

Section 2. Validity

Validity is one of the most important attributes of assessment quality. Validity refers to the degree to which logical, empirical, and judgmental evidence supports a proposed interpretation or use of a set of scores, and it is one of the most fundamental considerations in developing and evaluating tests (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999; Messick, 1989). Validity is not based on a single study or type of study; but involves an ongoing process of gathering evidence supporting the interpretation or use of the resulting test scores. The process begins with the test design and continues throughout the entire assessment process, including design, content specifications, item development, psychometric quality, and inferences made from the results.

Mod-HSA items were adapted from banked HSA (SR) items. The development of test content was overseen by a content expert who has a depth of knowledge and teaching experience related to the course in which the Mod-HSA was to be administered. Appropriate content leads who had similar qualifications reviewed the test development work of these individuals.

The constructs measured by each Mod-HSA are described in detail in the Maryland high school curriculum standards (Core Learning Goals, CLGs). All ETS content staff working on test development have been trained in the CLGs. The test blueprint documents presented in Section 1 (see Tables 1.2 to 1.5) were created in collaboration with committees of Maryland educators and were derived from the Maryland goals, expectations, and indicators. The CLGs can be found on the MSDE website at <http://www.mdk12.org>.

Banked items were referenced to a particular instructional standard (i.e., goal, expectation, or indicator). During the internal ETS development process the specific reference was confirmed or changed to reflect changes to the item. When the item went to a committee of Maryland educators for content review, the members of the committee made independent judgments about the match of the item content to the standard it was intended to measure, and evaluated the appropriateness for the age and cognitive ability of students being tested.

As described in Section 1, the process of adapting banked HSA items for use as Mod-HSA items involved simplifying the question format to make items more accessible for special education students. For example, items were modified to reduce reading load and simplify graphics. One answer option was removed from each of the SR items so that students chose from three options instead of four options. The process of selecting and modifying items provided numerous opportunities for the client to review test content and make changes to ensure that the items were aligned with the Maryland content standards.

In addition to the validation documentation gathered and maintained by MSDE, other information in support of the Mod-HSA can be found in the following sections of this technical report:

- Section 3 provides information regarding the item-level analyses used to inform selection of the 50-item operational forms. Descriptions of classical item analyses and differential item functioning, as well as summary tables of item p-values and item-total correlation distributions are presented;
- Section 4 presents information concerning item response theory calibration methods and scaling to align the Mod-HSAs to the HSA scale;
- Section 5 describes the scoring procedures and provides cut score information;
- Section 6 presents information concerning the test characteristics based on classical test theory for the May and Summer administrations;
- Section 7 provides information regarding student characteristics for the May and Summer administrations.