

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Department of Education
Office of the Secretary

May 26, 2016

Circular Letter Num. 34-2015-2016

PUBLIC POLICY ON CERTIFICATION TESTS OF TEACHERS (PCMAS)

The Regulation 8146 of Certification of the Teaching Personnel of Puerto Rico of January 25, 2012 establishes the academic and professional requirements for the certification of teachers¹ of public and private schools in accordance with Law No. 94 of June 21, 1955, as amended. In addition, it establishes the approval of Teacher certification exams as a requirement for the corresponding certification. These exams are known as the Teacher Certification Tests (PCMAS).

Since 1992, PCMAS are a requirement to request and obtain a regular certificate of teacher in Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rico Department of Education (DEPR) started this process together with the College Board with the objective of professionalizing the teaching career, include a uniform assessment criterion for any aspiring teacher who went to request the regular teacher certificate in Puerto Rico and comply with federal requirements. The PRDE has made a significant financial contribution since the beginning of the administration of PCMAS to support aspiring teachers and establish guidelines on the implementation of the tests.

As part of the new PRPR policies - aligned to the Transformation Academic with Longitudinal Vision Plan- and the new requirements for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs, the PRDE carried out with the College Board a process of review and reconceptualization of the PCMAS. This process had as purpose that the tests respond to the needs and expectations of our PREK-12 students, in addition to evaluating the competencies that every aspiring teacher It has to develop to be effective in the classroom.

This Circular Letter, when referring to the "teacher", includes the teaching staff of all academic programs, of the Special Education Program, of the Program of Occupational Education and Technical Education Program.

¹ For purposes of a legal nature in relation to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Public Law 88-352, 42 USC.2000 et seq.; the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Circular Letter No. 19-2014-2015, Public Policy on the gender equity and its integration into the curriculum of the Puerto Rico Department of Education as an instrument to promote dignity of the human being and the equality of all before the law, and the principle of grammatical economics and unmarked gender of spelling Spanish, the use of the terms facilitator, teacher, principal, student, tutor, manager and any use you may make reference to both genders, includes both male and female.

Tests for Teacher Certification

The current regulations establish the requirement that all aspiring teachers must approve the PCMAS. Next, the description of them:

1. PCMAS General - This test includes knowledge content Fundamental and Professional Skills (the latter includes a situation elementary or secondary level pedagogical, as applicable).
2. Specialty PCMAS, required as applicable: to.
 - a. Elementary Level - English
 - b. Secondary level - Spanish, Mathematics, Social Studies and History, English and Science.

PCMAS requires that a candidate must meet to obtain a certification for the first time (see other requirements established by Regulation 8146 of Certification of the Teaching Personnel of Puerto Rico).

The aspiring teacher who wishes to obtain a regular teacher certification at:

1. Early Education or Elementary Education, you must approve the General PCMAS next to the pedagogical situation for the elementary level.
2. Elementary Education in English, you must approve the General PCMAS together with the Pedagogical situation for the elementary level and the English Specialty Test.
3. Secondary Education in Spanish, Mathematics, Social Studies and History, English or Science, you have to approve the General PCMAS along with the pedagogical situation for the secondary level and the corresponding specialty test.
4. Occupational Education, has to approve the General PCMAS along with the pedagogical situation for the secondary level.
5. Areas that do not require certification for one level (School Health, Fine Arts, Special Education, Physical Education, Adapted Physical Education, Bilingual Education, Foreign Languages and Teacher Resource in Computer Use), have to approve the General PCMAS together with the pedagogical situation for the level elementary or secondary level, according to their preparation.

PCMAS requirements that a candidate must meet to obtain a recertification in another area or level other than the certification you currently have (see other requirements established by Regulation 8146 of Personnel Certification Teacher of Puerto Rico)

1. The teacher who holds the Regular Certificate of Teacher in Elementary Education and Who aspires to obtain a regular teacher certificate at:
 - a. Elementary Education in English, must pass the Specialty Test in

English. You do not have to take the General PCMAS.

- b. Secondary Education, has to pass the specialty test corresponding, as applicable. Does not have to take the General PCMAS.
- c. Secondary Education in English that has a Regular Teacher Certificate in Elementary Education in English does not have to take the General PCMAS or the specialty test.

2. The teacher who holds the Regular Certificate of Teacher in Secondary Education and who aspires to obtain a regular teacher certificate at:

- a. Secondary education in another category, has to pass the test of corresponding specialty, as applicable. You do not have to take PCMAS General.
- b. Elementary Education, does not have to take the General PCMAS.
- c. Elementary Education in English, must pass the Specialty Test in English. Does not have to take the General PCMAS.
- d. Elementary Education in English and has a Regular Teacher Certificate in Secondary Education in English does not have to take the General PCMAS or the specialty test.

3. The teacher who has a regular teacher certificate in areas that do not require certification by level and aspiring to obtain a regular teacher certificate in another category or level does not have to take the General PCMAS but it does have to take the corresponding specialty test, as applicable.

4. The teacher who obtained a Regular Teacher Certificate at any level or category when PCMAS were not required and that aspires to recertify in another level or category must pass the corresponding specialty test, as applicable. Does not have to take the General PCMAS.

Validity of test results for certification purposes

For certification purposes, the validity of all tests will be five years. It provides that, upon completing the requirements, the documents required of the candidate for the granting of a regular teacher certificate must be submitted to the Office of Human Resources of the corresponding educational region within the established period by the Department of Education. If not submitting them within this period of time (five years), the approved test (s) will expire and the candidate will have to repeat it (s).

For the secondary level candidate with a specialization in Mathematics, Spanish, Studies Social and History, Elementary and Secondary English or Science, which does not approve any of the evidence required for certification may take the same within five years from the date one of them approved for the first time. If you do not approve all tests within the established five-year period, the test passed will expire and the candidate will have to repeat both.

The candidate may repeat the test (s) not passed (s) as many times as necessary, as provided by Act No. 88-2010 in its Article 1. However, it will be required that every candidate for teacher, who has to repeat the test (s) a fourth time, evidence that he took remedial courses in the areas that will be reassessed. Failure to present the evidence may not repeat the test (s).

Minimum score for the approval of each of the PCMAS

The minimum approval scale score established for the General PCMAS at the elementary level and secondary level it is 89.

The minimum approval scale scores established for the PCMAS of Specialty are as follows:

Specialty test	Minimum score of approval
Spanish	85
English	80
Mathematics	80
Sciences	80
Social Studies and History	85

The examining entity shall notify the results obtained to each candidate, at Department of Education and the entities indicated by law. The minimum scores required to approve the PCMAS respond to the public policy of our agency, whose purpose is to promote and guarantee the highest professional competence of their teaching staff.

Any candidate may request a review of the test results from the entity that manages them. Said entity shall notify the Department of Education of any change in results.

Term in which the minimum scores to approve the PCMAS will be reviewed

The minimum scores required to pass PCMAS will be reviewed periodically within a period not exceeding five years. This way it guarantees that the approval standards conform to the dynamics of the education public system and to the demands of the professional teaching class.

General dispositions

1. Higher education institutions of Puerto Rico with programs of teacher preparation will be responsible for authorizing their students, who have completed the established requirements, to take the PCMAS. If an applicant has studied in different university institutions in Puerto Rico, the last institution where you complete the requirements to take the tests will grant his/her the permission for any of the tests: the General PCMAS, the Test Specialty or both, as applicable.

2. The Professional Development Institute of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico will authorize taking the PCMAS only to applicants who completed their teacher preparation program:

- a. al the exterior;
- b. ten years or more ago; or
- c. in an institution of higher education that no longer exists.

3. The process for the renewal of a regular teacher certificate does not require that the applicant approves the evidence again. For these purposes, the Regulation of Certification of the teaching staff of Puerto Rico in force establishes the dispositions.

4. The applicant who will be certified in the categories of School Social Work and Professional Counselor on the school scenario is exempt from taking the PCMAS. To these personnel apply other provisions corresponding to their profession; this includes approving a revalidation.

This circular letter repeals the provisions of Circular Letter No. 23-2015-2016 of December 7, 2015 and any other provision that is in conflict, in its entirety or in part, with the provisions that are hereby established.

Cordially,

(Signed)

Prof. Rafael Román Meléndez
Secretary