

**COMMISSION ON DIETETIC REGISTRATION
COMPUTER BASED TESTING
Q & A/FACT SHEET**

Q. Why did CDR choose to implement computerized testing for its entry-level examinations?

A. The Commission made the decision to implement computerized testing for the entry-level examinations because it recognized the many advantages it offers to examinees. These include:

- Flexible test administration dates; examinees can schedule testing throughout the year;
- Retesting available forty-five days following the previous test date;
- Unique examination based on each examinee's entry-level competence;
- Score reports distributed to examinees as they leave the test site eliminating the six-week waiting period required with paper and pencil testing.

Q. What is the difference between computer based testing (CBT) and computer adaptive testing (CAT)?

A. **Computer based testing (CBT)** is an umbrella term used to describe several types of examinations administered by computer. These tests may range from conventional multiple-choice tests administered on a personal computer to virtual reality simulations.

Computer adaptive testing (CAT) is a specific type of computer based testing. An adaptive test is commonly shorter than a traditional paper-and-pencil test. CAT also results in more measurement efficiency as it administers questions that provide the most important information about the examinee's competence.

Q. Where will the computerized examinations be administered?

A. CDR's testing agency, ACT, Inc., has developed their own testing network to administer the examinations at over two hundred thirty (230) approved test sites nationwide, located in universities and community colleges. More centers are scheduled to become available in the future. Candidates will receive the most updated test center listing at the time of test registration. Centers are subject to change.

Q. How often will the computerized examinations be administered?

A. The examinations will be administered year round at over two hundred thirty (230) ACT Centers nationwide. All test sites are open Monday through Friday with some centers also open on Saturdays. Eligible candidates will be instructed to call a toll free number to schedule an appointment to take the examination.

Q. How much is the application fee?

A. The application fee for dietitians is \$200 and s \$120 for dietetic technicians.

- Q. Will the examination application, sent with the *Handbook for Candidates* by ACT, expire?**
- A. The examination application expires one year after it is issued by ACT. (Refer to page 1 of the *Handbook for Candidates*.) If you do not complete and return the examination application within this one-year time period, you must contact the Commission on Dietetic Registration to request a new application.
- Q. Does the authorization to take the examination expire?**
- A. Yes. The CDR Authorization to Test expires after the test is taken or one (1) year after authorization, whichever occurs first. This means that if examinees are unsuccessful they must contact CDR in order to take the test again. It is important to note that some employers and licensure boards may establish shorter limits on the testing authorization period.
- Q. How many questions will be on the Registration Examination for Dietitians?**
- A. The examination will be variable length. Each examinee will be given, **and must receive**, a **minimum** of one hundred and twenty-five questions: one hundred (100) scored questions and twenty-five (25) pretest questions **in order for the examination to be scored**. The **maximum** number of questions possible is one hundred and forty-five (145): one hundred and twenty (120) scored questions, and twenty-five (25) un-scored pretest questions.
- Q. How many questions will be on the Registration Examination for Dietetic Technicians?**
- A. The examination will be variable length. Each examinee will be given, **and must receive**, a minimum of one hundred and ten (110) questions; eighty (80) scored questions and thirty (30) pretest questions **in order for the examination to be scored**. The maximum number of questions possible is one hundred and thirty (130); one hundred scored questions and thirty (30) un-scored pretest questions.
- Q. How often does the examination content outline (test specifications) change?**
- A. The content outline changes following the review and analysis of the Dietetics Practice Audit. The last Audit was conducted in 2005. The current content outline took effect in January 1, 2007; dietitian (Domain I - Food and Nutrition Sciences – 12%; Domain II - Nutrition Care Process and Model – Simple and Complex Conditions – 40%; Domain III - Counseling, Communication, Education and Research – 10%; Domain IV - Foodservice Systems – 17%; Domain V - Management – 21%) dietetic technician (Domain I -Food and Nutrition Sciences – 8%; Domain II - Nutrition Care Process and Model – Simple Conditions – 40%; Domain III - Counseling, Education and Training – 7%; Domain IV - Foodservice Systems – 21%; Domain V - Management – 24%).

- Q. Why are there more pretest questions on the Registration Examination for Dietetic Technicians than the Registration Examination for Dietitians?**
- A. It is important that new questions be pre-tested for both examinations on a regular basis. The Registration Examination for Dietetic Technicians was only administered once per year until 1996 and coupled with a small examinee volume reduced the number of pretest questions administered each year. With computerized testing and year round administration, CDR can pretest more questions and increase the bank of questions.
- Q. How much time will examinees have to complete the examination?**
- A. Examination testing appointments are three (3) hours; two and one-half (2 ½) hours to take the examination and thirty (30) minutes to complete an introductory tutorial. The timer/clock will begin with question one of the examination. Examinees will have two and one-half (2 ½) hours to complete the examination once the timer/clock begins. The examinee will have the option to hide the clock during the examination.
- Q. Will examinees be given an opportunity to become familiar with the computer before beginning the test?**
- A. Yes. Examinees will be allowed to take a tutorial on the computer prior to beginning the actual examination. This tutorial will include detailed instructions on taking the computerized examination and provide an opportunity to respond to practice questions.
- Q. Will a calculator be provided at the test center?**
- A. Yes. A simple calculator is provided at each computer workstation. Examinees are not permitted to bring their own calculator. Each calculator should be examined and tested prior to the beginning of the examination.
- Q. Will the test questions be in multiple-choice format?**
- A. Yes. The question format continues to remain the same as it had been on the pencil-paper examination. (Refer to the *Handbook for Candidates* sample questions.)
- Q. Will the test questions be numbered?**
- A. Yes. The examination questions will be numbered.
- Q. Will examinees be allowed to change question responses, skip questions, or review question responses?**
- A. No. Each question will require a response in order to continue the examination process. Once an examinee answers a question and continues to the next question, the examinee is not permitted to review or change previous examination questions/responses.

- Q. Will there be staff available at the test center in case the computer malfunctions?
- A. Yes. Each test center will be staffed with personnel to assist examinees in the event of a computer malfunction. Examinees will be asked to wait approximately forty-five minutes while the computer problem is investigated. If it is not possible to resolve the problem in this timeframe, examinees will be rescheduled to test as soon as possible.
- Q. **How should I report scheduling problems?**
- A. If you experience difficulty during scheduling, please contact ACT at 319/337-1315.
- Q. **How should I report onsite testing problems?**
- A. If you experience technical difficulties during testing, please notify the test center personnel immediately.
- Q. **Will the Commission continue to make special accommodations for examinees with disabilities?**
- A. Yes. The Commission will continue to make reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities, provided appropriate medical documentation is submitted with the request for special testing accommodations. Refer to the *Handbook for Candidates* for specific documentation requirements.
- Q. **When will examinees receive their score report?**
- A. Score reports will be distributed to examinees as they leave the test center.
- Q. **Is the score report distributed by the testing center official?**
- A. No, the examination results are subject to verification by CDR.
- Q. **What information will be included on the examinee score report?**
- A. The examinee score report will include the examinee's scaled score and the scaled score required to pass the examination. In addition, scaled sub-scores for the Food and Nutrition Sciences (Domains I, II, and III) and Foodservice Systems/Management (Domains IV and V) areas will be reported.
- Q. **Are there any other materials available to assist examinees in preparing to write the examination?**
- A. The Commission on Dietetic Registration publishes two study guides; *Study Guide for the Registration Examination for Dietitians*; and *Study Guide for the Registration Examination for Dietetic Technicians*. Both study guides include a comprehensive study outline, references and practice examination. The practice examination is provided in both hard copy and CD-Rom versions. The CD-Rom has been designed to simulate the actual computerized examination.

- Q. Will dietetics education program directors receive institutional score reports?**
- A. Yes. Program directors will receive institutional reports in February and August of each year. The institutional score report will include scaled scores for program graduates (examinee names will only be included if the examinee authorized release of scores with examinee name), percentile ranks, national mean scores, institutional examinee mean scores, and scaled sub-scores for Food and Nutrition Sciences (Domains I, II, and III) and Foodservice Systems/Management (Domains IV and V).
- Q. Will the scaled score required to pass the examination change from the current minimum passing scaled score of twenty-five (25)?**
- A. The scaled score required to pass the examination will remain twenty-five (25) on a scale of one (1) to fifty (50).
- Q. How soon can unsuccessful examinees retake the registration examination?**
- A. Examinees will be allowed to retest forty-five (45) days after taking the examination unsuccessfully. They must contact the Commission on Dietetic Registration to be reauthorized as examination-eligible and pay the current examination application fee.
- Q. If the examinee decides to stop before responding to the minimum number of questions required to make a pass/fail decision, will the examinee's score be reported as a "fail?"**
- A. No. If an examinee does not respond to the minimum number of questions required to make a pass/fail decision, the examination will not be scored. The examinee will receive a form documenting their decision to quit the examination. The examinee must contact the Commission on Dietetic Registration to be reauthorized to test. No refunds will be provided.
- Q. Under what conditions must the examinee contact the Commission on Dietetic Registration to be reauthorized to test?**
- A. The examinee must contact the Commission to be reauthorized to test:
- when the examinee fails the examination,
 - when the examinee's one-year authorization period ends,
 - when the candidate fails to cancel the testing appointment within the specified timeline,
 - when the candidate arrives late for the scheduled testing appointment,
 - when the candidate does not complete the examination during the test appointment.
- Q. How long after candidates complete registration eligibility requirements will it take to be authorized to test?**
- A. The entire process from the time the Commission on Dietetic Registration receives the eligibility application to the time the candidate receives the *Authorization to Test* letter is 3 to 4 weeks dependent on first-class mail delivery and prompt candidate response to the examination application mailing. Please refer to the February 1999 *JADA* article entitled *Computer-based testing: A new experience in 4 easy steps*, for a description of the application process. (<http://www.cdrnet.org/PDFs/Feb%201999%20PE.pdf>).

Q. How often may examinees take the registration examination?

A. Once an examinee establishes eligibility to take the examination there is no limit on the number of times an examinee may take the examination, provided the examinee waits the required forty-five (45) days between test dates. Please check with your state licensure board for state specific requirements regarding retesting for licensure purposes.

Q. Why did CDR choose to give examinees different questions and a variable length test?

A. The Commission made the decision to administer a unique variable length test to examinees for two reasons:

- Reducing the number of examinees who “see” each question enhances test security and ultimately the credibility of both the RD and DTR credentials.
- Administering only the number of questions needed to accurately assess the individual examinee’s competence to practice results in a shorter testing time for all examinees: maximum of 2½ hours versus the maximum of four hour and twenty minute testing time with the paper-pencil test. The length of the test will be shorter for those examinees who clearly pass or clearly fail after responding to the minimum number of questions (110 questions for DTR and 125 questions RD).

Q. Is a variable length test with different questions for each examinee equitable?

A. The computerized examinations are fair to all examinees for the following reasons:

- All examinees are given the opportunity to respond to the precise number of questions required to measure accurately their competence to practice at the entry-level. The minimum/maximum number of questions presented to examinees has been established based on actual simulation studies.
- All examinations are scored following the same passing standard.
- All examinations conform to the test specifications (content outline) for either the Registration Examination for Dietitians or the Registration Examination for Dietetic Technicians.

Q. Will the questions change in difficulty as I progress thru the CBT exam?

A. No. The purpose of CDR's computerized examinations is to classify candidates as ready to practice or not ready to practice safely. Consequently, the item selection process chooses items that are most discriminating at the cut score. If a candidate is borderline, then all items will seem difficult.

Q. Does the difficulty level of the computer-based exam become more difficult if a candidate takes it more than one time?

A. No. The CDR exams are computer based exams and there is nothing in the administration algorithm that identifies a candidate as a repeat candidate. The nature of the items or questions that a candidate receives is not based on the number of times the exam is taken.

If you analyze item performance after the fact, it is true that repeat candidates do not perform as well as the total population, but that would be true if we were to look only at failing candidates. When repeat candidates are mixed in with the total population, the high performance of the majority cover over the performance of the few.

Q. Have the computer-based registration examinations been pilot-tested.

A. In preparation for the implementation of computer-based testing for the entry-level registration examinations, CDR's testing agency, ACT Inc., conducted simulation studies of both the dietitian and dietetic technician question pools. These studies were designed to validate that the questions would provide the information required to make a valid pass/fail decision on a computer-based examination.

Computer-based examinations have been used by many professions for both licensing and certification, since the early 1990's. Based on the experience of these professions, the psychometric community recognizes computer-based and paper-pencil examinations as comparable.