

**Commission on Dietetic Registration
DEP Area Meeting Questions and Answers
Revised/Updated April 2008**

- 1. Q. Some dietetics education program directors have indicated that their institutions are no longer permitting social security numbers to be used in college/university records, including transcripts. How will CDR track students without requiring Social Security Numbers (SSN)?**

- A.** CDR's Legal Counsel has provided the following response to questions raised regarding ADA/CDR use of the social security numbers.

The Privacy Act of 1974 that gave rise to the limitations regarding the collection and use of the SSNs. Specifically, that Act is applicable to federal, state and local government agencies, and also to school boards and school districts. All such entities are precluded from denying benefits or rights to individuals on account of their refusal to provide the SSN. The federal, state and local government agencies are also prohibited from requesting that an individual disclose his or her SSN unless the individual is advised whether the disclosure is mandatory or voluntary, by what statutory or other authority the disclosure is solicited, and the uses to which the SSN will be put.

Consequently, the federal law does not prohibit CDR or other private entities from requesting the SSN. However, various advocacy groups are advising citizens to refuse to disclose their SSNs to non-governmental agencies, and it may become somewhat problematic (practically more than legally) to deal with an applicant who refuses to disclose. It appears, therefore, that CDR can legally continue to require the disclosure of the SSN by its applicants.

CDR currently uses the social security number to prevent the creation of duplicate member and registry records, since CDR shares its demographic database with ADA. Based on this legal input, CDR will continue to request the social security number for each applicant for registration eligibility.

- 2. Q. Would it be possible for CDR to speed up the registration application process by including the examination application fee with the registration eligibility application as either cash or a credit card payment?**

- A.** This is definitely an option that CDR can consider. One major consideration is that payment processing with registration eligibility processing would require interface with the ADA Accounting area which may result in additional processing time. The ACT online registration examination application process, implemented in July 2005, resulted in significant time savings by eliminating the postal delivery time from the examination application process for those candidates that avail themselves of this option.

- 3. Q. If a program is in audit, will CDR tell a student who calls regarding their application status that their application is pending?**

- A.** Yes, it is CDR's procedure to indicate to students whether or not an application has been received and its status.

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4. **Q. Why is it necessary to hold up processing the entire class submitted when one person did not fill out a form properly? During the summer when applications are often processed, the program director may not be available to get the data/form needed for the errant student?**
- A. CDR makes the assumption that the Program Director has previously reviewed and edited their students' application materials prior to submission. Recognizing that many program directors are away from their offices during the summer months, CDR developed a special contact form for use in resolving application issues. CDR will expedite the processing of the class without the errant student(s) upon program director's written authorization.
5. **Q. Is the score release section of the examination application clearly identified?**
- A. Yes, the score release section is repeated after each program type. The new on-line application highlights these sections of the application.
6. **Q. What is the turnaround time for eligibility application for RD exam?**
- A. The "Flow Chart, Registration Eligibility Application Process" is on CDR's website: <http://www.cdrnet.org/PDFs/Flowchart.pdf>. The process can take 4-14 days depending on the speed of applicant response and CDR's application volume.
7. **Q. How does CDR address the fact that standardized testing is a culturally biased process in light of diversity goals/needs for the profession? Should there be multifaceted evaluation forms of competency?**
- A. CDR recognizes that bias in testing is a complex issue that has received increased scientific and public attention. From the inception of its testing program in 1970, CDR has been committed to the inclusion of bias prevention steps in its examination development process. The basis of this process is the use of practice audit data that is practice/job related and representative of cultural diversity in dietetics practice to develop the examination content specifications. In the subsequent examination development step, the process of item writing and review, CDR has consistently included writers and reviewers who represent diverse population subgroups engaged in dietetics practice. This assists in ensuring that under-represented group perspectives are represented in the items. This review activity is repeated throughout the examination development process.
8. **Q. Do dietetics educators have access to the full practice audit reports?**
- A. CDR expends considerable resources to conduct the dietetics practice audit every five-years. The complete results are shared with the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) and ADA Research Team. A summary of the results are

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published in the *Journal of the American Dietetics Association*. CDR will consider requests for use of the data on a case-by-case basis with a written request including a full explanation of the research project.

9. Q. Is CDR planning to offer the registration examination in other languages, or will additional time be allowed for examinees for which English is a second language?

A. CDR has given careful consideration to requests to offer its examinations in a second language. CDR has made the decision not to administer the registration examinations in a second language for several reasons including:

- The RD credential is a national credential in the United States where English is the official language. English and Spanish are the official languages in Puerto Rico.
- It is reasonable for employers and the public to assume that CDR credentialed practitioners are fluent in the English language.
- It is cost prohibitive to develop a separate Spanish registration examination in Puerto Rico. The Spanish dialect spoken in Puerto Rico is different than that spoken by other Spanish populations which would limit use of this Spanish examination to Puerto Rico.
- English language, textbooks, software and comprehensive examinations are used in CADE accredited programs in Puerto Rico.

English as a second language is not currently defined as a reason for special testing accommodations, such as extended time, under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

10. Q. How does the test development process ensure that examination questions are current? Are question writers required to provide references for each question?

A. New questions are written every year by trained item writers representing diverse geographic, ethnic and dietetics practice perspectives. The CDR Examination Panel and content expert reviewers representing diverse ethnic, geographic and practice perspectives review all new questions for currency, accuracy and absence of bias before they are pretested. Entire item pools are reviewed on an annual basis when outdated items are archived and new items are introduced. Every item must be referenced by the item writer prior to submission.

11. Q. Why isn't the CDR examination based on the CADE competency standards?

A. The registration examinations are designed to assess entry-level competence to practice, rather than as educational assessment examinations. Both the registration examinations and the CADE competency standards are based on the results of the dietetics practice audit conducted every five years. This assures congruence between the examination and the educational competencies. While the CDR examination must

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be careful to test for competence to practice, the educational competencies may include skills and “cutting edge” new information that cannot be assessed on the registration examination, for example counseling skills are difficult to assess on the multiple choice registration examination.

12. Q. Why doesn't CDR offer the study guide examination on computer?

A. CDR does provide a CD of the practice examination with each study guide. This computerized examination has been designed to simulate the actual examination.

13. Q. Can the *Study Guide for the Registration Examination for Dietitians* practice examination be copied by educators to distribute to students?

A. No. The *Study Guide* is copyrighted. CDR established a nominal charge of \$35.00 per copy (ADA member price) for the *Guide* with the intent that every candidate would have access to all the information included in the *Guide*, not just the practice examination.

14. Q. Does every candidate get a comparable test as far as the percentage of questions coming from each domain being equal to the study guide test specs?

A. Yes. Every examinee receives an examination that adheres to the content specifications described in the *Candidate Handbooks*. However, it is important to note that each examinee also receives un-scored pretest questions (twenty for dietitian examinees and thirty for dietetic technician examinees), and each exam candidate receives different pretest questions. These questions are newly written and may or may not adhere to the content outline. Depending on the needs of CDR examination question pool, the pretest questions may focus on one or two content areas. This may lead examinees to perceive that their examination is heavily weighted in a particular content area.

15. Q. If a student gets an examination question wrong, do they still receive the same percentage of questions according to the test specifications?

A. Yes, candidates still receive the same examination content. Incorrect question responses do not alter the examination content.

16. Q. Are examinees 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

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questions/responses. This policy was established by CDR to enhance examination security and the credibility of the RD and DTR credentials.

- 17. Q. Several students have failed the exam on the first try due to "computer problems", and then passed on the 2nd try. What can be done about this?**
- A. CDR is concerned by this query. We maintain a log of all CBT technical problems reported to us by examinees. In no instance has an examinee failed due to a technical difficulty. All computer problems are to be reported to the onsite test proctor for immediate resolution. If the problem cannot be resolved within thirty minutes, the examinee is rescheduled for an alternate test appointment. In no instance is the candidate given a failed score report solely because of a technical problem.
- 18. Q. Does the exam begin immediately, or are there practice questions to get the test-taker used to the format?**
- A. An examination tutorial is available at the beginning of each examination. The testing appointment is scheduled for a three-hour period to allow examinees thirty minutes to complete the tutorial before going on to the two and one-half hour examination.
- 19. Q. What if a student has a learning disability and needs extended time, will the two and one-half hour testing time be extended?**
- A. Yes. The testing time will be extended for examinees that have a documented learning disability. The *Handbook for Candidates*, which is included on the program director page of the CDR website, includes specific instructions regarding the special testing accommodation process. The *Handbook* is also sent to all examination applicants.
- 20. Q. Please explain the scaled scoring process in more easy to understand terms?**
- A. CDR uses a scaled score to report examination scores; the scale is 1-50 with 25 always being the passing scaled score. The number of questions the examinee must answer to obtain the scaled passing score of 25 varies. This variation is due to the fact that each examination includes a different set of questions. Because every examination is different, one may be more difficult or easier than another. The "raw" scores are adjusted on the scale so that the examinee is not penalized because their examination was more difficult or rewarded because their examination was easier. ACT psychometricians know the difficulty of each examination question based on past administrations. The scaled score process is used to report most national standardized examination results such as the college entrance examinations. An explanation of the scaled score is also included in the Candidate Handbook on page 29-31. Here is the link:
http://www.cdrnet.org/programdirector/ADA_RD%20Handbook.pdf

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- 21. Q. Are the registration examination test scores examined by either range of percent correct, or correct number of questions answered?**
- A. Yes, psychometricians at CDR's testing agency, ACT, Inc., conduct a thorough analysis of the test scores. CDR has made the decision to only release scaled scores.
- 22. Q. Are examination scores for students who completed a dietetics education program several years ago included on the institutional summary reports provided to program directors?**
- A. CDR includes aggregate examination score information for program graduates who completed the dietetics education program within the last five years.
- 23. Q. Is CDR concerned about the falling pass rate on the exam?**
- A. The primary purpose of a registration examination is to discriminate between those examinees who are minimally competent to practice at entry-level and those who are not. Passing rates on both entry-level registration examinations are expected to fluctuate over time based on examinee competence. Historically, the pass rates on both examinations fall slightly when the test specifications are revised every five years to reflect the practice audit results. You will note on the attached Examination Performance History summaries that the pass rate goes back up. We see this same trend with this cycle of the exam.
- 24. Q. Why can't CDR release the names of students with their scores? It will help to identify students who are failing the exam.**
- A. The Federal Privacy Law, enacted in 1974, prohibits the release of examination scores without the permission of the examinee. Unlike many other credentialing programs, CDR releases scores without the examinee name regardless of the number of examinees included on the institutional score report. Many other credentialing programs do not provide institutional score reports if the number of examinees falls below a minimal number; e.g., less than 10, due to the increased likelihood that individual student scores could be identified. CDR encourages Program Directors to continue to emphasize to their graduates the importance of releasing score information.
- 25. Q. Why can't CDR release all five examination domain sub-scores? It would help to inform pedagogy. Noted trends will help inform progress or potential weakness of program. Need scores by domains so educators can review/assess for trends and areas to be changed/ improved in curriculums and rotations. Upper administration wants us to identify specific areas in outcomes data that need to be addressed/revised, etc.**

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- A. While CDR understands the need for program faculty to assess the effectiveness of their educational programs, it is important to note important differences between educational and certification testing. Certification testing methodology focuses its measurement precision on discriminating at the cut score or passing level, with a corresponding lack of measurement precision at the higher and lower levels of performance. In addition, modern computer based testing models allow pass/fail decisions to be made with many fewer questions than previously needed. While this is helpful in controlling development costs and reducing item exposure, it reduces the number of questions taken by certification candidates, and therefore, reduces the number of questions available to produce valid and reliable sub-scores on an examination. Thus, while certification tests are extremely reliable near the pass/fail level of performance, they are necessarily less reliable near the extremes of performance, and therefore particularly unsuited and unreliable for diagnostic or educational testing, or for student ranking purposes. The number of questions required to make a reliable pass/fail decision in a broad area of practice (such as on a certification examination) is far fewer than the number required to produce a number of stable, reliable sub-scores. A small number of test questions in a sub-area (say 5 or 10), is very likely to produce spurious, non-reliable results, which is often worse than no information at all, causing students and educators alike to draw incorrect conclusions

26. Q. Why are test sites closed?

- A. ACT, Inc. closes test sites either at the request of the subcontracted testing center or because the testing center has failed to adhere to established testing security procedures. When this occurs ACT does work to identify another appropriate testing site facility willing to comply with the established testing security procedures.

27. Q. Does CDR (ACT) require that both the candidate's name and address match on their government issued photo ID, and authorization to test and appointment letters to be admitted to the testing center?

- A. No, CDR (ACT) does not currently require that both the name and address match on the government issued photo ID, and authorization to test and appointment letters to be admitted to the testing center. Only the name has to match on all three documents. Previously, CDR required the address to match also. The decision was made in 2007 to require only the name to match.

28. Q. How many dietetic technicians are currently registered with CDR?

- A. As of January 1, 2008, there are 4,214 DTR's.