

# TRANSLATING EXAMINATIONS

## PURPOSE

Licensure examinations may be translated (adapted) from English into another language or languages to provide equal consideration to candidates whose first language is not English.

## PROCESS

Examination adaptation does not imply a literal word-to-word translation. The examination adaptation process provides for recognition of cultural, content, and language differences so that the intended meaning is retained. The Office of Professional Examination Services' (OPES') process includes the use of subject matter experts (SMEs) in a series of adaptation workshops. In these workshops, the examination is adapted and then independently reviewed to ensure that the final adapted examination is equivalent to the original examination.

## KEY FACTORS

When a licensing board, bureau, or committee under the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) is faced with the decision of whether or not to adapt an examination, the following must be taken into consideration:

- If a language survey has been conducted and a target language group has been identified to have a substantial number (5%) of non- or limited-English-speaking candidates, an examination may be adapted.<sup>1</sup>
- If English is an essential aspect of a profession, an examination will not be adapted.<sup>2</sup>
- If the candidate population is too small to produce reliable data for determining equivalency, an unadapted examination may be most valid.

## STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

During the adaptation process, there are well established psychometric standards, guidelines, and statistical procedures that should be applied to evaluate its equivalency.

- *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* emphasize that linguistic and cultural differences should be taken into full account, as cultural behaviors and thinking may not be comparable between languages, and translated words may appear to be the same but can have significantly different meanings.<sup>3</sup>
- *The Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests* set forth by the International Test Commission outline the process and the evaluation procedures for examination adaptation.<sup>4</sup>

Failure to adhere to these standards, guidelines, and procedures can lead to offering an examination that is not equivalent in content, difficulty level, reliability, and validity, which may result in erroneous licensure.

1. California Government Code sections 7295.4 and 7296.2.

2. California Business and Professions Code sections 853, 855, 1630, 2103, 3053, 8023.5, 8565, 10153.

3. American Educational Research Association, *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, Washington, DC, (2014).

4. International Test Commission (2010). *International Test Commission Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests*.

[<http://www.intestcom.org>].

# TRANSLATING EXAMINATIONS (CONTINUED)



## TIME AND COST

Adaptation can take several months depending on various factors. Estimated costs of adapting an examination are as follows:

- 100-item multiple choice exam, per language \$25,000–\$40,000
- 200-item multiple choice exam, per language \$55,000–\$75,000

## CONTACT

To learn more about these and other examination-related services, please contact OPES at (916) 575-7240.