



Policy 2.5 Elimination of Bias/Sensitivity in Items and Testing Materials

Policy

BCEN® is committed to providing a certification process that is fair and free from discrimination. All reasonable efforts are made to ensure that BCEN examinations are based on job-related knowledge and tasks. BCEN uses a judgmental process to review and proactively prevent potential bias in individual examination items, in the examination itself, and in its ancillary materials.

BCEN recognizes that bias in individual test items can result in differences in performance of candidates of equal ability and thus is considered a validity issue. Variations in test results are not acceptable when they result from unintended interpretation of the item by an identifiable subgroup. Stereotyping is avoided in BCEN test items as it can be offensive or demeaning, even when it is not intended to be. Therefore, individual items are examined for bias/sensitivity issues at several points prior to use as non-scored items. Items are reviewed for terminology, phrases, idioms, and language that may be sexist, racist, or may offend or discriminate against any legally protected subgroup in target population. BCEN's test development vendor is contractually obligated to review items for bias/sensitivity issues.

During item-writing training, editorial review of individual items, exam review situations, documentation on how to prevent bias and stereotyping, as described above, is provided in either written or verbal form.

All ancillary materials related to BCEN certification exams, which includes but is not limited to, testing directions, candidate handbook and the BCEN website, are reviewed by an internal BCEN staff member before publication to ensure the information is free from bias and sensitivity. The review is also conducted on an as needed basis as part of exam maintenance.

Procedure

1. Item writer training includes a discussion and several examples of different types of potential bias/stereotyping and use of appropriate wording to avoid such bias.
2. Responsibilities of item writers when writing new items include eliminating potential bias, sensitivity, stereotyping or inappropriate language that may be considered offensive for examinees.

3. Each item writer has an assigned Examination Construction Review Committee (ECRC) mentor, who reviews all new items. One of the roles of that mentor is to ensure absence of bias or sensitivity in BCEN test items. If an item contains any bias or sensitivity issues, it is sent back to the item writer for revision.
4. Upon receiving items for the item bank, BCEN's test development vendor's staff provides editorial review of newly written items. As part of that review, each item is examined for cultural, regional, gender, and ethnic/class stereotypes that may differentially affect performance. For the sake of clarity and simplicity of items, it is sometimes appropriate to include gender references. In such cases, the test development vendor will balance the use of personal pronouns and ensure that they are not consistently used in stereotypical ways. Items that are potentially biased are flagged. In addition, the test development vendor incorporates bias review into all examination instructions and other ancillary materials.
5. The ECRC must unanimously approve all items prior to pretesting, and one of the areas of agreement is absence of bias/stereotyping issues. Items that have previously been flagged by the test development vendor are especially reviewed for this issue. If an item has the potential for bias, the issue is either corrected or the item is eliminated.

Approved: June 2016

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