Preparing for the 7-12 ELAR TExES Exam (Field #231)

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Effective with the fall 2014 administration, the secondary English certification exam has changed to reflect the new 7-12 certification. The main thing for you to know is that the *standards and practices the new exam is drawn from are precisely the same as they were before*. In other words, the coursework and other background you have already accumulated will apply to the exam exactly as before. There are some changes, which you will see more clearly as you work through the preparation guide. However, here are the main ones:

- **Computer Administration.** The exam had already gone to a computer administrated format, but the new exam goes even farther. For instance, you will answer some of the questions by clicking on various options from a table of responses.

- **Different Multiple-choice Question Formats.** The new multiple-choice format still includes items for which you simply choose the one correct answer out of the four offered; however, you will see new question formats, such as questions which have more than one correct answer.

- **Two Essays (Constructed-Response Questions).** In addition to the previous essay (a literary comparison and contrast based on theme and literary terms), you will have a second essay examining your grasp of writing assessment and pedagogy. These essays are referred to in the preparation guide as “Constructed-Response Questions.” In the previous exam, the essay counted 20%. In the new exam, the essays together count 35%.
English Discipline Knowledge You Will Need for the TExES

- Basic Literary and Rhetorical Terminology
- Major Literary Movements, Classifications, and Genres
- Basic knowledge of the History and Development of the English Language
Primary Sources for English Discipline Knowledge

- Background provided in your English classes (especially ENGL 4364, ENGL 3374, ENGL 4367, and the Literature Survey Courses)
- Your own reading, study, and reflection.
- Standard Literary Handbooks or Online Resources (For all study aids, see the links on the Certification web page.)
Pedagogical Knowledge You Will Need for the TExES

- Student-Centered, Interactive Approaches to ELA
- Principles of Integrating the Language Arts
- Contemporary Approaches to Teaching Writing
- Contemporary Approaches to Teaching Literature
- Contemporary Methods of Assessment
- Reading Theory as Applied to the ELAR Classroom
- Oral Language in the Classroom
- Uses of Media and Promoting Media Literacy
Sources of Pedagogical Knowledge and Review

- English 4364 (ELAR Teaching Methods)
- Methods Textbooks (*Bridging English* or Comparable Texts)
- Methods Classes in Secondary Education
- The **ELAR Standards** for Texas
- The TExES Competencies
Overall Suggestions to Help You Prepare for the TExES

1. Understand that it is a tough exam.
2. Cultivate certain attitudes about the exam and preparing for it.
3. Regard the TExES Preparation Manual as a key to your success.
1. Understand that the 8-12 ELAR TExES is a tough exam.

- Take nothing for granted. (Good grades and attending the review are not enough.)
- The exam is 5 hours long (with multiple choice questions and two writings).
- Very few questions are simple recall.
- The high stakes of the exam will create tension for you.

Coming to grips with these factors will make you better prepared emotionally.
2. Cultivate certain attitudes about the exam.

- Believe in your background and your preparation. (Our passing rates are high.)
- Consider the structure of the exam (the type of questions/assessment, the time you have, and the physical circumstances of the exam itself).
- Relax (at least as much as you can) as you prepare and when you take the pre-test and the actual test.
3. Regard the TExES Preparation Manual as a key to your success.

- Visit the ETS TExES Certification website, where you will find the prep manual and a thorough and useful study tips document.
- Go through the manual thoroughly.
- Become especially familiar with the domains and competencies.
- Construct your strategies for the test questions.
- Take the practice test when you are ready, not before.
A. Go through the manual thoroughly, cover to cover.

The more you know about the exam, the better prepared you will be. Here are some features that it will help you to know:

- How the exam is constructed
- Strategies for approaching the multiple-choice questions (pages 17-27)
- The writings (constructed-responses) and how they are scored (including the score point descriptions)
B. Become especially familiar with the domains and competencies.

- Understand the link between them and the ELAR Standards for Texas.
- Use the competencies as a test of your English content and pedagogical knowledge.
- Become aware of the link between the competencies and the multiple-choice questions. (Each question is connected specifically to a competency. Each domain is a specific percentage of the overall exam.)
C. Construct your strategies for the test questions.

- **Multiple-choice Questions:** (1) Understand that you have more time per question than you think and that you should use it. (2) Study the question strategies provided in the preparation manual and decide the ones you will use.

- **Constructed Responses:** Study “Strategies for the TExES Constructed Responses,” linked on the certification website.
4. Do the multiple-choice practice questions (pages 28-63) when you are ready, not before.

- Do not take the practice test too early.
- The best time to take the practice test in the preparation guide is when you think you are about 75% ready for the actual practice test or the state test.
- Take the practice test, as much as possible, under “testing conditions” (while thinking about how it will be different on a computer)
- Decide how you are going to approach the constructed responses in the preparation guide.
- If your results are alarming, seek advice from the English certification program coordinator.
Preparing for the Multiple-Choice Section of the TExES

- Make yourself aware of the details of the multiple-choice section—number of questions and, especially, the types of questions.

- Pay CAREFUL attention to the sample questions in the manual. Notice the type of questions, how they are posed, and the analysis of the answers—correct and incorrect. Plant these processes in your thinking about the exam and how you will approach it.

- Be aware that you will have ample time (more than you think) to read, consider, re-read, and answer the questions. YOU NEED TO TAKE THAT TIME!!
Preparing for the Essays
(Constructed Response)

- Study the “Strategies for the TExES Constructed Responses” guide on the certification website.
- Study the preparation manual so that you know exactly what you are expected to produce.
- Understand what holistic scoring is and read how the responses are scored (page 69 for the literary response and page 82 for the writing assessment and pedagogy response).
- Shoot for a 3 or 4 on the literary question and a 5 or 6 on the pedagogy question. (The constructed responses represent 35% of the total score, much more than the former 20%. You can’t give away points on the essays.)
- Take TIME to write your best essays, using your best analysis, with your best support, and in your best writing.
What You Need to Know about the Practice Test

NOTE: Don’t be confused by the term “practice test.” There is, first, the “practice test” in the preparation guide. Then there is the “practice test” that you will take in the SHSU testing center in order to be cleared to take the actual state test. That latter test is what this section is about.

- **You are required to take our practice test before being cleared to take TExES.**
- In our program, the practice test is used mostly as a diagnostic to help you prepare for the actual test, but you need to score well on it.
- Treat the practice test as a real, live test. It is.
- When you get your practice test results, use them to begin your final stage of preparation.
- Dates for practice tests will appear on the Certification website and will be announced through the mailing list. (If you want on the mailing list, contact Sarah Browning, in the English office.)
Advice for Test Day

- Get plenty of sleep the night before. Don’t cram. (You might review the competencies, or perhaps literary terminology.)
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Arrive early.
- During the test, consciously try to relax as much as you can. Remember that this is not a heavily time-based test. You don’t have unlimited time, but you have time to read, think, and re-read.
The hard work of preparation for the TExES is up to you, but you are not in this alone. The English Department certification website has resources and links to further resources that will help you in your preparation.

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