



Frequently Asked Questions Wisconsin Personnel Partners Exam Validation

1.) How often are the existing civil service exams reviewed to ensure they are valid?

Before a customer initially uses an exam, they conduct a local review to ensure that the exam content is valid for their position. Wisconsin Personnel Partners exams generally have three to six dimensions, or sections. The test content is identified by acquiring position descriptions from several jurisdictions and asking subject matter experts (SMEs) to determine the appropriate tasks and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) for the corresponding position. After the first exam administration, or when a sufficient number of applicants has taken the exam, we conduct an item analysis which assesses the performance of each question, and the exam's overall reliability. Based on the statistics we make a limited number of changes to the test.

2.) In creation of the exam questions, at what skill level are the questions based? Are they considered to be entry level skills, average skill level, complex skill level, etc.

The questions within each test are derived from the subject matter experts' evaluation of the necessity of the skill upon job entry and not based on content that will be taught to the appointee. The skill level of the questions is dependent upon the level of the position for which the test is written. If it is an entry level position, items are determined from an entry level perspective. Promotional or complex level exams are written for that level.

3.) Who is responsible for validating the exam? How are the exam experts selected?

An SME or group of SMEs provides information to validate our examinations. An SME is an individual who is deemed qualified to participate in the updating or creation process of the exam because of specific credentials. Exam experts, selected from state, city, and local government, have proven qualifications as an SME by meeting one or more of the following:

- They are the immediate supervisor of persons employed in the position or classification.
- They have performed all or most of the duties of this position or classification.
- They were directly involved in the development of the position description or the classification.
- They currently hold, or have held, a position closely related to this classification.

The jurisdictions are responsible for providing the information that supports the validation of the exam. Their SMEs confirm that the final exam is representative, essential, and appropriate to the content of the job. For every exam that is created, a job analysis is conducted to identify the tasks and resources needed for that particular position. This is a crucial step in the process of ensuring the content validity of an exam, and also of determining the relative importance of the tasks and KSAs to the overall job.

After the test is given an item analysis is conducted and some questions may be modified or deleted depending on the results. These changes are made to produce a more suitable, valid exam.

4.) What factors are taken into account in determining the validity of the exam?

Validity is the quality of a test that refers to its accuracy (i.e., is it actually measuring what it is intended to measure). The ultimate purpose of any assessment is validity or accuracy of measurement. This quality is extremely important for job analysis and job evaluation measures, as well as for performance appraisal devices and employee selection.

The exams Wisconsin Personnel Partners administer establish content validity based on a sampling of similar position descriptions. Content validity is assured when the content of the exam is consistent with the content of the position (e.g., you are evaluating candidates based on criteria related to the position).

Several mathematical formulas are associated with reviewing the overall item analysis. We look at the average score, which yields a measure of the difficulty of the test, and the overall quality of the candidate group. The coefficient alpha gives a general measure of reliability or consistency. The standard deviation conveys important information about the test variance of range of scores. These mathematical formulas, along with the item analysis and SME judgment contribute to the evidence of reliability and validity of our exams.

5.) If an employer, upon reviewing the exam, requests to eliminate some questions throughout the exam, or specifically within one section (if they are not considered to be relevant to the specific position), does Personnel Partners ensure that the elimination does not effect the validity?

Elimination of items that are not job related never reduces the validity. The jurisdiction's specific SMEs are the best judge of whether questions are relevant to their particular position. If the jurisdiction feels that particular questions are not relevant they have a few options. If applicants take the exam in its entirety, Partners would eliminate the appropriate questions from scoring. Scores are provided to the jurisdiction and calculated with the requested items removed. Jurisdictions also can have the undesired questions removed before test books are printed. The employer determines the content validity of the questions they select. Wisconsin Personnel Partners will consult with the jurisdiction to make recommendations on the number of questions remaining in a particular subject matter.

6.) If an employer were to create a new exam, and provide Personnel Partners with the exam questions and answers, does Personnel Partners have this exam reviewed to ensure it is valid by your standards?

Personnel Partners offers guidance to the jurisdictions on multiple choice question structure and writing techniques. We rely on the judgment of the jurisdictions' SMEs to establish the job relatedness of the test questions, but we do analyze the test results to assure the statistical soundness of the exam.