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

The Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing (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 the performance of candidates of equal ability and thus constitutes 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 because it can be offensive or demeaning, even when unintended, and individual items are examined for bias and 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 and sensitivity issues.

During item-writing training, editorial review of individual items, exam review situations, and 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 include but are 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 or stereotyping and use of appropriate wording to avoid such bias.
2. Item writers are responsible for eliminating potential bias, sensitivity, stereotyping, or inappropriate language that may be considered offensive for examinees when writing new items.
3. Each item writer has an assigned Examination Construction Review Committee (ECRC) mentor, who reviews all new items. This mentor helps ensure that BCEN test items are free of bias or sensitivity. 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 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. Potentially biased items 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 must agree on the absence of bias or stereotyping issues. Items previously flagged by the test development vendor are reviewed explicitly for this issue. If an item has the potential for bias, the issue is either corrected, or the item is eliminated.

Approved: June 2016

Reviewed and Approved: May 2019; September 2022; November 2025