

ACT Policy for Supporting English Learners

Introduction

ACT recognizes the need to expand access to English learners. Beginning in the fall of 2017, ACT will provide supports on the ACT® test to U.S. students who are English learners. These supports are designed to improve access and equity for those students whose proficiency in English might prevent them from fully demonstrating the skills and knowledge they have learned in school. The number of English learners is growing in our country and ACT is committed to improve access and opportunity for them and all underserved learners.

This document was developed by ACT, Inc., to provide individual examinees and educational programs/schools with specific information about ACT's policies regarding criteria for establishing an examinee's English learner status and the process for requesting supports on the ACT® test. The timely submission of proper documentation will help avoid delays in decisions related to providing supports and other services for examinees who are identified as English learners.

The document discusses the following topics:

- Preparation of the Policy for Supporting English Learners on the ACT
- Use of this Information
- Guiding Principles
- Criteria for Establishing English Learner Status
- Procedures for Implementation
- Confidentiality

Preparation of the Policy for Supporting English Learners on the ACT

In preparing this policy document, ACT sought the counsel and advice of numerous education, research, and policy professionals who have expertise in identifying and serving English learners. Namely, ACT convened a Blue Ribbon panel, conducted market research, and developed a robust internal research agenda to determine the impact on providing supports to English learners. The panel carefully examined the potential impacts of each proposed support on construct validity, evaluated compliance with applicable federal and state laws regulating ACT, and considered impacts to our stakeholders in determining a fair test experience and delivery for all examinees, both those seeking supports and those testing under standard conditions. ACT acknowledges and appreciates their valuable contributions.

Use of this Information

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Guiding Principles

ACT has adopted the following guiding principles for responding to requests from examinees identified as English learners for test supports:

1. Requirements and procedures for test supports must ensure fairness for all examinees, both those seeking supports and those testing under standard conditions.
2. Supports must be appropriate and reasonable for those with English learner needs.
3. Documentation of English learner status must meet guidelines established herein. Examinees must provide information about prior supports received in a similar setting, such as in academic classes and other testing situations.

Criteria for Establishing English Learner Status

ACT follows criteria delineated in federal law for establishing English learner status, namely criteria identified in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Therefore, to be eligible for supports on the basis of English learning needs, an examinee must establish, via submission of supporting documentation, that he/she is an individual:

- whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual--
 - the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
 - the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
 - the opportunity to participate fully in society;
- who is enrolled in an English Language program at a school located within the United States;
- who receives the requested supports on classroom tests via a formalized plan; and/or
- who provides results from an appropriate English language assessment that demonstrate the examinee's limited language proficiency.

Supporting documentation may include but is not limited to: an EL Plan, an Individualized Education Program, official support or accommodations plan, English language proficiency assessment results, and/or confirmation of eligibility or participation in an English language program.

English learners may utilize one or all of following supports if approved by ACT:

- Extended Time, not to exceed time and half
- Approved word-to-word bilingual dictionary (no definitions)
- Test directions in the native language
- Testing in a familiar environment/small group

Procedures for Implementation

The examinee must work with a school official to submit a request for supports in the Test Accessibility and Accommodations System (TAA). TAA can be accessed by school officials only at the following website: <https://readiness.act.org>. Please note that registration and support request deadlines apply.

The Test Accessibility and Accommodations System (TAA) is used for approved accommodations and supports management. A school official who serves as the test coordinator (TC), and/or test accommodations coordinator (TAC) accesses TAA for:

- submitting requests for ACT-approved accommodations and English learner supports to ACT
- checking the status of requests

- reviewing decision notifications
- requesting reconsideration of requests that were not approved initially, if applicable
- viewing examinee information for planning purposes, as needed

Confidentiality

All documentation submitted to ACT is kept confidential, and is used solely to determine the examinee's eligibility for test supports. Test coordinators or test accommodations coordinators are also instructed to treat as confidential all information they receive relative to the examinee's English learner status and testing supports. ACT Score Reports do not include any specifics about the supports provided.