

# FSM National Minimum Competency Test Policies and Procedures

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## Introduction

The Standards Development Working Group developed the Federated States of Micronesia's (FSM) National Curriculum Standards and Benchmarks (CS&B) in February 2006. The group consisted of representatives from the National Department of Education (NDOE), then the FSM Department of Health, Education, and Social Affairs, the four State Departments of Education (SDOE), and the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL). These standards established the minimum expectations for student learning outcomes for Language Arts (English and Vernacular), Mathematics, and Science for the particular grades in elementary and secondary levels.

National Minimum Competency Test (NMCT) is the nation's standard instrument assessing elementary and secondary student academic performance relative to the CS&B. These assessments were collaboratively developed in 2010 by the NDOE, four SDOEs, and PREL. At the time of writing, the NMCT consisted of two components: English for 6th, 8th, and 10th grades and Mathematics for 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th. There were no assessments for Vernacular and Science.

Each state may have state-specific curriculum standards as long as they are not below the standards set by the CS&B and the states may administer tests for their curriculum. States may also have other standard tests including high school entrance exams, SATs, TOEFL, and ASVAB. All students applying for the College of Micronesia are also required to take the College of Micronesia Entrance Test (COMET).

## Purpose

The purpose of the Policy Guidelines for the FSM National Minimum Competency Test, hereinafter referred to as the "Policy", is to establish the

schedule and procedures for administering the NMCT, evaluation procedures, reporting requirements, and other administrative details necessary to effectively conduct testing annually and produce reliable student performance data.

Presidential Decree formed the National Department of Education from the Department of Health and Social Services in 2008.

In 1990 a constitutional amendment sought to clarify the relationship between national and state departments of education. The amendment delegated the following powers to Congress:

- To promote education and health by setting minimum standards, coordinating state activities relating to foreign assistance,
- providing training and assistance to the states and providing support for post-secondary educational programs and projects.

Title 40 of the FSM Code Outlines the authority of the Secretary of Education as follows: The Secretary of Education shall have the authority to administer and coordinate the educational system of the Federated States of Micronesia consistent with the National powers set forth in the FSM Constitution to do the following:

- 1) Promote education by setting minimum standards for educational administration, programs and facilities;
- 2) Coordinate efforts to obtain foreign assistance for the states and to distribute foreign aid for education in an equitable manner which will provide the maximum benefit to the students of the FSM;
- 3) Provide technical assistance to the States concerning educational administration, programs, facilities, and training; and
- 4) Coordinate efforts which seek to meet the needs of FSM students in the area of post-secondary education, including FSM students at home and abroad, scholarships, and transfers among colleges.
- 5) The roles and responsibilities of the NDOE are further described in Title 40 (See Appendix 1) and President mandate (Executive order No. 1 section VII). These include:

- Administration and coordination of the Education System
- Establishing and monitoring Standards
- Developing Programs
- Providing Technical Assistance
- Conducting School Accreditation
- Conducting Teacher Certification
- Supporting post-secondary education programs and projects
- Chartering Private schools

The relationship between the NDOE and SDOEs is a strategic issue. The FSP strengthens the role of the NDOE by focusing on its missions, to set, monitor and report on the education standards and to provide technical assistance to ensure that all standards are achieved. This policy is consistent with Title 40, FSM Code Section 110.

### **NMCT Administration**

The administration of the NMCT consists of four stages: planning for the test, administering the test, processing test results, and evaluating and disseminating test results. The NMCT shall be administered throughout the nation according to the following schedule and sequence of events:

#### **I. Planning for the Test**

A. By July each year, each State Testing Coordinator (STC) shall submit to the National Testing Coordinator (NTC) at NDOE a work plan for the next year's schedule of testing. Within 14 days of receipt the NTC shall review and verify that all working plans meet the requirements of this Policy.

B. For planning purposes, after the verification of work plans and no later than the first week of school, each STC shall also inform all school principals of the schedule of testing via the necessary means of communication.

C. The work plans shall contain the following information: names of schools being tested, the grades and subjects to be tested, the number of students in each grade to be tested, test sites, transportation needs, the date(s) for administering the tests at each school, and the required number

of test proctors for each school. The work plans should also identify the number of students with special needs who will take the NMCT and what special accommodations need to be made. The NMCT Work Plan may be used as a guideline.

1. The NTC shall review each SDOE plan to ensure: that the right number of test booklets and answer sheets are provided to each SDOE, that the SDOE work plans will include the testing of the minimum number/percentage of schools/students as required by this Policy, and that the tests are conducted within the time period as required by this Policy.

2. The NDOE and SDOEs shall also ensure the administration of the NMCT is appropriately budgeted for by the current fiscal year.

D. By October 31st of each year, the NTC shall complete and process any purchase orders for necessary supplies and materials (testing booklets, answer sheets, pencils, etc) as provided in the work plans.

E. By November 30th of each year, each STC shall assemble a State Testing Team (STT) based on the necessary number of test proctors submitted in the work plan. STTs may be comprised of SDOE staff and contractors hired specifically for the administration of the NMCT. All members of the STTs must receive training and be certified by the STCs.

F. By January 31st of each year, all requested supplies and materials shall be mailed to STCs. Within 2 days of receipt, STCs shall verify that all requested supplies and materials are received and acknowledge receipt via email. Any missing supplies and materials shall be reported to the NTC immediately.

G. Two weeks prior to the administration of the tests, each STC shall convene its STT to provide the required training and certification.

H. The Overview of the NMCT Schedule provides a summary of these benchmarks in the schedule and corresponding responsibilities for parties involved.

## **II. Administering the Test**

A. The NMCT shall be administered throughout the Nation within 30 days starting March 1. Each year, the test shall be given to no less than 90% of the elementary schools, 90% of the secondary schools, and no less than 95% of the student population of each tested grade within each school.

B. All elementary and secondary schools shall be tested every two years. The schools, which were not tested the first year, shall be prioritized and tested the second year.

C. The NMCT shall be administered according to the NMCT Administration Manual.

D. Accommodations

As defined by OSEP, the term accommodation is commonly used to define changes in format, response, setting, timing, or scheduling that do not alter in any significant way what the test measures or comparability of scores. The accommodation should not change scores of non-IEP students if given to them.

There are four basic types of accommodations:

1. Presentation accommodations:

- a) Verbatim repetitions of directions
- b) Written copies of orally presented material
- c) Sign language interpreter, amplification of visual display
- d) Verbatim audiotape of directions
- e) Verbatim audiotape of presentation of total test (not for reading section)
- f) Verbatim reading of selected sections of the test or vocabulary by examiner or trained assistant
- g) Verbatim reading of entire test to student by examiner or trained assistant
- h) Other, as determined by the IEP team

2. Response accommodations:

- a) For machine scored tests, student marks answers in test booklet
- b) For selected response items, student indicates answers by pointing or other method

- c) For constructed response items, student uses a word processor for constructed items, student tapes response for later verbatim transcription by school personnel
  - i. School personnel may check student's transferred responses for alignment and completeness of hand-filled bubbles
  - ii. For constructed response, student dictates responses to examiner for verbatim transcription by school personnel
  - iii. For constructed response items or oral presentations, student signs responses to interpreter of the deaf/hearing impaired
  - iv. Other, as determined by the IEP committee

### 3. Setting Accommodations:

- a) General education classroom with special seating
- b) General education classroom with adjusted grouping
- c) General education classroom with additional school support person (not to help student read or respond to items)
- d) General education classroom with special education staff support
- e) Small group setting with professionally certified teacher or school staff as examiner
- f) Small group setting with special education teacher as examiner
- g) Individual administration within the school building
- h) Individual administration outside the school (home, hospital, etc.)
- i) Other, as determined by IEP

### 4. Timing/Scheduling

- a) Periodic breaks
- b) Administer test over multiple days without exceeding total time allowance
- c) Extra response and processing time
- d) Other, as determined by IEP

## **III. Processing Test Results**

A. Test proctors shall ensure that all testing booklets, answer sheets, and provided supplies and materials are collected and returned to the STCs according to the NMCT Administration Manual. April XX shall return all materials to the respective STCs each year.

B. The STCs shall reconvene all members of their STT by May 15th to review that answer sheets are filled out correctly before they are submitted to the NTC and for a debriefing session. Answer sheets will only be reviewed for the completeness and clarity of student demographic data, provision of accurate school code, and other demographic information. STTs will not review the answers provided in the answer sheet. This review is aimed at increasing reliability of the data and the debriefing session will focus on successes and areas of improvement in the current testing cycle. The observations of the STT shall be documented and incorporated as appropriate to improve the testing for the next years.

C. By May 31st, all STCs shall submit their answer sheets to the NTC. The NTC shall verify that all test booklets, answer sheets, and testing supplies are returned. Any missing supplies shall be reported to STCs within 2 days of receipt for recovery.

#### **IV. Evaluating and Disseminating Test Results**

A. The NTC shall evaluate the tests and publish a report of the results on NDOE's website no later than August 1 each year. To be most useful to principals and teachers the report shall disaggregate student performance on the benchmarks by state, school, and grade levels. The report shall be provided to the Directors of the SDOEs and the Directors shall disseminate them to the school principals.

B. No later than the first week of school, the Directors of the SDOEs shall also convene principals and teachers to review the NMCT results, identify areas of improvement, and recommend action items to address these weaknesses. The draft schedule of the following year's NMCT testing shall also be shared with principals at this meeting.

C. Based on the results of the NMCT, each school principal will set improvement benchmarks for the next year.

#### **State Testing Teams**

State Testing Teams (STT) are the groups of test proctors identified and certified by each State Testing Coordinator (STC) to administer the

NMCT. STTs shall be led by the STCs and staff from the SDOEs. When necessary, STCs may recruit contractors to help administer the NMCT. The number of test proctors in each STT will depend on the needs of the particular state as identified in their NMCT Work Plan, however, at least 20% must be staff from each particular SDOE. The STCs shall widely disseminate public notices, through all relevant media, about opportunities to serve in the STT.

## I. Contractors

A. Contractors can be any individual over the age of 18 who are able to read, write, and speak English and the local vernacular; can understand the test instructions and be certified by the STC; and can fully commit to the time and effort required to successfully administer the NMCT and perform the related responsibilities.

B. It is the responsibility of the STC to ensure that perceived or actual conflict of interest issues do not arise when selecting members of the STT and assigning them to specific schools.

## II. Compensation and Per Diem

A. NDOE and SDOE staff administering the NMCT shall not receive additional compensation beyond their actual pay. NDOE and SDOE staff administering the NMCT shall receive per diem for meals, lodging, and incidentals based on established regulations by the national or each state government. Per Diem shall only be approved for outer island trips longer than one day.

B. Contractors shall be compensated \$50 for 2 hours of training and certification before the test, 2 hours of review and debrief after the test, and 2 hours administering the NMCT. Contractors shall receive per diem for meals, lodging, and incidentals at the same rate at state or national government employees and based on the established regulations. The STC is responsible for logging and verifying hours served by contractors. Payment shall only be made on verified hours and be issued after the completion of the debrief meeting after the test.

C. STC shall submit logged and verified hours to the NTC to be processed for payment. Roles and Responsibilities

The successful administration of the NMCT depends on both NDOE and SDOE's understanding their roles and executing their responsibilities. The NDOE Secretary of Education shall develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each SDOE Director establishing the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved.

I. NDOE is responsible for:

A. Budgeting, purchasing and delivering testing booklets and answer sheets for the NMCT

B. Budgeting and paying for the cost of hiring contractors to administer the NMCT

C. Budgeting and paying for half the cost of transportation and fuel required to administer the NMCT for each state.

D. Reviewing each SDOEs NMCT Work Plan to verify compliance with the requirements of this policy and ensure delivery of the requisite amount of testing materials to SDOEs

E. Evaluating NMCT test results, publishing a report on the NMCT results, and sending SDOE's the report on the NMCT result.

F. Providing training to SDOEs to increase their understanding the NMCT results and how to use them for improving student performance

II. Each SDOE is responsible for:

III. Budgeting for and designating staff to administer the NMCT

**IV. Budgeting and paying for half the cost of transportation and fuel required to administer the NMCT in its state**

**V. Keeping accurate records of transportation and fuel costs and submitting to NDOE for reimbursement**

**VI. Developing an NMCT Work Plan annually for NDOE verification and ensuring all testing materials are received from NDOE before the test and returned to NDOE after the test**

**VII. Establishing a State Testing Team and providing the required training and certification**

**VIII. Logging and certifying hours served by each contracted test proctor and submitting accurate log sheets to NDOE.**

**IX. Notifying school principals and teachers of the NMCT testing schedule and providing training to help them understand the NMCT results and how to use them for improving student performance.**

**X. Conducting a debrief session with the State Testing Team to determine areas of improvement in the following years' administration of the NMCT. When relevant, provide recommendations to NDOE.**