

Legal defensibility

Role delineation is a critical step in the development of a legally defensible testing mechanism. Performing a role delineation study and using the resulting data to develop exam specifications ensures that candidates are tested on critical incidents or the knowledge, skill, and abilities (KSA'S) that are relevant to the role for which they are being certified/licensed.

The defensibility of an exam is dependent upon the content validity of the questions included. Validity, therefore, becomes the most important consideration in test development. Content validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores. It involves the establishment of the relationship between a test instrument and the KSA's required to successfully perform the job.

Test validation is the process by which a test developer collects evidence to support the types of inferences that are to be drawn from test scores. Under the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and American Psychological Association guidelines, examinations should meet the requirements of content validity typically including:

1. Selecting a panel of qualified experts
2. Defining the performance domain
3. Weighting content domains by importance to public protection
4. Developing and validating test items that meet the content
5. Providing a structured framework to match items to the content domain
6. Taking steps to minimize subjective bias
7. Setting the passing score at the appropriate level