

Title I of [The Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) requires each state to implement a state assessment system that is coherent and consistent within the state. The [U.S Department of Education Assessment Peer Review](#) is the process through which a state demonstrates the technical soundness of its assessment system.

The USED's review of state assessment systems is an evidence-based, peer review process involving experts in the field of educational standards and assessments for which each state submits documentation to demonstrate that its assessment system meets a set of established criteria, called critical elements.

Federally required assessments **must be aligned with the state's academic content standards and address the depth and breadth of those standards**; be valid, reliable, and of adequate technical quality for the purposes for which they are used; express student results in terms of the state's academic achievement standards; and provide coherent information about student achievement.

In addition, the same academic assessments must be used to measure the achievement of all students in the state, including English Learners and students with disabilities, with the exception allowed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who may take an alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards.

Any time a state changes its academic content standards or assessment system, it must submit evidence related to the affected component for assessment peer review. Examples of change include changing from a paper-pencil test to a computer-based test, changing purpose, use, design, or content of a test due to legislative change, or revision of academic standards and test blueprints.

For each critical element, the state must provide evidence that:

- Assessments are aligned to challenging grade level academic content standards or alternate academic achievement standards for all public-school students in the state;
- Assessment test design and development is technically sound and reflects appropriate inclusion of challenging content that requires complex demonstrations or applications of higher-order thinking skills;
- Assessments are administered using standardized administration and test security procedures and are implemented with fidelity across districts and schools;
- Assessments are valid
  - aligned to the challenging grade level academic content standards or alternate academic achievement standards they are designed to measure
  - include balance of content and cognitive complexity
  - address the depth and breadth of content standards
  - related in scoring as expected with other variables;

- Assessments are reliable
  - consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical testing standards
  - consistent and accurate in estimates in categorical classification decisions for cut scores or achievement levels based on assessment results;
- Assessments ensure inclusion of English Learners and make available appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and English Learners.

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