

Frequently Asked Questions about the Core Academic Skills Tests

What are the tests?

There are three tests: reading, writing, and math. They are sometimes called CASE tests or Core tests or Praxis I tests. Some people believe they indicate that you will be a successful teacher but our research does not support this. You can be an excellent teacher even if they are challenging for you. Our licensing agency, ESPB, requires us to use these tests.

Are they hard?

The tests resemble other standardized tests that you have taken like the ACT or SAT or state assessment tests. The reading test has passages to read, the writing test has grammar questions and two essays, and the math test has a variety of math problems.

I heard that you can save money by taking all three at once. Should I do that?

If you are a good test taker and got in the high 20s for a composite score on your ACT, you will likely be fine to take all three tests at one sitting and can register for the combined test. Some people do better when they take the three tests separately. If your ACT composite score was lower than 25, if tests make you anxious, if you need disability accommodations, or if you have had challenges with reading along the way, we recommend that you take them on three different days.

How do I take the tests?

You may take them in the testing center at MSU Tuesdays at 9, Wednesdays at 1, or once a month on Saturday morning. You may also schedule them at home if you have a place where you can't be disturbed and have a camera and microphone on your laptop. Students who need accommodations usually have to schedule their tests in Bismarck.

How do I sign up?

There is a step-by-step guide on our MSU Teacher Education admission web page.

When should I take them?

We recommend taking them in your first year at MSU regardless of whether you start as a first-year student or as a transfer student. You do not need to wait until you have any certain classes completed at MSU in order to take them. Starting Fall, 2022, everyone must show they have attempted one test by the end of ED 282 and everyone must show they have attempted all three tests by the end of ED 320.

How do I study for them?

Lisa Borden-King sends out messages every semester with times/dates for study sessions for the reading and writing tests. We highly recommend those and they are posted on the Teacher Education admission web page. If you want a sense of what the tests will be like, there is a study guide in a PDF or Word format that accompanies each test. In addition, doing a couple free Khan Academy practice sessions will give you a score so you have a sense in advance of

what you are likely to get. If you are struggling with the math tests, we recommend following the guidelines of the Khan Academy session for repeated practice on areas where you are struggling.

Is there help paying for them?

ETS has a waiver that is based on a sliding fee and you may use it for one test. The lead time is pretty long, so plan ahead. Information is on the TEU Admission page. If you are getting financial help from the VA, please talk with Andy Heitkamp.

Can I use accommodations during the test?

If you currently have test accommodations in place through Access Services due to a disability, you can and should use them for these tests. If you don't currently have test accommodations set up through Access Services, but you had extended time or special conditions for tests during high school, we highly recommend you visit Access Services so you can use accommodations during the Core Academic Skills test. Accommodations do take a bit of time to set up and sometimes the tests need to be taken in Bismarck. If you use a colored overlay, you may bring that to the testing center at MSU. If you need other accommodations, please consult with us and Access Services so you can advocate for your needs.

Ok, I'm feeling better now. But what if I fail them?

If you don't meet the minimum score or if you need more total points, you can take just one portion of the test again. We recommend attending one Lisa's practice sessions if you didn't already. We recommend the math Khan Academy sessions for the math test. We don't want you to give any more money to ETS than necessary. If you have a disability and have taken the tests multiple times, please come and talk to us. If you think you might have a disability but have never been tested, please come and talk to us. If English is not your first language, you may be eligible for extended time. Please come and talk to us!

When do I have to have them passed?

We don't recommend putting them off as it is pretty stressful when it gets down the wire and you are trying to pass. You may not advance to student teaching until you have been admitted to the teacher education program.

I have heard a lot of rumors about the tests.

If you hear conflicting information, please do email us or stop by our office. We are here to help clarify things.

Here is the website with links to all the information:

https://www.minotstateu.edu/teu/ted_admission.shtml

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