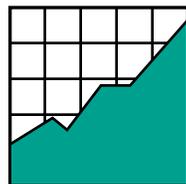




## **Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**



**NATIONAL  
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***In collaboration with:***

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

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***Supported by:***

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# **Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**

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## What is a SCASS?

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The mission of the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) is to provide leadership, advocacy and service in creating and supporting effective collaborative partnerships through the collective experience and knowledge of state education personnel for the purposes of developing and implementing high standards and valid assessment systems that maximize educational achievement for all children. This mission statement is in alignment with the overall vision and mission of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Program specialists from the state education agencies continue to be the principal representatives in each of the SCASS partnerships with supplemental representatives from districts, federal agencies, higher education, research, and private sector consultants. Additionally, each of these partnerships continues to allow state education agencies to draw from a greater pool of experience not easily available when a state confronts the same challenge alone. Each partnership also allows a larger scale operation that supports a more collegial atmosphere and the deployment of economic resources more efficiently.

## What is the ASES SCASS?

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The Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) SCASS addresses the inclusion of students with disabilities in large-scale assessment, standards, and accountability systems and the effects of these systems on related educational reform efforts. The ASES SCASS has been carefully monitoring the implementation of No Child Left Behind and the reauthorization of IDEA 1997 for impacts on states and students with disabilities.

ASES capitalizes on the synergy of the shared efforts of member states to improve practices for students with disabilities and accomplishes this mission in these areas by:

- increasing awareness among state education agency staff of issues, trends, promising practices, and resources,
- development and/or review of potential policy statements that can be adapted or adopted by state and federal agencies, and
- developing other products, research, and resources useful for reference or adaptability to state educational agencies

The three study groups of ASES are the following:

- Auditing and Monitoring Accommodations
- Assistive Technology and Assessments
- Alternate Assessment-Alternate Achievement Standards Professional Development

In 2006-2007, the ASES SCASS involved teams from the following 31 member states:

Alaska	Hawaii	Mississippi	Rhode Island
Arkansas	Iowa	Nebraska	South Carolina
California	Kansas	New Hampshire	South Dakota
Colorado	Kentucky	New Mexico	Texas
Connecticut	Louisiana	North Carolina	Utah
Delaware	Maryland	Ohio	Washington
Florida	Michigan	Oregon	Wyoming
Georgia	Minnesota	Pennsylvania	

## What is the Peer Review?

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A peer review process is used by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to determine whether states are meeting requirements for funds that they receive. Starting in 2004, a peer review process was initiated on states' standards and assessments. Several of the criteria attend to accommodations and their effects (see Appendix A for a copy of the Standards and Assessments Peer Review Guidance sections focused on accommodations). This peer review process is currently ongoing.

At the start of the peer review process, each state compiled a set of evidence materials, including state statutes and regulations, test administrator manuals, board resolutions, and assessment reports (p. 6), to demonstrate how each criterion was met. The reviewers, under the guidance of an ED staff person, provide feedback that served two primary purposes: (1) Comments from the peer reviewers are shared with each state to assist in making improvements to the state's assessment system, and (2) Comments from the peer reviewers serve the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education in making decisions about the approval of each state's assessment system.

## A Message from the Co-chairs

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In October 2006, the ASES-SCASS Accommodations Monitoring workgroup discussed providing more information to states about the monitoring of accommodations as required by NCLB and as addressed in the peer review guidance notes. Our current working agenda addresses the question of how states meet the NCLB requirement that they routinely monitor the extent to which test accommodations are consistent with those provided during instruction, specifically for students with IEPs. We are disseminating this information in three ways; first, a quick reference for states to use in preparing for peer review; second, an NCEO technical report with comprehensive peer review guidance information; and third, a more comprehensive professional development guide for states to establish quality monitoring programs.

This document is the first dissemination effort by the ASES SCASS workgroup. Working in conjunction with NCEO, this quick reference provides a summary of findings from peer review notes of acceptable evidence of accommodations monitoring as well as NCEO recommendations for best practices on the selection of accommodations. The technical report and professional development guide is scheduled for draft during future ASES-SCASS meetings.

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## The Purpose of the Handouts

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The handouts included here provide information and examples that should be useful to States in responding to accommodation criteria in the Standards and Assessment Peer Review process, and the need for continued improvement after approval. The handouts are organized by the themes that emerged as we reviewed the peer review comments on accommodations; these themes follow the order of the federal Critical Elements from the peer review guidance document. The four themes are the following:

1. Selection of Accommodations
2. Agreement of Assessment Accommodations with Instructional Accommodations

3. Monitoring Accommodations Availability and Use
4. Accommodations Use Provides Valid Inferences and Meaningful Scores about Students' Knowledge and Skills

On the handouts, we have highlighted evidence from the Standards and Assessments Peer Review process, including both acceptable and insufficient examples for the accommodations elements.

It should be noted that many of the acceptable examples included on the handouts demonstrate best practices, beyond what is required by the U.S. Department of Education and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2004.

We encourage states to consider our recommendations of best practices for assessment accommodations for students with disabilities. These recommendations, however, should not be construed as requirements for peer review.

## Acknowledgments

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**Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**  
**Section 4: Technical Quality**  
**Topic 1: Selection of Accommodations**

<b>What the Guidance Says about this Critical Element</b>	<b>Examples of <u>Acceptable</u> Evidence</b>	<b>Examples of <u>Insufficient</u> Evidence</b>
<p>4.3 Has the State ensured that its assessment system is fair and accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency, with respect to each of the following issues:</p> <p>(a) Has the State ensured that the assessments provide an appropriate variety of accommodations for students with disabilities?</p>	<p>4.3 <i>The State is conducting studies to determine the appropriateness of accommodations and the impact on test scores.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Existing written documentation of the State's policies and procedures for the selection and use of accommodations and alternate assessments, including evidence of training for educators who administer these assessments.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Selected <u>acceptable</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Flowchart of accommodations decision-making</li> <li>2. Tables that show what accommodations are permitted and not permitted for each assessment</li> <li>3. Guidelines that clearly state which accommodations are allowed for students with IEPs, students with 504 plans, and students who are English language learners</li> </ol>	<p>4.3 <i>The State does not have a policy on the appropriate selection and use of accommodations and alternate assessments.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The State does not train or monitor personnel at the school, LEA, and State levels with regard to the appropriate selection and use of accommodations and alternate assessments.</i></li> <li>• <i>There are no appropriate accommodations for students with particular disabilities (e.g., no allowable accommodations on the regular assessment or alternate assessments for students who are visually impaired and need large print or Braille or for students who are significantly physically impaired and need assistive technology.)</i></li> <li>• <i>The State uses the same accommodations for limited English proficient students as it uses for students with disabilities.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Selected <u>insufficient</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No distinction made among accommodations for students with IEPs, accommodations for students with 504 plans, or accommodations for students who are English language learners</li> <li>2. <i>CCSSO's (2005) Accommodations Manual</i> was adopted as part of the state's accommodations selection guidelines but not adapted to fit the state's unique conditions</li> </ol> <p>A variety of accommodations are provided, but justification for accommodations is missing</p>

**Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**  
**Section 4: Technical Quality**  
**Topic 1: Selection of Accommodations**

**NCEO Recommendations for Best Practices on the Selection of Accommodations:**

- Produce a set of guidelines for accommodations that reflects a variety of options, with clear indications of when their use results in valid scores.
- Differentiate accommodations for different groups of students (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learners), as appropriate.
- Ensure that information provided to districts and others (e.g. parents, students) accurately reflects the state's own accommodations policies, which appropriately fit with the state's conditions/circumstances. That is, the policies described are not direct forms of non-state-specific documents such as those produced by collaboratives of states or technical assistance centers.
- Provide tools for decision makers (e.g., decision-making tree, questions to ask, Q &A's, fact sheets) based on state accommodation policies.
- In addition to including accommodations guidelines in test manuals, ensure that they are readily available to all decision-makers.
- Monitor the selection of accommodations to ensure they are consistent with instructional approaches.
- Conduct studies on the application of accommodations policies to inform training and monitoring needs.

## Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review

### Section 4: Technical Quality

#### Topic 2: Agreement of Assessment Accommodations with Instructional Accommodations

What the Guidance Says about this Critical Element	Examples of <u>Acceptable</u> Evidence	Examples of <u>Insufficient</u> Evidence
<p>4.6 Has the State evaluated its use of accommodations?</p> <p>(a) How has the State ensured that appropriate accommodations are available to students with disabilities and that these accommodations are used in a manner that is consistent with instructional approaches for each student, as determined by a student's IEP or 504 plan?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The State. . . has provided training to support sound decisions by IEP teams.</i></li> <li>• <i>The State routinely monitors the extent to which test accommodations are consistent with those provided during instruction.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Selected <u>acceptable</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clearly stated agreement between assessment accommodations and instructional accommodations</li> <li>2. Tables that show instructional accommodations and possible corresponding assessment accommodations</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The State does not require that decisions about how students with disabilities will participate in the assessment system be made on an individual basis or specify that these decisions must be consistent with the routine instructional approaches as identified by each student's IEP and/or 504 plan.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Selected <u>insufficient</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Linkage of testing accommodations to use during instruction was not clear</li> <li>2. No clear requirement that accommodations used during testing were used in instruction</li> </ol>

**NCEO Recommendations for Best Practices to Align Assessment Accommodations with Instructional Accommodations:**

- Ensure that the agreement of instructional and assessment accommodations is clearly stated – in a way that expounds what is appropriate and what is not appropriate, given the state's assessment.
- Describe how accommodations for assessment are used in classroom instruction and assessment on the student's IEP/504 plan.
- Provide decision makers with tools to help them see the distinctions and linkages between instructional accommodations and assessment accommodations.
- For more information to assist in providing training on sound accommodations decisions by IEP teams, including those that support alignment of assessment accommodations with accommodations used during instruction, refer to CCSSO's *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluation the Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*.
- Monitor the selection of accommodations and their alignment with classroom accommodations.
- Establish clear policies that state that testing accommodations must be consistent with instructional approaches for each student.
- Ensure that training for local educators and test administrators includes guidance on accommodation use and its required alignment with instructional practices.

**Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**  
**Section 4: Technical Quality**  
**Topic 3: Monitoring Accommodations Availability and Use**

<b>What the Guidance Says about this Critical Element</b>	<b>Examples of <u>Acceptable</u> Evidence</b>	<b>Examples of <u>Insufficient</u> Evidence</b>
<p>4.6 Has the State evaluated its use of accommodations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The State has analyzed the use of specific accommodations for different groups of students with disabilities and has provided training to support sound decisions by IEP teams</i></li> <li>• <i>The State routinely monitors the extent to which test accommodations are consistent with those provided during instruction.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Selected <u>acceptable</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Documents that clearly show the monitoring of accommodations availability and use</li> <li>2. Records of district monitoring visits that include IEP reviews</li> <li>3. District affidavits that provide assurance that students with disabilities are given appropriate accommodations</li> <li>4. Documentation of accommodations used on testing day</li> <li>5. Records of annual state reviews of testing accommodations</li> <li>6. Targeted monitoring of school districts that includes monitoring accommodations</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No analyses have been carried out to determine whether specific accommodations produce the effect intended.</i></li> <li>• <i>The State does not require that decisions about how students with disabilities will participate in the assessment system be made on an individual basis or specify that these decisions must be consistent with the routine instructional approaches as identified by each student’s IEP and/or 504 plan.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Selected <u>insufficient</u> examples from peer review comments</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No clear monitoring of the selection and use of accommodations to establish that accommodations used during testing are the same as those used for instruction</li> <li>2. Providing a list of accommodations, but linkage of testing accommodations to use during instruction was not clear</li> <li>3. No clear requirement that accommodations used during testing must have been used in instruction</li> <li>4. No clear monitoring of the selection and use of accommodations to establish that accommodations used during testing are the same as those used for instruction</li> <li>5. No evidence on monitoring the delivery of accommodations</li> <li>6. State guidance documents do not result in consistent data collection on accommodations or monitoring of their use.</li> <li>7. Insufficient monitoring plans, or inappropriately targeted monitoring plans</li> </ol>

**Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**  
**Section 4: Technical Quality**  
**Topic 3: Monitoring Accommodations Availability and Use**

**NCEO Recommendations for Best Practices to Monitor Accommodations Availability and Use:**

- Ensure that there is a valid method for gathering data on which students are to receive specific accommodations in assessment, and a form to document what they receive on test day.
- Document how your state analyzes its accommodations data, including timelines of analysis.
- Identify a specific monitoring procedure that identifies issues in the selection of accommodations for individual students or the provision of accommodations for instruction or assessment.
- Include information on any consequences that result from any irregularities in the administration of assessment accommodations.
- Establish formal reviews of literature, collection of expert judgment, and empirical evidence regarding what accommodations produce valid scores for which students
- Consider conducting studies that examine the link between IEP-determined instructional accommodations, IEP-determined assessment accommodations, and which accommodations are actually used in each location.
- Conduct surveys or observations regarding accommodations assignment (e.g. samples of IEPs compared to accommodations, larger than that proposed) followed by random audits/monitoring.
- Conduct studies comparing external judgments of proficiency (e.g., teacher ratings on standards, overall grades) with test results with and without accommodations.
- Consider the application of existing research to selection of accommodations.
- Adapt existing information management systems to monitor the use of accommodations.

**Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review**  
**Section 4: Technical Quality**

**Topic 4: Accommodations Use Provides Meaningful Scores and Valid Inferences about Students' Knowledge and Skills**

<b>What the Guidance Says about this Critical Element</b>	<b>Examples of <u>Acceptable</u> Evidence</b>	<b>Examples of <u>Insufficient</u> Evidence</b>
<p>4.3 Has the State ensured that its assessment system is fair and accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency, with respect to each of the following issues:</p> <p>(d) Does the use of accommodations and/or alternate assessments yield meaningful scores?</p> <p>4.6 Has the State evaluated its use of accommodations?</p> <p>(b) How has the State determined that scores for students with disabilities that are based on accommodated administration conditions will allow for valid inferences about these students' knowledge and skills and can be combined meaningfully with scores from nonaccommodated administration conditions?</p>	<p><i>4.3 The State assessment system must be designed to be valid and accessible for use by the widest possible range of students.</i></p> <p><i>4.6 The State provides for the use of appropriate accommodations and has conducted studies to ensure that scores based on accommodated administrations can be meaningfully combined with scores based on the standard administrations.</i></p> <p><b>Selected <u>acceptable</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The accommodation guidelines indicate which accommodations can be aggregated for reporting and for the accountability system</li> <li>2. Accommodations selection documents state that accommodations that invalidate test scores are prohibited</li> </ol>	<p><i>4.3 The State assessment system is not designed to be valid and accessible for use by the widest possible range of students.</i></p> <p><i>4.6 No analyses have been carried out to determine whether specific accommodations produce the effect intended.</i></p> <p><b>Selected <u>insufficient</u> examples from peer review comments:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evidence of meaningful scores not provided for all assessments</li> <li>2. Results not reported by accommodation type</li> <li>3. Information on accommodations and valid test scores is not provided for all state assessments</li> <li>4. Reliance on the belief that if accommodations are those typically provided, they allow for valid inferences</li> <li>5. Lack of evidence that scores from accommodated administrations are valid representations relative to standards</li> </ol>

## Hints and Tips for Addressing Accommodations Issues for Peer Review

### Section 4: Technical Quality

#### Topic 4: Accommodations Use Provides Meaningful Scores and Valid Inferences about Students' Knowledge and Skills

##### **NCEO Recommendations for Best Practices to Ensure that Accommodations Use Provides Meaningful Scores and Valid Inferences about Students' Knowledge and Skills:**

- Provide a logical and rational argument that demonstrates why tests administered with specific accommodations that may be considered controversial (e.g., spell check, calculator) do indeed produce scores that are comparable to nonaccommodated tests, given the standards being assessed.
- Identify studies that have been conducted that demonstrate the comparability of scores obtained with the accommodated and nonaccommodated assessments.
- Provide results by accommodations and modifications, to clearly distinguish those that are comparable and those that are noncomparable to results from students who received no accommodations.
- Conduct studies in your states on the use of accommodations by specific groups of students (e.g., category of disability, ethnic groups, etc.).
- Interview students about accommodations (access to, understanding of purpose, reactions of peers, etc.) – variable that will help you understand the validity of scores that result from their use during instruction and assessment.
- Interview teachers to better understand the logistical constraints that impede the provision of accommodations, which in turn might reduce the validity of assessment results.
- Interview decision-making teams to identify factors that produce a tendency too many accommodations for individual students, thereby resulting in the provision of unneeded accommodations; produce a form to aid decision making to avoid students receiving unneeded accommodations.
- Consider further disaggregation of scores by type of accommodation.
- Use established research on accommodations to inform state policies.