

# REGENTS COMPETENCY TEST IN UNITED STATES HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

## Directions for Administering and Scoring English Edition January and June Administrations

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The general procedures to be followed in administering all Regents Competency Tests are contained in the current edition of *Regents Examinations, Regents Competency Tests, and Proficiency Examinations: School Administrator's Manual*. That manual also provides information concerning accommodations in testing procedures for students with disabilities and alternative testing procedures for students whose native language is other than English.

In addition to the English edition, the Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government is provided in alternative language editions. Information concerning the administration and scoring of these editions is provided in a separate publication, *Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government, Directions for Administering and Scoring: Restricted Alternative Language Editions*.

Although the Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government is scheduled for administration during a 3-hour examination session, there is no time limit for the test. While it is expected that most students will need no more than 3 hours to complete the test, some students may need more working time, and schools should make provisions to accommodate such students.

Do not permit any student to hand in his or her test materials and leave the testing room before the Uniform Statewide Admission Deadline, which in January and June is 10:00 a.m. for morning examinations and 2:00 p.m. for afternoon examinations.

### GENERAL FEATURES OF THE TEST

The Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government is based on the skills, content, and major ideas of the State course of

study *Social Studies 11: United States History and Government* and is intended for initial administration at the end of Grade 11.

### Test Description

The Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government has two parts. Both parts are contained in one test booklet. Part 1 consists of 50 required multiple-choice questions, for which the student is to select the correct answer from among the four choices given and record the answer on a separate answer sheet. Each question is worth 1 credit for a maximum Part 1 score of 50 credits.

Part 2 contains four essay questions. Students are to select *two* of the four questions and write their responses directly in the test booklet. Each Part 2 essay question is worth 10 credits. Since students are to answer two essay questions, the maximum Part 2 score is 20 credits. Thus, the maximum total test score is 70 credits. The passing score is 65%, which is a minimum total score of 46 credits.

### Test Materials

In addition to these directions for administering and scoring, the test materials provided by the Department include:

*For each student*

- test booklet (contains Part 1 and Part 2)
- separate Part 1 answer sheet (hand scorable and machine scorable on NCS equipment)

*For the teacher*

- scoring key for the Part 1 answer sheet
- a *Rating Guide for Part 2 Essay Questions*

Schools are to provide scrap paper for use by students in preparing their answers to the Part 2 essay questions.

The rating guide provided for each test administration contains specific information about

the Part 2 essay questions for use by teachers in rating the students' responses. Therefore, the rating guide for a test is *not* to be distributed to teachers prior to the date and time of the test administration.

For purposes of machine processing, several grids containing spaces for recording various types of student identification information have been included on one side of the Part 1 answer sheet. If the answer sheets are to be machine scored, uniform written instructions about the completion of these grids should be developed by the school and provided to all examiners administering the test. Such instructions should be based on careful consideration of the types of student and score information the school needs, as well as on the processing requirements of the scoring center that the school is using.

Schools that choose to use a Part 1 answer sheet other than the one provided by the Department should *not* have their students transpose Part 1 responses from one answer sheet to another. The answer sheet originally used by the student should be the official answer sheet.

### **SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING THE TEST**

Make sure that each student has a No. 2 pencil for marking the Part 1 answer sheet, a pen for writing answers to the Part 2 essay questions, and scrap paper. Then, follow the procedures outlined below.

1. Distribute the separate answer sheets for Part 1. Give complete directions concerning completion of the heading and, if necessary for machine scoring, the marking of student identification grids.
2. Distribute one test booklet to each student. Have the students complete the heading on the front cover of the test booklet.
3. Ask students to check the front cover of their test booklet to ensure that the examination title and the month, day, and date of administration are correct for this examination session. Next, review the remaining information on the front cover. Then, have the students turn to page 3 and read the directions and sample question for Part 1. Explain to the students the manner in which they are to record their answers on the separate answer sheet.

Make sure that each student understands the directions and sample question and knows how to mark the answer sheet. After you are sure that

all students understand the Part 1 directions, have the students temporarily set aside the Part 1 answer sheet.

4. Ask the students to open the test booklet to the page containing the directions for Part 2. (The proctor should refer to the specific page number.) Have the students complete the heading. Then, review the Part 2 directions. Make sure that students understand that they are to read each question carefully before they select the two essay questions they wish to answer. Remind students that, while they may use scrap paper to prepare drafts of their answers, their final responses for the two questions selected must be written in the spaces provided in the test booklet.
5. After all the students' questions about the procedures for taking the test have been answered, tell the students that they will be allowed as much time as they need to finish the test. Instruct the students to work on Part 1 first and to go right on to Part 2 as soon as they have completed Part 1.
6. In response to inquiries by students concerning the meaning or interpretation of examination questions, proctors should advise the students to use their own best judgment. **No one, under any circumstances, may interpret or explain examination questions to students, nor may anyone review or comment on the answer paper of a student while an examination is in progress.**
7. See Appendix III of this booklet for detailed instructions that must be followed to ensure that students do not use communications devices while taking this test.

As students finish the test, they should sign the declaration on their Part 1 answer sheet, hand in their test materials, and then be allowed to leave the testing room. However, no student should be permitted to leave the testing room before the Uniform Statewide Admission Deadline.

**NOTE: No one, under any circumstances, including the student, may alter the student's responses on the test once the student has handed in his or her test materials. Teachers and administrators who engage in inappropriate conduct with respect to administering and scoring State examinations may be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with Sections 3018 and 3020 of Education Law.**

## DIRECTIONS FOR SCORING

A student's total score on the Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government is the sum of the scores on Part 1 and Part 2. For Part 1, the student's score is the total number of questions that the student answers correctly. For Part 2, the student's score is the sum of the credits assigned to the student's two responses, using the criteria in the rating guide provided for the test. The maximum total score for the test is 70 credits. **The minimum passing score is 65%, which is a minimum total score of 46 credits.**

A table for converting the total test score to a percent is provided in Appendix I of this booklet.

### Organizing the Scoring and Recording Process

Before the students' Part 1 answer sheets and Part 2 responses can be scored, each school must set up a procedure for collecting, arranging, and processing the students' answer papers and for maintaining records of the test results. The procedure used in a particular school should be designed to accomplish the following for each student: (1) produce an accurate Part 1 score, (2) produce a reliable Part 2 score, (3) ensure that the Part 1 and Part 2 scores are combined into a correct total test score, and (4) facilitate the maintenance of accurate records of the total test score.

### Scoring the Part 1 Answer Sheet

**Hand Scoring:** Part 1 answer sheets can be hand scored using the scoring key printed on translucent paper. On the key, boxes have been printed to indicate correct answers. When the key is aligned properly with the answer sheet, each correct answer will be visible in a box.

Scan each answer sheet to make certain that the student has marked only one answer for each question. If two or more answers have been marked, draw a horizontal line with colored pencil through all of the answer circles so that no credit will be allowed for that question in scoring. Place the key on the answer sheet so that the box indicating the correct answer for each question corresponds to the row of answer circles for that question.

To obtain the Part 1 score, count the number of correct answers. Record the student's raw score (total number correct) on the line for the Part 1 score in the box provided on the answer sheet.

**Machine Scoring:** Scan each separate answer sheet to make sure that the student identification grids and answer circles have been filled in with heavy black marks and that all stray marks have been erased. For the convenience of scoring centers, a list of correct answers is printed on the scoring key. Schools should be sure to check with their scoring center concerning the procedure to be followed in preparing the answer sheets for machine scoring.

On the Part 1 answer sheet, spaces have been provided in the upper right corner for recording the student's Part 2 score. The purpose for providing this box is to enable scoring centers to generate a student's total test score. If schools wish to have their scoring center provide this service, they should make such arrangements with their scoring center prior to the test administration date.

### Rating the Part 2 Essay Questions

The rating of the students' responses to the Part 2 essay questions should be completed as soon as possible after the test administration, but only after teachers have had sufficient time to become familiar with the rating criteria and the procedure to be followed in rating the students' responses. It is recommended that each student's Part 2 responses be rated by two social studies teachers.

Each rater should be provided with a copy of the *Rating Guide for Part 2 Essay Questions*, which contains detailed directions for rating the answer papers, specific criteria for rating Part A and Part B of each question, and the chart entitled "Criteria for Rating Student Responses: Essay Questions, Part B." This chart also appears in Appendix II of this booklet.

Each rater should have sufficient time to become familiar with the rating criteria. The raters should meet for a group discussion of the essay questions and the rating criteria prior to rating the students' responses. Using a set of student responses as a training exercise in this meeting would be helpful.

### Detailed Directions for Rating the Part 2 Essay Questions

In rating the students' responses, follow the procedure outlined below.

1. Familiarize yourself with the system your school is using for processing the answer papers and recording the test scores.

2. Have a test booklet on hand. Read each Part 2 question carefully. Note exactly what is required. You may want to write your own responses for each of the questions.
3. Carefully read the criteria for rating Part A and Part B of each question provided in the *Rating Guide for Part 2 Essay Questions*. Note that Part A and Part B each have different criteria and are scored independently.
  - Part A is rated on the basis of the accuracy and relevance of the information provided by the student. Part A is worth a maximum of 4 credits. Fractional credit may *not* be given.
  - Part B is rated holistically using the criteria given in the chart “Criteria for Rating Student Responses: Essay Questions, Part B.” Keeping these criteria in mind, make a single judgment about the overall quality of the student’s response to Part B and assign a rating of 0 to 6 credits to the response. Fractional credit may *not* be given.
4. Discuss with other raters the requirements of each question and the rating criteria. When you are sure that you clearly understand the requirements and criteria, you are ready to begin rating the students’ responses.
5. Read and score the student’s response to Part A of a question before you read and score Part B of that question. Keeping in mind the specific rating criteria provided in the rating guide, decide which score is appropriate for Part A. That score may be recorded in the appropriate space in the box on the back cover of the test booklet. Schools are not required to record the students’ Part 2 scores on the back cover of the test booklets. Schools may choose to place Part 2 scores on school-developed documents, so long as accurate and complete records of the scores are maintained.
6. Read the student’s response to Part B. The student’s response to Part B should be based on the answers given in Part A. The student may also include different or additional information in his or her response to Part B. Decide which score is appropriate, using the chart “Criteria

for Rating Student Responses: Essay Questions, Part B.” That score may be recorded in the appropriate space in the box on the back cover of the test booklet.

If you encounter difficulty in deciding between two contiguous scoring levels, base the rating on the accuracy of the data. For example, the student’s response to Part B could develop the assigned topic with a general plan of organization, develop ideas using adequate support materials, and be clearly written, but still receive a score of 3 if only some of the data used were accurate.

7. If the student has answered more than two questions, rate only the student’s first two responses.

Once you have internalized the criteria established for rating, you should read and rate a student’s response to Part B quickly. However, you should not read the responses superficially. Some responses may require a second reading to determine the appropriate score level. After reading and rating a number of responses, you will find it helpful to stop and review the criteria before continuing with the rating.

Schools that follow the recommended procedure of having the students’ Part 2 responses rated by two social studies teachers may encounter differences in the total scores (Part A plus Part B) given by the raters to a student’s response. If the total scores given by the raters differ by one point, the student should receive the higher score. If the total scores given to a student’s response differ by more than one point, the difference should be reconciled either by averaging the two scores or by having a third social studies teacher rate the response and averaging all three total scores. Any decimal score resulting from this averaging should be rounded up to the next whole number. For example, a student’s response to an essay question receives a score of 7 from one rater and 9 from a second rater – a difference of 2 points. A third rater assigns a score of 9 points. Since the average of these three scores is 8.3, the student’s final score for the essay question is 9.

## APPENDIX I

### Regents Competency Test in United States History and Government

**Table for Converting Total Test Raw Scores to Percents**

Total Test Score	Percent						
70	100%	52	74	34	49	16	23
69	99	51	73	33	47	15	21
68	97	50	71	32	46	14	20
67	96	49	70	31	44	13	19
66	94	48	69	30	43	12	17
65	93	47	67	29	41	11	16
64	91	46*	66	28	40	10	14
63	90	45	64	27	39	9	13
62	89	44	63	26	37	8	11
61	87	43	61	25	36	7	10
60	86	42	60	24	34	6	9
59	84	41	59	23	33	5	7
58	83	40	57	22	31	4	6
57	81	39	56	21	30	3	4
56	80	38	54	20	29	2	3
55	79	37	53	19	27	1	1
54	77	36	51	18	26	0	0
53	76	35	50	17	24		

\* A total test raw score of 46 is the official minimum passing score.

**Note:** This table is provided for those schools wishing to convert total test scores (Part 1 plus Part 2) to percentage equivalents. The official passing score remains a total test raw score of 46.

## APPENDIX II

### Criteria for Rating Student Responses: Essay Questions, Part B

Category	6	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Use of Data</b>	Always uses accurate and relevant data.	Consistently uses accurate and relevant data.	Uses mostly accurate and relevant data.	Mixes accurate and inaccurate, relevant and irrelevant data.	Uses mostly inaccurate and irrelevant data.	Uses almost no accurate or relevant data.
<b>Plan of Organization</b>	Always demonstrates a logical and coherent plan of organization.	Consistently demonstrates a logical and coherent plan of organization.	Develops the assigned topic using a general plan of organization.	Addresses the assigned topic, but demonstrates weakness in organization and may include digression.	Attempts to develop the assigned topic, but demonstrates profound weakness in organization and may include several digressions.	Minimally addresses the assigned topic, but lacks a plan of organization.
<b>Development of Ideas</b>	Always develops ideas fully and clearly, using appropriate examples, reasons, details, explanations, and/or generalizations.	Consistently develops ideas fully, using appropriate examples, reasons, details, explanations, and/or generalizations.	Demonstrates satisfactory development and expression of ideas through the adequate use of support materials.	Demonstrates weakness in the development and expression of ideas with little use of support materials.	Demonstrates profound weakness in the development and expression of ideas, with little use of support materials.	Does not use support materials in the development or expression of ideas.

### Zero Paper

Uses no accurate or relevant data.

Is totally unrelated to the topic.

Is illegible, i.e., includes so many indecipherable words that no sense can be made of the response.

Is a blank paper.

## APPENDIX III

*At the beginning of each test administration, proctors must read the following statement to all students taking secondary-level State examinations:*

You may **not** use any communications device while taking a State examination, either in the room where the test is being administered or while on a supervised break (such as a bathroom visit). Such devices include, but are not limited to, cellular telephones, pagers, CD and audiocassette players, radios, MP3 players, Personal Digital Assistants, video devices, and associated headphones, headsets, microphones or earplugs.

If your cell phone rings, you may not answer it. If your pager beeps or vibrates, you may not look at it. You must therefore turn these and other such devices **OFF right now and secure them underneath your desk** [or in the location specified by the principal], **OFF and away from** your desktop. Your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you if you use any such device or related communications technology or if you wear headphones while in the testing room.

*For Principals and Proctors:*

Any student observed to be using any communications device while taking a State examination must be directed to turn it off and put the device away immediately. In order to allow for all possible outcomes of procedural due process, the student should be allowed to complete the examination.

The incident must be reported promptly to the school principal. If the principal determines that the student was using a communications device during the test administration, the student's test must be invalidated; no score may be calculated for that student.

The incident must be reported in writing to the Office of State Assessment, as is the case for all testing irregularities, misadministrations, or other violations of State testing policy and procedures.

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*Note:* Some students with disabilities may use certain recording/playback devices **ONLY IF** this accommodation is specifically required as a provision of the student's Individualized Education Program or Section 504 Accommodation Plan. If not, the general policy on communications devices as provided above is in effect, and the school may not allow the use of any such equipment.