

## **Assessment #7: Praxis II Essay Test**

### **1. Assessment Description**

Every candidate seeking state certification in New Hampshire must pass the English Language, Literature, and Composition: Essays (0042) exam. NCATE does not require this test and the state of New Hampshire does not hold the ELA Program to a particular pass rate on this exam. However, the English department would like to see candidates achieve an 80% pass rate on the essays as they have on the Content Knowledge exam.

This exam consists of four essay questions that candidates must complete in two hours. The English Department tracks candidates' scores on this test very carefully because we see it as a reflection of our success in teaching our candidates to write. While we have respect for the composing process and the essential role revision plays in writing well, we also believe that English teachers ought to be able to write well spontaneously and to have enough grasp of sentence structure and grammar to do so in a way that demonstrates their control of language. This skill is crucial for making comments on student papers, answering emails from parents, or communicating with administrators and colleagues. In addition, an on-the-spot writing assignment has become part of some job interviews for teachers. It is a skill our candidates should have.

### **2. Alignment of Assessment with NCTE Standards**

This test aligns with **Standard 3.1.7** concerning candidates' knowledge of grammar and with **Standard 3.5** concerning candidates' understanding and knowledge of literature. However, the English Department uses it to monitor **Standard 3.4** concerning composing effectively for a specific audience.

### **3. Data Findings**

Our success rate for the essay portion of the Praxis has not been as high or consistent as we would like for it to be. Over the past three years, our pass rate has ranged from 100% to 50% to 80%. While most of our candidates meet the standards in most years, we will continue to strive to prepare candidates to pass these tests and to gain confidence in their ability to write spontaneously. Because candidates have reached an 89% pass rate on the Praxis II Content Knowledge exam, we assume the difficulty is with composition. The department is currently conducting writing assessments on which to base future curricular changes, and the Methods instructor is planning to conduct practice sessions on the essay questions as she does now with the multiple choice questions.

### **4. Evidence for Meeting Standards**

Most candidates do pass this exam and therefore demonstrate their ability to read, analyze, and interpret literature; to use their knowledge of grammar; and to write well, meeting **Standards 3.5, 3.1.7, and 3.4**.

### **5. Assessment Documentation**

### 5a. Assessment Tool

The test consists of four essay questions. The ETS website ([www.ets.org/Praxis](http://www.ets.org/Praxis)) describes these as:

- One literature question that asks examinees to interpret a work of poetry
- One literature question that asks examinees to interpret a work of prose
- One issue question that asks examinees to evaluate the argument and rhetorical features of a passage that addresses an issue in the study of English
- One issue question that asks examinees to take and defend a position on an issue in the study of English, using references to works of literature

### 5b. Scoring Guide

#### ETS Rubric

The score range is 3 to 0.

#### 3

- Analyzes the specified literary elements in the selection accurately and with some depth
- Shows a sound understanding of the selection
- Supports points with appropriate examples from the selection and explains how the examples support those points
- Is coherent and demonstrates control of language, including diction and syntax
- Demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English

#### 2

- Analyzes the specified literary elements in the selection with overall accuracy but may overlook or misinterpret some elements
- Demonstrates understanding of the selection but may contain some misreadings
- Supports points with appropriate examples from the selection but may fail to explain how the examples support those points
- Is coherent and demonstrates control of language, including diction and syntax
- Displays control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some flaws

#### 1

- The response demonstrates some ability to engage with the selection but is flawed in one or more of the following ways:
- Incorrectly identifies literary elements in the selection or provides a superficial analysis of those elements
- Demonstrates an insufficient or inaccurate understanding of the selection
- Fails to support points with appropriate examples from the selection
- Lacks coherence or has serious problems with the control of language, including diction and syntax
- Contains serious and persistent writing errors

### 5c. Data

#### Praxis II Data 2003-2005

(Number of completers not available unless over 9)

Year	Content Area	Test	Completers	Passing	Pass Rate
2002-03	English	Essays			100%
2003-04	English	Essays			50%
2004-05	English	Essays			80%