end of a semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction, even though the instructional intervention is more than 100 hours of instruction.
 - ✓ Programs offering low intensity courses with fewer than 70 hours in a semester, quarter, term, or other substantial block of instruction, may choose to administer a post-test at the end of the instructional period. However the minimum number of hours between pre and post test should not be less than 40 hours.
- Publishers of the BEST Plus and Literacy recommend 80 – 100 hours of instruction between pre and post testing with a minimum of 60 hours.
- If a posttest is administered before the publisher's recommended time frame (CASAS is 40 hours, BEST is 60 hours), programs must have evidence of standards level completion in the student's portfolio and approval from the program administrator that documents why an early posttest was warranted.
- The same assessment instrument should be used for pre-testing and post-testing, using alternate forms for each, or specified by the assessment publisher.
- If more than one assessment is administered to a participant, the program should use the last assessment given as the basis for determination of the educational level.
- If, due to extenuating circumstances, no post-test is given during the fiscal year, the program participant must be counted as remaining in the same educational level as upon entry and cannot be reported as advancing to a higher functioning level.
- An "advance" or "completion" of one or more Educational Functioning Level (EFL) is recorded if, according to a post-assessment, the participant has skills corresponding to one or more levels higher than the incoming level in the areas initially used for placement. If an assessment is given in multiple subject areas (such as reading and math), the lowest level is initially used for placement.

3.1.3. Test Administration Requirements

It is critical that local programs adhere to these test administration requirements to ensure that test data are meaningful:

- Programs shall follow appropriate test administration policies, procedures, and practices, as published by developers of the approved tests.
- Assessment instruments shall be administered in a proctored environment and in accordance with publishers' and Office of Adult Education, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) assessment guidelines.
- Programs must make accommodations for adults with disabilities who request them and must do so following test developer guidelines. Programs shall keep good records on their requests for testing accommodations.
- Assessment results shall be shared with learners as soon as possible after the assessment is completed.
- Programs may share test results with instructors to inform curricula and instruction, but must maintain confidentiality in other instances. Test scores may be shared in the aggregate, but no personal identifying information can be revealed; nor may results be publicly reported in cells smaller than six (6) observations to protect individual's privacy.

- Programs pre- and post-testing rate can be calculated using NRS Table 4 and 4b.
- Programs must put in place strict information security and confidentiality guidelines to ensure test security and protect student information.

3.2. Using Test Results to Determine Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs)

The NRS divides educational functioning into four levels for ABE, two levels for ASE, and six levels for ESL. The levels for ABE are beginning literacy, beginning basic education, and low and high intermediate basic education. The levels for ASE are low and high adult secondary education. Each ABE and ASE level has a description of basic reading, writing, numeracy, and functional and workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The six ESL levels are beginning literacy, low beginning ESL, high beginning ESL, low and high intermediate ESL, and advanced ESL. The ESL levels describe speaking and listening skills and basic reading, writing, and functional workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The skill descriptors illustrate the types of skills students functioning at that level are likely to have. The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at that level but provide examples to guide assessment and instruction.

At the low and intermediate levels, the basic reading and writing skills are identical for both ABE and ESL. At the higher levels (secondary level for ASE, advanced level for ESL), the reading and writing skills are designed to be slightly higher for ABE than for ESL, because the adult secondary level is designed to be the highest level. The functional and workplace skills for ABE and ESL also differ somewhat by having a stronger second language focus for ESL. Speaking and listening skills are only described for ESL, and numeracy is only described for ABE to reflect common instructional practice. Programs, however, may apply the numeracy descriptors to ESL students and the speaking and listening descriptors to ABE students if the students' needs and the program's instruction warrant this approach.

- The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical student functioning at that level should be able to do. They are not a full description of skills for a particular level. When a student has skills at one or more levels above the placement level, he or she has completed that level and can advance to the next level.
- Students do not need to be assessed in all of the areas described in the level descriptors. The local program must decide the skill areas most relevant to each student's needs or the program's curriculum and assess students in these areas. At a minimum, students must be assessed in basic reading, writing or math.
- If multiple skill areas are assessed and the student has different abilities in different areas, the program should place the student according to the *lowest* functioning level. For example, if a student is at the beginning level in reading and the low intermediate level in numeracy, then the student would be placed in the beginning level. The lowest functioning level also should be used to determine educational gain in subsequent assessments.

NRS Educational Functioning Levels table and corresponding standardized test scores are described below. These level descriptions and associated test scores allow local programs to use test scores and determine the appropriate pre- or beginning EFL for a student, as well as the appropriate post-EFL for a student. The chart below provides guidance regarding appropriate EFL placement.

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Educational Functioning Level Descriptors—Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education Levels

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional and Workplace Skills
<p>Beginning ABE Literacy</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i></p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 200 and below Math: 200 and below Writing: 200 and below</p>	<p>Individual has no or minimal reading and writing skills. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument. At the upper range of this level, individual can recognize, read, and write letters and numbers but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Can write a limited number of basic sight words and familiar words and phrases; may also be able to write simple sentences or phrases, including very simple messages. Can write basic personal information. Narrative writing is disorganized and unclear, inconsistently uses simple punctuation (e.g., periods, commas, question marks), and contains frequent errors in spelling.</p>	<p>Individual has little or no recognition of numbers or simple counting skills or may have only minimal skills, such as the ability to add or subtract single digit numbers.</p>	<p>Individual has little or no ability to read basic signs or maps and can provide limited personal information on simple forms. The individual can handle routine entry level jobs that require little or no basic written communication or computational skills and no knowledge of computers or other technology.</p>
<p>Beginning Basic Education</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i></p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 201–210 Math: 201–210</p>	<p>Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar</p>	<p>Individual can count, add, and subtract three digit numbers, can perform multiplication through 12, can identify simple fractions, and perform other simple arithmetic operations.</p>	<p>Individual is able to read simple directions, signs, and maps, fill out simple forms requiring basic personal information, write phone messages, and make simple changes. There is minimal knowledge of and experience with using computers and related technology. The individual can handle basic entry level jobs that require minimal literacy skills; can recognize very short, explicit, pictorial texts (e.g., understands logos related to worker safety</p>

<p>Writing: 201–225</p>	<p>situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety, but individual shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).</p>		<p>before using a piece of machinery); and can read want ads and complete simple job applications.</p>
<p>Low Intermediate Basic Education</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i></p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 211–220 Math: 211–220 Writing: 226–242</p>	<p>Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; and can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>Individual can perform with high accuracy all four basic math operations using whole numbers up to three digits and can identify and use all basic mathematical symbols.</p>	<p>Individual is able to handle basic reading, writing, and computational tasks related to life roles, such as completing medical forms, order forms, or job applications; and can read simple charts, graphs, labels, and payroll stubs and simple authentic material if familiar with the topic. The individual can use simple computer programs and perform a sequence of routine tasks given direction using technology (e.g., fax machine, computer operation). The individual can qualify for entry level jobs that require following basic written instructions and diagrams with assistance, such as oral clarification; can write a short report or message to fellow workers; and can read simple dials and scales and take routine measurements.</p>
<p>High Intermediate Basic Education</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i></p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 221–235 Math: 221–235 Writing: 243–260</p>	<p>Individual is able to read simple descriptions and narratives on familiar subjects or from which new vocabulary can be determined by context and can make some minimal inferences about familiar texts and compare and contrast information from such texts but not consistently. The individual can write simple narrative descriptions and short essays on familiar topics and has consistent use of basic punctuation but makes grammatical errors with complex structures.</p> <p>Individual can</p>	<p>Individual can perform all four basic math operations with whole numbers and fractions; can determine correct math operations for solving narrative math problems and can convert fractions to decimals and decimals to fractions; and can perform basic operations on fractions.</p> <p>Individual can perform all</p>	<p>Individual is able to handle basic life skills tasks such as graphs, charts, and labels and can follow multistep diagrams; can read authentic materials on familiar topics, such as simple employee handbooks and payroll stubs; can complete forms such as a job application and reconcile a bank statement. Can handle jobs that involve following simple written instructions and diagrams; can read procedural texts, where the information is supported by diagrams, to remedy a problem, such as locating a problem with a machine or carrying out repairs using a repair manual. The individual can learn or work with most basic computer software, such as using a word processor to produce own texts, and can follow simple instructions for using technology.</p> <p>Individual is able or can learn to follow</p>

<p>Low Adult Secondary Education</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i></p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 236–245 Math: 236–245 Writing: 261–270</p>	<p>comprehend expository writing and identify spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors; can comprehend a variety of materials such as periodicals and nontechnical journals on common topics; can comprehend library reference materials and compose multiparagraph essays; can listen to oral instructions and write an accurate synthesis of them; and can identify the main idea in reading selections and use a variety of context issues to determine meaning. Writing is organized and cohesive with few mechanical errors; can write using a complex sentence structure; and can write personal notes and letters that accurately reflect thoughts.</p>	<p>basic math functions with whole numbers, decimals, and fractions; can interpret and solve simple algebraic equations, tables, and graphs and can develop own tables and graphs; and can use math in business transactions.</p>	<p>simple multistep directions and read common legal forms and manuals; can integrate information from texts, charts, and graphs; can create and use tables and graphs; can complete forms and applications and complete resumes; can perform jobs that require interpreting information from various sources and writing or explaining tasks to other workers; is proficient using computers and can use most common computer applications; can understand the impact of using different technologies; and can interpret the appropriate use of new software and technology.</p>
<p>High Adult Secondary Education</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i></p> <p><i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 246 and above Math: 246 and above Writing: 271 and above</p>	<p>Individual can comprehend, explain, and analyze information from a variety of literacy works, including primary source materials and professional journals, and can use context cues and higher order processes to interpret meaning of written material. Writing is cohesive with clearly expressed ideas supported by relevant detail, and individual can use varied and complex sentence structures with few mechanical errors.</p>	<p>Individual can make mathematical estimates of time and space and can apply principles of geometry to measure angles, lines, and surfaces and can also apply trigonometric functions.</p>	<p>Individual is able to read technical information and complex manuals; can comprehend some college level books and apprenticeship manuals; can function in most job situations involving higher order thinking; can read text and explain a procedure about a complex and unfamiliar work procedure, such as operating a complex piece of machinery; can evaluate new work situations and processes; and can work productively and collaboratively in groups and serve as facilitator and reporter of group work. The individual is able to use common software and learn new software applications; can define the purpose of new technology and software and select appropriate technology; can adapt use of software or technology to new situations; and can instruct others, in written or oral form, on software and technology use.</p>

Educational Functioning Level Descriptors—English as a Second Language Levels

Literacy Level	Speaking and Listening	Basic Reading and Writing	Functional and Workplace Skills
<p>Beginning ESL Literacy</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i> <i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 180 and below Listening: 180 and below</p> <p>Oral BEST: 0–15 (SPL 0–1) BEST Plus: 400 and below (SPL 0–1) BEST Literacy: 0–20 (SPL 0–1)</p>	<p>Individual cannot speak or understand English, or understands only isolated words or phrases.</p>	<p>Individual has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument.</p>	<p>Individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words, such as name and other personal information; may recognize only common signs or symbols (e.g., stop sign, product logos); can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English. There is no knowledge or use of computers or technology.</p>
<p>Low Beginning ESL</p> <p><i>Test benchmark:</i> <i>CASAS scale scores</i> Reading: 181–190 Listening: 181–190 Writing: 136–145</p> <p>Oral BEST 16–28 (SPL 2) BEST Plus: 401–417 (SPL 2) BEST Literacy: 21–52 (SPL 2)</p>	<p>Individual can understand basic greetings, simple phrases and commands. Can understand simple questions related to personal information, spoken slowly and with repetition. Understands a limited number of words related to immediate needs and can respond with simple learned phrases to some common questions related to routine survival situations. Speaks slowly and with difficulty. Demonstrates little or no control over grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read numbers and letters and some common sight words. May be able to sound out simple words. Can read and write some familiar words and phrases, but has a limited understanding of connected prose in English. Can write basic personal information (e.g., name, address, telephone number) and can complete simple forms that elicit this information.</p>	<p>Individual functions with difficulty in social situations and in situations related to immediate needs. Can provide limited personal information on simple forms, and can read very simple common forms of print found in the home and environment, such as product names. Can handle routine entry level jobs that require very simple written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. May have limited knowledge and experience with computers.</p>
<p>High Beginning ESL</p> <p><i>Test benchmark:</i> <i>CASAS scale scores</i> Reading: 191–200 Listening: 191–200 Writing: 146–200</p> <p>Oral BEST 29–41 (SPL 3) BEST Plus: 418–438 (SPL 3) BEST Literacy: 53–63 (SPL 3)</p>	<p>Individual can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition. Individual can respond to simple questions about personal everyday activities, and can express immediate needs, using simple learned phrases or short sentences. Shows limited</p>	<p>Individual can read most sight words, and many other common words. Can read familiar phrases and simple sentences but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading.</p> <p>Individual can write some simple sentences with limited vocabulary. Meaning may be unclear. Writing shows very little</p>	<p>Individual can function in some situations related to immediate needs and in familiar social situations. Can provide basic personal information on simple forms and recognizes simple common forms of print found in the home, workplace and community. Can handle routine entry level jobs requiring basic written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. May have</p>

	control of grammar.	control of basic grammar, capitalization and punctuation and has many spelling errors.	limited knowledge or experience using computers.
<p>Low Intermediate ESL</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i> <i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 201–210 Listening: 201–210 Writing: 201–225</p> <p>Oral BEST: 42–50 (SPL 4) BEST Plus: 439–472 (SPL 4) Literacy BEST: 64–67 (SPL 4)</p>	Individual can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with frequent repetition; can ask and respond to questions using such phrases; can express basic survival needs and participate in some routine social conversations, although with some difficulty; and has some control of basic grammar.	Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety but shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).	Individual can interpret simple directions and schedules, signs, and maps; can fill out simple forms but needs support on some documents that are not simplified; and can handle routine entry level jobs that involve some written or oral English communication but in which job tasks can be demonstrated. Individual can use simple computer programs and can perform a sequence of routine tasks given directions using technology (e.g., fax machine, computer).
<p>High Intermediate ESL</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i> <i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 211–220 Listening: 211–220 Writing: 226–242</p> <p>Oral BEST: 51–57 (SPL 5) BEST Plus: 473–506 (SPL 5) Literacy BEST: 68–75 (SPL 5-6)</p>	Individual can understand learned phrases and short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly and with some repetition; can communicate basic survival needs with some help; can participate in conversation in limited social situations and use new phrases with hesitation; and relies on description and concrete terms. There is inconsistent control of more complex grammar.	Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs with main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; and can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.	Individual can meet basic survival and social needs, can follow some simple oral and written instruction, and has some ability to communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects; can write messages and notes related to basic needs; can complete basic medical forms and job applications; and can handle jobs that involve basic oral instructions and written communication in tasks that can be clarified orally. Individual can work with or learn basic computer software, such as word processing, and can follow simple instructions for using technology.
<p>Advanced ESL</p> <p><i>Test Benchmark:</i> <i>CASAS scale scores:</i> Reading: 221–235 Listening: 221–235 Writing: 243–260</p> <p>Oral BEST 58–64 (SPL 6) BEST Plus: 507–540 (SPL 6) BEST Literacy: 76-78</p>	Individual can understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work. Can understand and participate in conversation on a variety of everyday subjects, including some unfamiliar vocabulary, but may need repetition or	Individual can read moderately complex text related to life roles and descriptions and narratives from authentic materials on familiar subjects. Uses context and word analysis skills to understand vocabulary, and uses multiple strategies to understand unfamiliar	Individual can function independently to meet most survival needs and to use English in routine social and work situations. Can communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects. Understands radio and television on familiar topics. Can interpret routine charts, tables and graphs and can complete forms and

<p>Exit Criteria: CASAS Reading and Listening: 236 and above CASAS Writing: 261 and above Oral BEST 65 and above (SPL 7) BEST Plus: 541 and above (SPL 7)</p>	<p>rewording. Can clarify own or others' meaning by rewording. Can understand the main points of simple discussions and informational communication in familiar contexts. Shows some ability to go beyond learned patterns and construct new sentences. Shows control of basic grammar but has difficulty using more complex structures. Has some basic fluency of speech.</p>	<p>texts. Can make inferences, predictions, and compare and contrast information in familiar texts. Individual can write multi-paragraph text (e.g., organizes and develops ideas with clear introduction, body, and conclusion), using some complex grammar and a variety of sentence structures. Makes some grammar and spelling errors. Uses a range of vocabulary.</p>	<p>handle work demands that require non-technical oral and written instructions and routine interaction with the public. Individual can use common software, learn new basic applications, and select the correct basic technology in familiar situations.</p>
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<http://www.nrsonline.org/reference/index.html?chapter=2§ion=1&topic=1&subtopic=0>

3.2 Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved CASAS Assessments

CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) is a competency, outcome-based system for assessing adult basic reading, math, listening, writing, and speaking skills. The intended population is adults functioning at or below a high school level in attaining the basic literacy skills to function effectively on the job, in the community, and in the family. Consultation and training are required for implementation of the system. More information is available at: <http://www.casas.org>.

3.2.1. What is CASAS?

The CASAS includes a variety of curricula and training resources, as well as assessment instruments. CASAS assesses student attainment of a range of specific competencies presented in functional contexts. Assessments can be used to measure proficiency in skill areas and to check for learning progress.

CASAS has three (3) main series of pre- and post-assessments, the Life Skills series, the Employability Competency Series (ECS), and the Life and Work series, which are somewhat different in content focus. The Life Skills series covers a wide range of content areas, while the ECS contains primarily employment-related content. The Life and Work series combines both. Each series includes reading and math assessments. Each series also has listening comprehension assessments for ESL learners. The assessments range from Level A (beginning literacy) to Level D (high school level) in reading and math, and Levels A to C in the listening assessments. Each series has a corresponding appraisal.

The appraisal assessment is given to determine which pre-test to use. Next, a CASAS pre-assessment is administered based on the appraisal score. An appraisal cannot be used as the pre- or post-assessment.

3.2.2. Which CASAS series do I use?

Programs may use any of the three (3) series as all assessments use the same scale. In most cases, ESL programs will select the Life Skills or the Life and Work series.

- ABE students take the reading and/or math assessments
- ESL students take the ESL appraisal and the reading and/or listening pre- and post-assessments.

3.2.3. How much time is required to administer CASAS instruments?

Life Skills Appraisal	Reading or Math	20 minutes	20 minutes
Life Skills Pre/Post Tests	Listening	28 – 40 minutes	(determined by the length of audiotape)
Life Skills Pre/Post Tests	Reading or Math	1 hour	None
ECS Appraisal	Reading or Math	25 minutes	25 minutes
ECS Pre/Post Tests	Listening	28 – 43 minutes	(determined by the length of audiotape)
ECS Pre/Post Tests	Reading or Math	1 hour	None
ESL Appraisal	Reading or Listening	25 minutes	None

3.2.4. How do I use the CASAS appraisal to determine the pre- and post-assessment level to administer?

Series	Life Skills	Life & Work	ECS
Appraisal	20, 30 or eTest CAT	20,30 120, 130 or eTest CAT	120, 130 or eTest CAT

After administering the appropriate appraisal, select and administer the correct ECS, Life Skills, or Life and Work pre- and post-assessments. These assessment instruments monitor progress in reading (for both ABE and ESL students), listening (for ESL students), and math (for ABE students). They also measure a student's ability to apply basic skills in employability or a life skills context. All assessments for monitoring progress may serve as pre- or post-assessments.

The following chart shows which pre- and post-assessments are selected based on appraisal scores.

Appraisal	Score Range	Level	Pre-Assessment Form #			Post-Assessment Form #		
			Life Skills	Life/Work	ECS	Life Skills	Life/Work	ECS
Reading	<180	Pre-A	27	27	27	28	28	28
	180-191	A	31	81	11	32/32X	81X/82/82X	12
	192-211	B	33	83	13	34/34X	84	14
	212-229	C	35	85/185	15	36	86/186	16
	>229	D	37	187	17	38	188	18
Math	<196	A	31	NA	11	32	NA	12
	196-214	B	33	NA	13	34	NA	14
	215-233	C	35	NA	15	36	NA	16
	>233	D	37	NA	17	38	NA	18
Listening (for ESL)	<196	A	51	NA	51	52	NA	52
	196-208	B	53	NA	63	54	NA	64
	>208	C	55	NA	65	56	NA	66

3.2.5. How do I use CASAS to determine the correct EFL?

Scores on CASAS assessment instruments are related to the same scale, so ECS, Life Skills, and Life and Work tests scale scores may be used to place students into appropriate EFLs. Use the answer keys and score conversion chart for each pre- and post-assessment to determine the number correct and the scale score.

CASAS assessment instruments are normed on ESL students as well as ABE students and thus can be used for both populations. However, CASAS scale scores are used to place ABE and ESL students into different EFLs. For example, an ABE student with a CASAS reading scale score of 205 would be placed in EFL 2 – Beginning Basic; whereas an ESL student with the same score would be in EFL 10 – ESL Low Intermediate.

3.2.6. What accommodations can be made?

Programs should follow the guidelines described in *Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using CASAS Assessment Systems* when using the CASAS assessments with students who have disabilities.

See: <http://www.casas.org/22R&D/Guidelines%20ADA.pdf>

3.2.7. How do I know when to use different levels and forms of the CASAS?

Different levels of the CASAS can be given for pre-, interim-, and post-assessment since scale scores are calibrated across all levels. For example, the same protocol must be followed for end-of-year assessments: thus, if the student is functioning at the same level, switch forms; if s/he has shown strong progress in class or the pre-test results were in the next level, move to the assessment at the next level. Never give the same form of the assessment at the same level sequentially to a student. Since all levels of CASAS are calibrated on the same scale, results may be compared across levels.

3.3 Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved BEST Plus Assessment

3.3.1. What is BEST Plus?

Best Plus (Basic English Skills Test) is a revision of the oral interview section of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which discriminates among the levels of English language proficiency described in the Student Performance Levels (SPLs). The intended population is adult English language learners who may or may not have received an education in their native language or in English, but who need to function in day-to-day life in the U.S. Conversation language skills, including speaking and listening are measured/tested. A six-hour training workshop in administering and scoring the test is required for all test administrators. Additional information is available at: <http://www.cal.org/BESTplus>.

The BEST Plus comes in two (2) versions:

- A computer-adaptive assessment on CD or
- A semi-adaptive print-based version

In the computer-adaptive version, the test items are provided by a CD-ROM program. The tester asks the examinee questions provided by the computer program, listens to the responses, and uses rubrics to score each item. After inputting the item score, the computer selects the next test item and continues to adapt the difficulty level of the questions according to the scores entered for each question. Each time the interview is administered to the same examinee (e.g., for pre- and post-testing), the computer generates a different set of test questions. In the print-based version, a brief locator test determines the level of test items. Parallel forms A, B, or C may be used for pre-, interim-, and post-assessment.

For both versions of the BEST Plus, you must purchase a fixed number of administrations (20, 50, 100, 300, 500). Thus, each time someone is tested (either in print or via computer), an administration is consumed.

3.3.2. How much time is required to administer the BEST Plus?

BEST Oral Interview	15 minutes per examinee
BEST Literacy	1 hour
BEST Plus computer	5 – 20 minutes to administer, depending on the English ability of the examinee
BEST Plus print	10 – 20 minutes per examinee

3.3.3. How do I know when to use different levels and forms of the BEST Plus?

With the BEST Plus computer-adaptive assessment on CD, the computer generates a different set of test questions each time the interview is administered to an examinee. In the print-based version, a brief locator test determines the level of test items (level 1, 2, or 3). There are three (3) parallel forms (A, B, C) that may be used for pre-, interim-, and post-assessment.

3.3.4. How do I use the BEST Plus to determine the correct EFL?

With the BEST Plus computer-adaptive assessment on CD, the computer tallies the score and provides the correct SPL and NRS level. In the print-based version, the raw score must be input into a computer management system to determine the scale score, SPL, and EFL.

3.5. Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved BEST Literacy Assessment

Best Literacy (Reading and Writing Skills Test) is designed to assess reading and writing skills in authentic situations specifically geared for adult English language learners. The print-based assessment features contemporary information, graphics, and photographs. No formal training is required, except to follow the guidance in the *Best Literacy Test Manual*. The relationship between BEST Literacy scores and EFLs is presented below:

Chart 1: NRS ESL Educational Functioning Levels and current and new BEST Literacy scale score ranges

NRS Levels	Current Scale Score Range Valid until June 30, 2008	New Scale Score Range Effective July 1, 2008
Beginning ESL Literacy	0-7	0-20
Low Beginning ESL	8-35	21-52
High Beginning ESL	36-46	53-63
Low Intermediate ESL	47-53	64-67
High Intermediate ESL	54-65	68-75
Advanced ESL	66-78*	76-78*

Source: <http://www.cal.org/topics/ta/bl2008scores.pdf>

* If an examinee pretests into SPL 8 with a scale score of 78, or into the NRS Advanced ESL level with a scale score of 76-78, use a different ESL assessment that measures higher reading and

writing skills to more accurately measure an examinee's language ability. Any student that falls into this category should be re-tested with another assessment at the time of pre-testing.

Additional information is available at <http://www.cal.org>.

4. Guidance for Programs Serving Distance Learning Students

Distance learners must be assessed under the same guidelines as all adult learners in Rhode Island. Students must be pre-tested using any of the RIDE-approved and NRS-compliant tests (i.e., CASAS, Best Plus, and BEST Literacy). All students must be post tested after the appropriate number of hours of instruction specified by the test developer, at the end of the semester, or upon completion of defined curricula. The RIDE Adult Education Assessment Policy, in other words, applies fully to distance learning students and no distance learning students will be included in state and federal reporting that do not have assessment results arrived at by following the state's assessment policy.

This means that all assessment of distance learning students must occur in secure, proctored settings, but it is permissible to arrange for remote testing locations that are more convenient for distance learners as long as all other state requirements concerning assessment are met.

Distance students must follow all existing assessment policies for administration, scoring and interpretation of test results. The NRS Guidelines state that distance students "should be post tested after the same amount of instructional time as other students, according to the state's approved NRS assessment policy."

Rhode Island has adopted a proxy hour model, which means that this model must be used to determine when to posttest. Using the guidelines in the Appendix of the Rhode Island Adult Education Distance Learning Policy, programs will determine when distance learning students have reached the minimum hours of instruction required for post testing and will make arrangements for distance learners to be post tested in a proctored environment

5. Guidance for Programs Serving Adults with High School Credentialing and Postsecondary Education and Training Enrollment Goals

If a student sets a primary or secondary goal of entering postsecondary education, the program shall give participants the option to take the Accuplacer tests or similar college readiness assessment within 30 days of enrollment so that participants and their teachers develop an understanding of the specific skills to be developed. The tests will be offered at no cost to the participant. Information about the Accuplacer tests (Sentence Skills, Reading Comprehension, Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra, College Level Math, and Written Essay) can be found at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html>

Similarly, programs are expected to give participants with employment goals the option to take a work readiness test of their choice such as WorkKeys or the National Work Readiness Credential test. Information about WorkKeys can be found at: <http://www.act.org/workkeys/>
Information about the National Work Readiness Credential can be found at: <http://www.workreadiness.com/>

6. Guidance Regarding Assessment of Eligible Adults with Learning Disabilities

All participants entering any adult education program shall be asked the following four screening questions at intake:

1. Do you think that you have trouble learning? If so, describe the trouble you have had with learning. How do you think this affects your life today?
2. Have you ever had any special help / classes when you were in school? Have you ever had special education services? If yes, please describe.
3. Do you have any medical conditions, chronic illnesses, or a history of head trauma? Do you have any vision or hearing problems?
4. Is there anyone in your family who has trouble learning?

If any learner answers 'yes' to any of the questions above, the program should follow the Learning Disabilities Assessment, Placement and Instruction Pathway for Native Speakers of English. This pathway is available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/adulteducation/Documents/LD/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20LD%20Committee%20Recommended%20Pathway.pdf>

Local programs should document the answers to these questions and keep them in the student's file in a safe and secure place. Upon completion of the Learning Disabilities Module in CALIS, programs will be required to enter learning disabilities screening information into CALIS. It is also recommended that any staff conducting student intake should have completed a comprehensive awareness training on learning disabilities.

Frequently Asked Questions:

In what skill areas should students be assessed?

Students should be assessed in the academic area(s) most relevant to their needs. For example, if a student is enrolled for the sole purpose of upgrading math skills, only the math sub-test should be administered. While the entire battery of tests is not required, programs may decide to give all the sub-tests to better plan instruction.

For ESL students, you may need to select more than one standardized instrument to appropriately assess the necessary skill areas. For example, the BEST Literacy assessment can be used to measure reading, but not oral skills. Therefore, you may need to administer BEST Plus for speaking/listening.

CALIS will only allow one assessment instrument to be selected. If different ESL assessments are used to measure different skills (i.e., BEST for listening/speaking and CASAS for reading/writing), only select the instrument and record the scores for the lowest EFL in CALIS.

Do I need to use locators and appraisals?

Assessment systems such as CASAS have an appraisal component to be used to determine the most appropriate pre-assessment instruments for each student. The appraisal should always be used prior to administering the pre-assessment battery. Appraisals may NOT be used in place of pre-assessment to determine a scale score or grade equivalent for placement on entry EFL.

When do I administer the pre-assessments?

Pre-assessments are administered prior to actual instruction. Pre-assessments must be administered within the first 12 hours of attendance.

How do I document student completion of an EFL or advancement from one level to the next?

The only way to verify that a student has completed an EFL or advanced from one level to the next is by comparing documented standardized pre- and post-assessment scores.

Are standardized assessments the only kind of assessment to be used in the classroom?

In addition to the required standardized pre- and post-assessment instruments, a program should continue to use a variety of formal and informal instruments and procedures to collect valid on-going information regarding student instructional needs and progress. Some examples include, end of unit tests from textbooks; instructor-made assessments; standards-based assessments/rubrics; portfolios; projects/products with clearly defined criteria or performance standards; student self-evaluations, etc.

Where should assessment take place?

Whether the student is taking a pre-, interim-, or post-assessment, s/he must have a quiet, non-threatening environment in which to take the assessment. The environment should be well lit with comfortable seating and heating/cooling. Whenever possible, the assessment area should be in a separate, designated area, free of distractions and noise.

Are standardized assessments interchangeable?

The assessment scores of one standardized instrument are not comparable to those of another. In assessing student educational gains within a program year, switching from one instrument for pre-assessment, to another for interim- or post-assessment is NOT allowed.

For ESL assessment, different instruments may be chosen to measure different skill areas. However, the interim- and post-assessment MUST always match the pre-assessment.

What assessment form should be used for post-assessment?

The parallel form of the assessment instrument used to determine the entry EFL must be used to determine the exit EFL and the educational gain. For example, if CASAS Reading Form 83 is used as the pre-assessment, CASAS Reading Form 84 should be used for post-assessment.

How frequently should standardized assessment be administered?

During each program year, a parallel form of the standardized assessment used for pre-assessment must be administered as a post-assessment to students. The publisher's guideline for the CASAS instrument indicates a minimum of 40 hours and a maximum of 70-100 hours of instruction between pre and post test. The guideline for the BEST is a minimum of 60 hours and a maximum of 80 – 100 hours.

A post-assessment is reliable for up to **90 days**, if no significant instructional intervention has occurred in the interim. Therefore, it is recommended that a returning student be pre-assessed at entry into the new fiscal year if that student's post-assessment in the prior fiscal year is more than **90 days** old.

Can the post-assessment score from one year be used as the pre-assessment for the next year?

If a student exits at the end of a program year and then re-enrolls for a new program year, the exit assessment score may be used as the new entry assessment score only if the test date is not more than **90 days** old.

However, if a program is changing from using one assessment instrument to another (i.e., in the past it used the TABE and now it will be using the CASAS), you must begin the program year by pre-assessing with the newly adopted instrument so that you will have parallel entry, interim-, and final post-assessment results for the program year.

How do I handle assessment of students who have a specific short-term goal?

Some students enter a program with a specific short-term goal. For example, an ABE student may simply want to take the Official Practice Test for the GED to determine if s/he possesses the necessary skills for earning a GED. If that student does well, s/he will probably receive less than 12 hours of instruction and achieve their goal.

Students with such specific short-term goals are NOT given a standardized pre-assessment and are NOT assigned an EFL. Students who later decide to study more than 12 hours, MUST then complete a standardized pre-assessment and be assigned an EFL.

How do I assess work-based project learners?

Work-based project students are those who are enrolled to acquire work-based skills that are taught in a short-term course. The program must deliver an instructional program with a minimum of 13 hours, but not more than 30 hours, of student contact time and it must be designed to teach work-based skills. Initial assessment may be conducted using a standardized assessment related to workplace skills or by using a performance-based assessment with a standardized rubric. The skills to be learned, as well as the method for assessing those skills and standards for achievement, must be explicitly stated prior to beginning the course.

Students designated as work-based project learners are NOT assigned an EFL and are NOT credited to the program in meeting Federal accountability measures for program reporting.

Sources in addition to those cited:

Liberally drawn from West Virginia's Instructor Handbook, Section 12, 2006-07
Office for Adult and Vocational Education policy guidance documentation
Adult Education Assessment work group