

Introduction

The time has arrived to take the final steps in acquiring teacher certification or licensure to become a professional in the field of the education of exceptional students. This career choice requires strong knowledge about special education regulations, instructional theories, techniques, and strategies as well as a general understanding of the characteristics and abilities of all types of exceptional students. Working with these students can be exciting, yet challenging.

Children enter educational institutions with individual strengths and specific needs. It is the educator's role to address both of these areas in a respectful and appropriate manner, which will help the exceptional students adjust to the environment, learn the concepts of the curriculum, and reach the goals they desire to become more independent and capable citizens.

Educators accept a wide range of responsibilities. They must work closely with other educators and parents to manage individualized education programs for students with exceptional needs. They must learn to be creative, flexible, and positive as they work in an array of educational activities and settings with students who possess a wide range of abilities.

Effective educators apply conceptual knowledge to classroom management, behavior interventions, curriculum design, and learning strategies. Educators should stay current on policies and instructional strategies as changes occur often. They may be part of the solution in resolving critical issues that impact exceptional student programs. Joining professional organizations, reading research studies, taking additional university courses, attending professional workshops, and subscribing to professional journals will help guide the educator in having a positive influence on students' futures.

Getting Started

Whether a recent college graduate or an experienced teacher, examinees who adequately prepare to take a Praxis II exam are taking a critical step toward meeting state certification requirements. The final score on these exams will reflect all that was learned from teacher preparation courses and from utilizing teaching practices in classrooms.

Examinees may need to take a Praxis II exam in a specific exceptional student area as well as in the core content area. This guide helps prepare the examinee to take four of the specific Praxis II exams, because it offers study information and practice exams with answer explanations for each of these Praxis II exams. Examinees may also want to review college texts, conduct Internet research, visit the library, and use other school resources to gather further study information for exam preparation.

Remember that the practice exams offered in this guide convey an idea about the format and types of questions on the Praxis II exams and should help examinees learn to pace testing time. The content and questions in the practice exams and on the actual exams may differ in subject matter and difficulty. After completing a practice exam, use the answers and detailed explanations for further study on these specific topics.

Format of the Exam

Each Praxis II exam identified in this guide is composed to help individuals evaluate general knowledge regarding exceptional students as well as some specific specialty areas in the field of special education. Examinees may be required to take more than one Education of Exceptional Students Praxis II exams, according to each state's certification or licensure requirements. Performance on these exams will be determined by what the examinee has gained from coursework, student teaching, or internship experiences.

Each of the exceptional student exams covered in this guide are slightly different in composition. Some of the exams are comprised of a set of *multiple-choice questions*; however, the number of questions varies. Some of the exams are comprised of *constructed-response questions*, which require more thoughtful and detailed narrative answers. All of the questions in the exams are based on a teaching situation, definition, concept, or topic that relates to exceptional students.

There are four general topics related to the education of exceptional students included in this study guide, each with an accompanying practice exam. The specific code and title of each exam are listed here.

- #0353 Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge
- #0382 Education of Exceptional Students: Learning Disabilities
- #0542 Education of Exceptional Students: Mild to Moderate Disabilities
- #0544 Education of Exceptional Students: Severe to Profound Disabilities

Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions include a statement (*stem*) and four answer choices. The four answer choices that follow the stem are identified by letter selections “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D.” Only one of these four choices is the correct answer (*key*). The other three possibilities (*distractors*) may be closely related to the actual answer, but be prepared to select only the best possible answer.

The multiple-choice questions are not designed to trick examinees but instead to test absolute knowledge of the subject material regarding students with exceptional needs. These questions are factually written with all possible answers most likely related to the stem in some way. Think carefully when making final answer selections.

There are five sample multiple-choice questions included for each of the four main topic sections in this guide. These questions are intended for examinees to test general knowledge of the main topics, while also providing an example of the questions that may be included on the actual exam.

In both the practice test and the actual exam, some of the multiple-choice questions may be centered on a case history that resembles a classroom or school situation. Read the case history carefully and think about how these questions should be answered in reference to the information presented. Consider what an educator should do if placed in this particular circumstance, based on federal law and best practices.

Multiple-Choice Strategy

When answering discrete multiple-choice questions, strong reading skills are critical. It is important to read carefully and understand the basic premise of the question, while being confident in the knowledge of the content area being tested. These questions reflect the *best practices* that are reflected in teaching situations and information about students with exceptional needs.

Prior to taking the practice or actual exam, read and then reread each question. Think about the answer before looking at the list of presented possibilities. Check to see whether that answer is listed in the four choices, which will make finding the best answer an easier task. If the information is unknown, look at all of the options and try to use the process of elimination. Remove any choices that seem impossible or not probable, as that may help in selecting an answer from fewer choices.

The several types of *multiple-choice formats* are explained here.

- **Complete the Statement:** This type of question offers information and a partial sentence that must be finished by using one of the presented options. Select the option that best completes the sentence using the facts and data known about exceptional students.
- **Which of the Following:** This type of question asks a short question that must be answered by selecting one of the four options provided. It is a frequently used question type on multiple-choice exams. Read the question carefully and think about all of the options, choosing the one that BEST suits the question posed.
- **Least/Not/Except:** This type of question often requires that an examinee select an answer that is not correct, or less likely to be correct. These questions place a more negative slant on the outcome of an answer, so beware of selecting the appropriate response. It requires that examinees think very carefully about which of the three options are correct answers, so those may be eliminated to determine the incorrect answer, which is what this type of question seeks. Examinees may need to rephrase the question in a positive way in order to select the correct answers.

An example may read: Which of the following is NOT included on a transition plan for older students? Watch for questions that are worded as “Which is the LEAST likely,” or “All of the following are ____ except...,” or “Which choice is NOT a component of.” These questions can be tricky, so beware!

The multiple-choice questions termed with “Least”, “Not”, or “Except” are included on the Praxis exams, but samples are **not** included in this guide, for fear that examinees may study incorrect information in preparing for the actual exam.

Case-History Strategy

On the practice test and the actual exam, some of the multiple-choice questions are based on a minimum 500-word case history that provides an actual educational situation. Think about how to answer the questions that follow in reference to the case presented and what a teacher should do based on federal law and best practices for exceptional students in that specific circumstance. Read each case carefully and consider all of the information when answering the related questions. Examinees may want to read the questions that follow the case history before reading the scenario to determine what will be asked.

Constructed-Response Questions

A constructed-response question is related to a situation or an educational scenario in which the examinee must construct a written answer. This response may be in the form of a narrative essay, or a series of short answers. Answers must be written in a test answer booklet provided at the testing center. These questions are scored using a preset and standardized grading rubric. Since the questions are not known prior to the exam, examinees must be careful regarding pacing and developing the responses that include all of the necessary information.

The following strategies or steps may be helpful to examinees on the actual Praxis II exams:

1. Read the questions prior to reading the case history.
2. Engage in reading the case history by taking notes and thinking about the questions.
3. Reread each question and review notes and ideas.
4. Outline the constructed response to the questions.
5. Review the case history and the outline for accuracy.
6. Think about the needed details and focus on the accuracy of the answer.
7. Develop a clear and concise narrative response specific to the case.
8. Review the response to be sure all points were answered.

It is very important for the examinee to write complete and concise answers. Simple answers may not receive full credit, so remember to include information for every portion of the question asked. Watch for questions that have more than one part and may require multiple answers.

The three Praxis II exams that include constructed-response questions in this study guide are

Education of Exceptional Students: Learning Disabilities (0382)

Education of Exceptional Students: Mild to Moderate Disabilities (0542)

Education of Exceptional Students: Severe to Profound Disabilities (0544)

Time Frame

The amount of time allowed for taking each Praxis II exam is based on the specific format of the test. For the four exams listed in this book, examinees are allotted 1 hour to answer between 33 and 60 multiple-choice questions and 1 hour to answer 5 constructed-response questions.

Examinees should learn to pace themselves prior to taking the actual test. They should think about the times given as they work on the sample questions and take the practice exams. When taking the actual Praxis II exam, examinees need time to read each question, to consider each answer, and then to review all of the final answers before submitting the test for a score. When writing a constructed-response answer, examinees need time to read the question, consider the formation of a narrative answer, take the time to write the answer, and finally review the answer by reading through it.

When addressing the multiple-choice questions, examinees must think about all the answer possibilities and select the most appropriate response. Examinees who may be unsure of the correct response for a multiple-choice question should answer every question on the exam. No penalty is assessed for guessing an answer on these exams. For the constructed-response questions, examinees should make every attempt to develop a thorough and thoughtful response in a narrative or essay format.

The specific exams, the number of questions, and the time limits are listed here.

Core Content Knowledge	60 Questions	1 hour
Learning Disabilities	33 Questions	1 hour
Mild to Moderate Disabilities	5 Questions	1 hour
Severe to Profound Disabilities	5 Questions	1 hour

Content of the Exam

Each of the specific subject area tests in this guide are comprised of *Content Categories*, and the actual Praxis II exams assess an examinee’s understanding of the concepts related to these specific content areas.

The following list includes the broad topics, the number of questions, and the percentage of the final score dedicated to that section for each exam.

- Education of Exceptional Students: Core Content Knowledge
 - Understanding Exceptionalities 15–18 25–30%
 - Legal and Societal Issues 9–12 15–20%
 - Delivery of Services to Students with Disabilities 30–36 50–60%
- Education of Exceptional Students: Learning Disabilities
 - Learner Characteristics; Historical & Professional Context; Definitions 15 25%
 - Delivery of Services to Students 15 25%
 - Problem Solving Exercises 3 50%
- Education of Exceptional Students: Mild to Moderate Disabilities
 - Assessment 1–2 25–42%
 - Curriculum and Instruction 1–2 25–42%
 - Structuring and Managing the Learning Environment 1–2 25–42%
- Education of Exceptional Students: Severe to Profound Disabilities
 - Assessment 1–2 25–42%
 - Curriculum and Instruction 1–2 25–42%
 - Structuring and Managing the Learning Environment 1–2 25–42%

Frequently Asked Questions

Examinees generally have questions prior to taking a Praxis II exam. These questions are presented to help answer the most commonly posed questions. However, if you still need assistance, contact the Educational Testing Services at www.ets.org/praxis or call 800-772-9476.

- Q.** What is an Education of the Exceptional Student Praxis II exam?
- A.** The Praxis II exam(s) has been developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to measure an individual's knowledge in specific topics related to the education of exceptional students. It includes general teaching practices that pertain specifically to students with exceptionalities. Many states require these examinations in order to complete the certification or licensure process for professional practice. There may be some professional organizations that also require the completion of a Praxis exam for membership.
- Q.** How should an examinee register for a Praxis II exam?
- A.** Most individuals find that registering online is quick and easy. Contact the Educational Testing Services on its website or at the telephone number listed previously. Registration may be completed any time prior to taking the test, but it is recommended that registration be completed 1 to 3 months ahead of the testing date.
- Q.** What if an examinee misses the registration for the test date preferred?
- A.** Late registration is allowed, but examinees must hurry to get the correct information and obtain a seat at the testing location. There may be a fee for late registration, so check the specific information about late registrations on the ETS website.
- Q.** Can the registration date be changed if needed?
- A.** Contact ETS as soon as possible if a conflict or problem arises with confirmed registration dates. ETS should be able to help with scheduling issues or changes to the existing registration; however, there may be a fee for changes.
- Q.** Which states require the various Education of Exceptional Students Praxis II exams for certification?
- A.** Some states use certification tests created in that state or those developed by a testing company and do not require the use of the Praxis II exams. Contact the specific state department of education to find out which exams are required in each state of interest. Ask about the scores that are considered as passing, since the acceptable scores differ in each state. If an examinee has already taken the exam in one state and is moving to another state, he should ask if the current score will be accepted. Most states will allow the transfer of a score as long as it meets the required passing score in that state and the completed exam is recent.
- On the ETS website, (www.ets.org/praxis/states) examinees may access each state's requirements by clicking on the name of that state. However, it is highly recommended to speak with someone at the state department of education, since regulations sometimes change before websites do.
- Q.** How does an examinee know which exam should be taken?
- A.** Each state mandating Praxis II exams for certification or licensure differs on which particular test is required. Research the testing requirements by contacting the department of education in the particular state. The teacher certification office should have the information needed to select the correct exam or the combination of exams.
- Q.** What is considered a passing score for teacher certification?
- A.** The teacher certification office at the department of education in each state should provide the score considered acceptable for teacher certification. Contact this office in the specific state to find out which score is adequate.
- Q.** When can an examinee expect to receive the scores?
- A.** The ETS attempts a quick return of scores, so expect the scores to be delivered in 4 to 6 weeks, pending no major holidays. A list of dates is available on the ETS website, as well as an informational guide to interpret the score received.

- Q.** Are accommodations permissible for an individual with a disability?
- A.** Yes. Individuals may apply for accommodations if they have a disability or if the primary language is not English. Information on accommodations is available in the Praxis II test registration booklet, or on the ETS website.
- Q.** What should an examinee plan to bring to the exam site on the date of the test?
- A.** Examinees will need to consider the following items:
- Identification that includes name, a photo, and signature
 - An alternative identification that includes the same (optional but recommended)
 - Admission ticket (proof of registration)
 - Several pencils (#2) and an eraser
 - Ink pens (two or three, blue or black) for narrative answers required on some tests
 - Watch (optional but recommended)
 - Extra clothing (optional but recommended, as the temperature in the rooms vary)
- Q.** How can an examinee best prepare to take a Praxis II exam?
- A.** Using this study guide should help improve the chances of passing a Praxis II exam. Understanding the test format, taking the practice exams, and reviewing the contents of the study guide should reinforce an examinee’s knowledge base. Use of the websites in the “Resources” section to seek additional information may also be helpful.

Using this Study Guide

CliffsNotes Praxis II: Education of Exceptional Students (0353, 0382, 0542, 0544) Test Prep includes several supports to help guide examinees.

1. **Introduction sections:** Included for each topic exam are general broadly stated questions about the subject and samples of test questions. Some also include a case history and associated multiple-choice questions or constructed-response questions.
2. **Content area information:** This comprehensive section is to be used for study purposes according to the content categories described on the exam. The headings should guide the examinee in selecting topics to study, as well as help find the areas determined as needing additional review and further study.
3. **Final thoughts and tips:** Test-taking strategies and techniques are provided on how to answer the various types of questions which include multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. Tips for test preparation to achieve exam success are also available.
4. **Resource section:** A list of specific websites, categorized by subject areas are found at the back of the book, as it includes information pertinent to all four exams.
5. **Practice exams:** A sample full-length test is provided for each of the four separate topics in the education of the exceptional student series. These tests are offered as a guide about the content and format of the actual Praxis II exams.
6. **Special Education components:** A detailed explanation on how to develop certain special education documents with examples.