[ACT exam set to better reflect Common Core State Standards](http://blog.herffjonesnystrom.com/act-exam-set-to-better-reflect-common-core-state-standards/)

Posted by [Herff Jones | Nystrom](http://blog.herffjonesnystrom.com/author/nystrom/) on Wednesday, June 11, 2014 · [Leave a Comment](http://blog.herffjonesnystrom.com/act-exam-set-to-better-reflect-common-core-state-standards/#respond)

Changes to the ACT exam will bring the test more in line with Common Core State Standards next year. The Associated Press reported that [two new scores will be displayed](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/06/act-score-changes_n_5459788.html?utm_hp_ref=college" \t "_blank) to students and the optional essay section will be made more complex.

**Core focus**  
Student performance on the test will be aggregated into two new "readiness indicators" that reflect areas of focus for the CCSS curriculum. Scores in the math and science sections of the test will be folded into one STEM score. A combination of scores from the English, reading and optional writing portions will be combined to form a language arts rating. A "career readiness indicator" representing performance in skills most desired by employers will also be [added to the test results](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/act-college-admission-test-to-report-new-scores-in-2015/2014/06/05/1dbd96a8-ecaa-11e3-b98c-72cef4a00499_story.html" \t "_blank), according to The Washington Post.

In addition to the new scores, the 2015 version of the ACT exam will also feature an enhanced writing test. Essay topics are expected to become more difficult, and students will be asked to further demonstrate the critical thinking and analysis skills taught by the Common Core. The current version of the writing portion asks them to take one side of an issue and write a persuasive essay supporting that view. Revisions to the exam may require students to describe both sides of the issue before coming to a reasoned conclusion.

**Structural changes**  
Other changes are expected to be instituted in the structure of the test. Last year, ACT announced that it would begin offering an online version of its exam, perhaps in response to the growing role of technology in classrooms. Pilot programs to evaluate the new online test started this year and are expected to expand for the 2015 round of exams.

Some critics have questioned the effectiveness of having so much of the test based on multiple-choice responses. The ACT is responding by offering more open-ended questions. These questions, which ACT calls constructed response questions, will be offered first to students who take the exam during the school day.

The other leading college entrance exam, the SAT, is also introducing some changes, but not until 2016. The College Board, which runs the SAT, will be reverting the test back to its old 1,600-point scoring system after a change in 2005. Like the ACT's writing section, essay questions on the SAT will now be optional. The test's vocabulary portion will also be changed, reportedly to better mirror the kind of language students can expect to encounter in their careers.