THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

PERSONNEL POLICY BULLETIN:  6-98  DATE:  Nov. 10, 1998

REGULATION REFERENCE NO.: 3.3

INDEX REFERENCE:  Examination Administration
Civil Service Tests
Security Guidelines

Issue:

The attached manual codifies the University’s procedures to insure the highest security standards are met to insure the integrity of the administration process for civil service administration in CUNY.

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

SECURITY GUIDELINES FOR CIVIL SERVICE TEST ADMINISTRATION

University Personnel Office

May 1998

APPROVED

University Personnel Director
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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The integrity of all aspects of the civil service examination process is critical to the credibility of and public trust in a jurisdiction’s merit system. Written guidelines are an essential element in a strong security program. However, anything that may be interpreted as giving an applicant an advantage on a current or future examination or otherwise weakens the real or perceived integrity of an examination is considered part of the security program, whether or not it is included in these guidelines.

New York State Law - Several sections of NYS Civil Service Law address security issues related to examinations. Section 50.11 provides penalties for the misuse or misappropriation of examination material. Section 106 makes it a misdemeanor to falsely grade examinations or to wilfully furnish special information to help or harm applicants. Part 70 of the NYS Civil Service Commission President’s Regulations addresses additional issues including a prohibition of copying examination materials and property rights regarding examination questions.

Accountability for Examination Security - The University Personnel Director has overall responsibility for exam security. This responsibility may be delegated to exam managers or administrators who have overall responsibility for specific examinations and to test administrators at specific testing sites. Room monitors at testing sites retain responsibility for test security in their rooms. This includes physically safeguarding test materials, monitoring applicants and administering the test(s) precisely as directed.

Test Guidelines

1. Test Developers and Administrators: All individuals involved in test development and administration must maintain test confidentiality. They must be informed of the importance of test security and sign a confidentiality statement. Unless otherwise authorized by the University Personnel Director, the names of exam committee members should be kept confidential until all appeals for an examination have been resolved. Copies of confidentiality statements are attached.

A. For test developers, an individual must be excluded from the development process if he or she or a member of his or her immediate family is, or plans to be, an applicant. The individual should usually be excluded if he or she has ever been the direct supervisor or a close friend of an applicant, or if he or she has a substantial interest in an applicant’s outcome on an examination. However, direct supervisors or individuals with a relationship with an applicant may work on the examination with the approval of the University Personnel Director.
B. Test administrators, including room monitors, must inform the test/site administrator if any of the criteria described above apply to them. They may work on the test provided that the test/site administrator concludes that the relationship will not affect the candidacy of the relative or applicant in question. Except in unusual circumstances, room monitors should be assigned to rooms where they do not know any applicants.

C. The decision to permit an individual with a relationship with an applicant to work on a test should be made on a case-by-case basis.

2. Test Development

A. For a job analysis, only permanent incumbents should be interviewed. If there are no permanent incumbents or if provisional incumbents are performing essential tasks not usually performed by permanent incumbents, provisional incumbents may be interviewed provided that the discussion focuses solely on the tasks and duties of the position, not on the skills, knowledge and abilities required to perform them. No questions should be asked regarding skills, knowledge and abilities for the job.

B. The work of the Advisory and Subject Matter Expert Committees on an examination must be documented and kept confidential.

3. Storage of Test Materials: All materials related to test development and the assessment and scoring of applicants, when not in use, must be stored in a secure area to which access is limited to authorized personnel. These materials include test questions, scoring keys before they are released, job analyses and related materials in the test development process. The secure storage of these materials is the responsibility of the exam manager.

A. Typical duties may be treated as nonconfidential material; however, the skills, knowledge and abilities associated with these duties must be kept confidential and are subject to security guidelines. Detailed tasks, which may be used to generate test questions, are confidential.

B. Within the University Personnel Office, storage of test materials before or immediately after an examination should be in a fire-resistant file cabinet with a combination with access limited to authorized personnel except as listed below. The general file cabinets may not be used because many staff have keys accessing these files.

1. Prior to a test administration, test booklets must be kept in the examinations unit at all times. Because of their bulk, it is not practicable to keep these booklets in a fire-resistant safe. They should, however, be kept in sealed boxes.
2. Unused test booklets following a test administration should be stored, whenever possible, in the fire-resistant file cabinet with a log indicating when a booklet is removed for an alternate test or other purpose. If the number of unused
tests is large, those booklets may be stored in a sealed box in the examinations unit office.
3. Paper and computer copies of test booklets kept on file must be stored in a fire-resistant safe in the examinations unit.

C. Confidential test materials should not be taken out of the office without specific authorization of the exam manager or his or her designee.

D. Confidential test materials should be destroyed either through shredding in this office by staff authorized to handle the materials or through an agency with an acceptable recycling program for confidential materials.

4. Printing/Duplicating of Test Materials:

A. A management representative of the printer should sign a confidentiality statement.

B. A UPO staff member should observe the printing/duplication process to ensure the physical security of the booklets as well as monitor the accuracy and quality of the duplicated materials. Booklets should be shrink wrapped in numbers suitable for the test administration site and a sample of packets should be counted to ensure that packaging is accurate. Unless otherwise specified in the instructions for that test, the booklets should remain shrink wrapped until they are opened at the test administration site.

5. Transporting Test Materials to the Test Sites: A procedure for counting and receiving the test booklets prior to a test administration and transporting them to the test site should be developed for each test.

A. For New York State Department of Civil Service tests, the test booklets must be counted when they are received from the State.

B. An authorized staff person must remain with the test boxes and booklets at all times when they are transported to a test site and distributed to the test rooms. A UPO staff member or designee must accompany the driver transporting the materials to and from the test site(s).

6. Test Administration: Room monitors must observe the following general guidelines to maximize test security. For tests developed by the New York State Department of Civil Service, state security guidelines should be observed. For other tests, the following guidelines apply:

A. A room monitor may never leave a test room when there are test materials or applicants in the room, unless relieved by another authorized person.

B. Room monitors must ensure that applicants’ seats are not so close that applicants are
able to see each others’ test papers. If the seating is close, alternate answer sheets must be used with persons sitting in close proximity using different answer sheets.

C. Distribution of test booklets

1. For test sites where booklets have been shrink wrapped for individual rooms, the room monitors should not open the shrink wrapped packages until all the applicants have signed in and been seated. They should open and count the booklets while the applicants are reading the general instructions and other materials. The monitor must inform the site administrator immediately if the number of booklets is different from the number assigned to the room.
2. In other instances, where the packages of booklets are opened at the site and distributed to the rooms according to the number of applicants assigned to the rooms, the booklets must be counted when the boxes are opened.
3. In all instances, the number of booklets distributed to each room must be recorded on the test administration form.

D. Applicants attending a test must present adequate proof of identification (e.g., photo identification and letter of admissions) as specified in the monitor instructions for that test.

E. Monitors must read the test scripts as written. They must be alert, watchful and move around the room to monitor the behavior of all applicants. They may not read materials other than the test instructions and script, listen to radios, or do anything that will in any way divert their attention from the test or disturb the applicants. There should be no conversation between test administration staff in the test rooms during the test except essential discussion regarding the administration of the test.

F. An applicant who appears to be trying to copy from another applicant’s paper should be moved to another seat as soon as the behavior is noticed and the incident should be noted on the appropriate form (test administration form or critical incident report). The applicant need not be informed of the reason for the relocation. In many instances, in order to avoid a confrontation, it is advisable not to give a reason. If the behavior continues, the room monitor should call a site administrator to handle the situation. A room monitor may advise applicants at any time to keep their eyes on their papers.

G. Applicants may not have books or reference materials on their desks unless they are specifically authorized by the test instructions. All such materials must be placed underneath the applicant’s chair or at another location. For tests developed by the New York State Department of Civil Service, such materials must be held by the room monitor until the applicant leaves the test room.

H. Applicants who have signed in may not leave the room unless accompanied by an
authorized test administration staff member until they have turned in their test materials. Thus, applicants who have signed in must be escorted to a restroom even if the test has not yet begun.

1. For most classrooms (with fewer than 40 applicants), only one applicant may leave the room at a time.
2. For larger rooms (e.g., auditoriums, lecture halls) small groups of applicants may be escorted to the restrooms.
3. After signing in, applicants taking the test must not be permitted under any circumstances to be outside their test room unescorted. If practicable, only one applicant should be permitted in a restroom at a time. If it is necessary to permit more than one applicant at a time in a restroom, the hall monitor should either enter the restroom or stand immediately outside with the door opened to ensure that applicants do not talk in the restroom.

I. Applicants who turn in their materials, sign out and leave the test room may not be readmitted. They should not be permitted to use the restrooms available to applicants who are still taking the test.

J. When an applicant signs out, the monitor must ensure that all the required materials are turned in. If required by the test guidelines, the monitor must count the pages of each returned test booklet and initial the booklet in the appropriate area.

K. The monitor must count the test booklets and other test materials at the end of the test and record the information on the test administration form. For NY State tests, state guidelines must be observed.

L. When the test booklets are returned to the exam administration room, the number of returned test booklets must be verified by a second individual. If the test requires that the pages be counted, the individual verifying the number of booklets should also check that the two initials indicating the number of pages are on the booklets. If there is only one set of initials, that is sufficient provided that it is the room monitor who counted and signed his or her initials.

M. The test booklets must be sealed in boxes before being returned to the Central Office.

N. If a test booklet is determined to be missing at any point, the problem should be referred immediately to the site administrator, who in turn should immediately notify the exam manager.

7. Final Reconciliation of Test Booklets: Following the test administration, a procedure to record and reconcile the overall number of booklets at the start and end of the test must be carried out. This reconciliation requires that the total number of booklets assigned to the site
must match the total number returned from the site. This reconciliation must indicate that booklets distributed to, and returned from, the individual rooms along with the unused booklets retained by the site administrator, equal the total number distributed to the site.

A. If there is any question about the number of test booklets, the boxes should be reopened, as necessary, and the booklets recounted, either at the site or at the University Personnel Office.

B. If any booklets are missing, the matter should be investigated immediately and a thorough report on the incident submitted to the University Personnel Director and filed in the test files.

8. Confidentiality of Application Information and Test Materials

A. Confidentiality for the purposes of these guidelines means that the information may be known, unless otherwise specified, only by UPO professional staff and the applicant. The information may be shared or released as specified below with other units in or associated with the University Personnel Office or with other organizations.

B. All materials related to accommodation requests are confidential and are subject to these security guidelines. The information may be shared, as necessary, with persons involved in providing the accommodation or administering the test.

C. Confidentiality of exam and test scores and materials

1. Exam scores are confidential until they are released in The Chief. An exception to this policy is: passing scores may be released to the Personnel Directors for their use in workforce planning at the time applicants are informed of their scores. Information forwarded to the Personnel Directors before it has appeared in The Chief must be stamped confidential. Following publication in The Chief, passing scores on a civil service list are a public record, and the civil service list should be available for review in the University Personnel Office. If an individual requests copies of scores or of a list, unless otherwise specified by the University Personnel Director, the list should be forwarded in response to a Freedom of Information Law request (at the cost of $.25 a page).

2. Scores on individual test components are confidential unless the release of the information meets one of the following conditions: specified in the notice of examination or other notification to the applicants; in compliance with a request of the CUNY Civil Service Commission; in response to a written legal mandate; authorized by the applicant; or authorized by the University Personnel Director. In all other circumstances, the examinations unit must maintain the confidentiality of applicants' scores on individual test components and provide this information only to the individual applicants.
3. Failing scores should be released only when one of the conditions cited above has been met. In those instances, the examinations unit should release only that the applicant failed. The University reserves the right to convert all failing raw scores to zero or another appropriate number. Numeric raw scores should be released only with the written authorization of the University Personnel Director. 4. Except in unusual circumstances, exam scores should not be provided over the telephone.

D. Confidentiality of exam materials

1. During the appeals period, candidates may review test materials such as written test answer sheets, oral interview rating forms, and job suitability rating sheets in the University Personnel Office as specified in the notice of examination or notification to the candidates regarding appeals. However, rating forms that contain criteria critical to passing future tests must be withheld. 2. Copies of written test answer sheets, oral interview summary rating forms, job suitability summary rating forms, medical and drug records must be released to the candidate under a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request. Candidates should be charged $.25 a page for theses materials. However, rating forms that contain criteria critical to passing future tests may be withheld. There is no time limit on Freedom of Information requests, and discoverable records must be made available if they exist. There is no obligation to provide records that have been destroyed pursuant to an agency’s record retention policy. 3. Other information regarding applicant performance on personality or psychological tests including the psychologist’s summary report and information regarding the individual’s performance on the written personality and psychological tests may be released only at the applicant’s authorization to a psychologist of the applicant’s choosing during the appeals period. After the close of the appeals period, these materials may be released only in response to a written legal mandate or, at the authorization of the candidate, to a psychologist associated with another employer or relevant organization. The psychologist’s written report may be released in response to a request from the CUNY Civil Service Commission. This summary also may be shared with the University Public Safety Office or other law enforcement agency for further investigation or to obtain additional follow-up information. This information is not discoverable under FOIL. 4. Pursuant to guidelines of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, an individual’s criminal history record (“rap” sheet) may not be released to anyone although it may be shared with the Personnel Director of the employing college for use in making and communicating related employment decisions. 5. Written test questions are generally not released. However, if specified in the test materials, they may be reviewed by candidates at a test review session.
E. Although applicants' social security numbers are considered confidential, social security information may be known by all UPO staff and, as necessary, persons involved in test administration. Test application and assignment materials containing applicants' social security number are not subject to these security guidelines. However, because of the confidentiality of social security numbers, their inclusion on test materials should be reviewed carefully. For instance, candidates' social security numbers should not be included on the civil service list for The Chief. For administrative purposes related to applicant identification, it is sometimes necessary to include applicant social security numbers on documents such as site assignment lists for specific tests.

April 1998
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

STATEMENT OF EXAMINERS/ADVISERS
IN THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

Exam Title: ________________________

As a member of the Advisory Committee or the Subject Matter Experts Committee, I will observe the following rules:

1. I will not become a candidate in the examination.

2. I will notify the staff examiner immediately if I know of any relatives or friends who are candidates or intend to be candidates in the examination.

3. I will not reveal to anyone that I am an examiner for University Personnel since this work is highly confidential. I will not discuss this work with or show it to any business or professional associates, superiors, subordinates, friends, relatives or anyone else not specifically authorized by University Personnel.

4. I will discuss such work only with staff examiners or other examiners assigned to the examination and will show such work only to them.

5. I will take all precautions necessary to safeguard the integrity of the examination process and to prevent any candidate from gaining any advantage. I will consult the staff examiner if any question or problem arises, no matter how minor it seems, concerning test security or the propriety of any matter relating to the examination.

6. If I recognize a candidate who is a relative or a friend in a test situation or I am able to identify a candidate’s test materials while evaluating them, I will inform the staff examiner immediately.

7. I will make my judgments, ratings and/or recommendations on the basis of objective determinations of facts, materials and other data presented in the course of the examination.

8. I have not, in any way, directly or indirectly, helped others prepare for the examination, and I have not advised others who may be helping candidates prepare for the examination. I will not help anyone in preparing for the examination, nor will I advise those who are helping candidates prepare.
9. Unless otherwise instructed, I will perform my assigned work at the offices of University Personnel and will take all steps necessary to safeguard test materials.

10. I will lock all material relating to the examination, including scratch paper, etc., in a safe place accessible only to me or the staff examiner.

11. I will not send any examination material by mail or messenger. I will deliver it in person unless the staff examiner instructs me otherwise.

12. I will keep confidential all source material used in writing questions, test plans, scope of examinations and related material.

Name of Committee Member

Signature of Committee Member

Title

College

Date

ENDORSEMENT BY PERSONNEL OFFICIAL
I hereby certify that I consider the above-named person qualified to serve as an examiner/advise in the examination development process.

Name of Personnel Official

Signature of Personnel Official

Date
Background

Regulation 3.1.7. requires that an application for an examination or determination of eligibility for a position must be disqualified if the application is "incomplete, defective or illegible." This PPB outlines what constitutes a complete application and the criteria upon which an application may be disqualified.

Policy

A complete application must contain the following:

- All required forms listed on the examination announcement unless otherwise specified by University Personnel in its examination criteria,
- The examination fee in the form of a certified check or money order, and
- The applicant's signature on the Application Form.

In some instances, University Personnel may specify that certain forms such as the special insert are optional even if they are listed as required on the examination announcement. Examination applications will not be rejected if these optional forms are not included in the application package.

In general, an applicant must pay the fee by certified check or money order. Cash or personal checks are not an acceptable form of payment. Exceptions to this policy must be stated in the examination announcement. If an applicant pays less than the amount stated on the examination announcement, the application will not be accepted. Payment of not more than $5 in excess of the amount stated on the examination announcement will be accepted. However, the amount due to the applicant will not be returned unless the applicant requests the amount due in writing from University Personnel. If an applicant pays more than $5 in excess of the fee, the application will not be accepted and will be returned unprocessed.

An application found not to be complete according to these criteria will not be accepted. Pursuant to 3.1.7., the applicant may resubmit the application; however, the corrected application package must be submitted before the end of the filing period. The date of the resubmitted application becomes the amended date of the official submission. Resubmissions after the date of the filing period will not be processed. The burden is on the applicant to file the complete application package, and procedures established to verify that applications are complete should not be viewed as shifting that burden to the college or university. An applicant who requests a review of a decision regarding the completeness of his/her application must do so through the appeals process.