

OVERVIEW FOR THE TEXAS PEACE OFFICER LICENSING EXAMINATION

Purpose

This document provides the student an overview of the knowledge-based examinations that must be taken and passed by all entry-level peace officers in Texas. Further, this document contains strategies to prepare for the examination, and alternative strategies for maximizing successful performance during the examination. Finally, this document describes the structure of the examinations, a list of frequently asked questions about the Peace Officer Licensing Examination, and the format of typical questions.

Organization of Document

The document is organized into sections that provide a narrative to assist the student to understand the purpose of that section. The sections are:

- Structure of the Examinations
- Development and Validation of Examinations
- Question Format
- Preparing for the Examination
- Maximizing Success during the Examination
- Retaking the Examination (if necessary)
- Summary of State Peace Officer Licensing Examinations
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Sample Questions

Structure of the Examinations

A large bank of questions has been developed to measure the comprehensiveness of the examinee's knowledge of the topic areas of the basic peace officer course. The examinations are 250 items in length and are based on the learning objectives within the basic peace officer course. The examination may test all of the learning objectives except for those that call for the direct demonstration of a skill. Before endorsing the student to sit for the licensing exam, the academy should have tested and evaluated the knowledge and skill of students on all of the learning objectives that are a part of the basic peace officer course.

The licensing examinations are administered electronically and designed in the form of multiple-choice questions. Each exam contains a proportionate number of items based on the minimum amount of time spent on the knowledge-based areas of the basic peace officer course as determined by an advisory committee of subject matter experts.

Development and Validation of Examinations

The basic peace officer examination was developed and is maintained by a team of law enforcement professionals representing a number of training academies and subject matter experts in the field, utilizing the learning objectives from the basic peace officer course. The test items proceed through a rigorous development and review process.

Teams of individuals from law enforcement agencies and academies in the State of Texas select items from their current data banks or write new items that reference each learning objective. The validation process utilized in developing the examinations is content validation, utilizing expert panels to initially write the items, and expert panels to review the items. All test questions are piloted and subjected to psychometric item analysis for purposes of test reliability. To maintain the integrity and reliability of the licensing exam, new pilot questions will at times appear on the electronic test. These pilot questions will not be graded; and, additional proportional time will be allowed to complete an exam that includes pilot questions. Your exam proctor will inform you if pilot questions are to be included before the exam begins.

Question Format

Questions are directly tied to a current learning objective. Questions are quotes of, or worded as closely as possible to, either a statute or course content.

Example 1: from a statute

Learning Objective 16.3.7 Identify the statutory authority relating to confidentiality of sex offense victims.

Statute: from the Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP) 57.02)(b)

A victim may choose a pseudonym to be used instead of the victim's name to designate the victim in all public files and records concerning the offense, including police summary reports, press releases, and records of judicial proceedings.

Exam Question

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, a victim of a/an ____ offense may choose a pseudonym to be used instead of the victim's name to designate the victim in all public files and records concerning the offense.

- A. assault
- B. sex*
- C. aggravated
- D. domestic

Example 2: from course content

Learning Objective 22.1.1 Define emergency communications and describe the various services provided in public safety.

Course Content: Definition from the 'Emergency Communication' topic

A police officer or a citizen requesting an emergency response from public safety personnel to an emergency event involving, but not limited to, a life-threatening occurrence or accident, criminal activity or breach of the peace.

Exam Question

A/An _____ is defined as a citizen request for an emergency response from public safety personnel to an event involving criminal activity.

- A. 911 call
- B. critical incident call
- C. request for service
- D. emergency communication*

Preparing for the Examination

Preparation for the Peace Officer Licensing Examination should begin as you start the Basic Peace Officer Course. You will, during your time in the academy, cover a large amount of material. This material will be valuable to you when you become a peace officer. You will have many quizzes, examinations, and practical problems that will serve to develop your competence for a career in law enforcement. Your instructors will reinforce the basic knowledge and skills you will learn with practical activities to test your application of this knowledge and skills.

Much of what you will learn will be unique to your community, county, and region of the state. However, the Peace Officer Licensing Examination is focusing on the objectives listed in the current basic peace officer course. Each objective should be covered during your course of study. Make sure that you have a clear understanding of each objective and the information that you should have mastered about that objective. Some objectives stress knowledge, comprehension, or application while other objectives focus on analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

A technique of making “flash” cards with the objective on one side and the correct response on the other side will assist the student in studying for both academy and state licensing examinations. The student should also outline books and handouts utilized in the academy with a focus on understanding the correct information associated with each objective. Any time you are not clear about an objective, ask your instructor to explain the information to you. The State Licensing Examinations will not require you to memorize specific names, dates, or numbers associated with a legal reference.

Maximizing Success during the Examination

In reality, success during the examination is based on preparation prior to the examination. During the basic peace officer course of study, organize a set of notes and flash cards that give the information for each objective. Study this material periodically with increasing intensity until you are to take the licensing examination. Design your studying in preparation for the State Licensing Examination in two ways:

- 1) remember that the test has been constructed proportionally to the time of instruction outlined for the course.

2) prior to taking the examination, get a good night's sleep, eat a light breakfast, and try to relax. The technique of "cramming" just prior to the examination is typically counter-productive with this type of examination. Ongoing preparation as you are learning course materials is your best tool for success.

Many test-takers will first go through the entire examination and answer those questions that are correct based on their knowledge. The remaining items then are analyzed to see if the student can reduce the alternatives by rejecting clearly incorrect responses to a minimum acceptable amount. Guessing will not be penalized; however, analyze each question to see if you can reduce the possible alternative answers prior to guessing. If you have had a negative stress reaction to examinations in the past, discuss techniques to minimize stress with your instructor/coordinator. If necessary, obtain approval from your instructor/coordinator to work with a mental health professional to reduce stress if your reaction is extreme. This should be done early in the academy, not immediately prior to the State Licensing Examination. It should be noted that cheating must be reported immediately to a test proctor. Cheating will not be tolerated, and immediate action will be taken to deal with any form of cheating.

Retaking the Examination (if necessary)

Students have three opportunities to take the examination, before retraining is required. Commission rules require that after three failures, the individual retrain by taking the basic peace officer licensing course. A student who does not pass the Licensing Examination will receive a detailed analysis of exam performance. This analysis indicates areas of strength and weakness for the student. This exam analysis will allow the student to focus on areas of needed improvement to be studied prior to retaking the State Licensing Examination. The Licensing Examination can be repeated once the student has been notified of failure; however, it is strongly recommended that the student obtain and utilize the information from the exam performance analysis to aid in preparation for the next attempt. The student who passes the examination will receive notification that he/she passed, along with an analysis of performance. It should be noted that, because test items are selected electronically and randomly, individuals may receive a different version of the examination upon retesting.

Summary of Peace Officer Licensing Examinations

This document is an attempt to provide students with an overview of the licensing examination that must be passed by all individuals wishing to become a peace officer in Texas. The exam is based on the learning objectives within the basic peace officer course. The focus of the licensing exam is on the knowledge-based learning objectives. Academies are responsible for the skill-based objectives (driving, mechanics of arrest, etc.). It is suggested that students ask instructors to clarify any objectives about which they are unsure during training sessions. It is recommended that students only use the Commission-developed course (without local processes or procedures) and the necessary statutory references to study for the exam. The learning objectives for the Basic Peace Officer Course (BPOC), course #1000, are available at our website, www.tcleose.state.tx.us.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Peace Officer Licensing Exam

Q. How many questions are on the exam?

A. 250

Q. Is there just a single version of the exam?

A. No, there are multiple versions because questions are randomly drawn from the electronic test bank.

Q. How much time do I have to complete the exam?

A. You will have 2 hours and 45 minutes to complete the 250 question examination.

Q. What is the format of the questions?

A. The questions are multiple choice with four alternatives.

Q. What is the required passing percentage on the exam?

A. 70% (miss no more than 75 questions).

Q. Can there be more than one correct answer for any exam item?

A. No, there is only one correct response. Select the one that you think is most correct.

Q. Who developed the questions?

A. Each question was written and reviewed by a team of law enforcement training professionals who specialize in basic peace officer training.

Q. How is each exam item related to the basic peace officer course?

A. Each exam item relates to a specific learning objective. However, there may be several questions on a single learning objective depending on the amount of course content.

Q. Will I be required to memorize specific dates?

A. No, this is not required.

Q. Will I be required to memorize section numbers and article numbers from statutory references?

A. No, there are no references to a specific statutory section or article numbers.

Q. What are some ways to control anxiety during the examination?

A. A number of techniques will minimize stress. First, studying on a regular basis and at a scheduled time each day during your course of study will establish both a strong knowledge base and proper self-confidence to take the examination. A good night's sleep prior to the examination and proper nutritional foods are essential to optimal performance. At exam time, focusing on the task of answering the questions, rather than on any anxiety you may feel about how well you will do on the exam, will direct

your attention appropriately and allow you to use your time most effectively and efficiently.

Q. Are there any study tools that can be used?

A. Daily studying for the exam during your course of training, so as not to “cram” at the last minute, is the best study strategy. Students can develop hypothetical questions, based on the learning objectives, and place them on "flash" cards, with questions on one side and answers on the other. Use these cards to test others in a study group. The best way to learn material is to teach it to another.

For example:

Who are peace officers?

Article 2.12 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure designates numerous types of peace officers that the student should know.

Q. Do my results reflect only the questions I answer?

A. No, any questions left blank will be scored as incorrect.

Q. What if I don't know much about taking a test on a computer?

A. Your test proctor will assure that you have all the support you need in order to feel confident about taking the test on a computer. Ask the proctor for assistance if you have any questions about how to use the computer.

Q. Can I make changes to my answers?

A. Yes, your test proctor will provide instructions for reviewing and/or changing answers.

Q. Is there a penalty for guessing on the examination?

A. No. In fact, the technique of eliminating possible answers as non-correct will increase your odds of getting the question correct.

Q. If I pass, can I get an analysis of my weak areas?

A. Yes, you will be provided your score and exam analysis.

Q. Can I see the questions that I got wrong?

A. No, Commission rules prohibit revealing the content of exams to anyone.

Q. Why are some objectives not tested at the state level?

A. Topic areas are sampled; thus, not all objectives are included on any individual exam. Also, some objectives focus entirely on skills, and the academy is responsible for determining student ability regarding those objectives.

Q. What if I fail the exam?

A. You will receive an analysis of your exam. The analysis lists your performance in all topic areas.

Q. If I fail the examination, how soon can I re-take the exam?

A. You may re-take the exam according to the schedule of your examining facility. It is strongly recommended that the student utilize this performance analysis to aid in preparation for the next attempt.

Q. Will the exam notice indicate how many times I have tested?

A. No, but the letter indicating a failure will include a statement indicating the number of attempts remaining.

Q. What if I fail all three times and still want to pursue a law enforcement career?

A. You will be required to successfully complete the entire training course again.

Q. Am I licensed when I pass my exam?

A. No, passing the exam is only one phase of the licensing process.

Q. How long are the exam results good for?

A. Results are recognized for two years after the date the exam is graded.

Q. How soon will I know my exam results?

A. You will receive a printout of your results immediately upon completion of the exam.

Q. May I take notes about the contents of the exam during the exam to look up something later?

A. No, Commission rules strictly prohibit reproducing or revealing the content of an exam at any time.

Q. May I ask about exam questions while taking the exam?

A. No, exam administrators are instructed not to respond to questions about exam contents. Any concerns/complaints about the exam must be in writing to the Commission. Remember, Commission rules prohibit discussion of exam content, so keep the item(s) in general terms. These concerns must contain the topic area(s) and the general intent of the question(s). This type of letter should be directed to Examination Development.

Q. May I take paper, books, or other assorted items into the exam room with me?

A. No, these items are prohibited.

Q. What should I do if I detect someone attempting to cheat?

A. Inform the exam proctor immediately.

Q. What if I have to leave the room (to use the bathroom) during the exam?

A. You should check with the exam proctor for site-specific guidelines.

Q. What if I experience a bona fide medical emergency during the exam?

A. Notify the exam proctor in private of your situation. The proctor will evaluate your situation and direct you accordingly.

Sample Examination Questions

A vocation in which professed knowledge of some branch of learning is used in its application to the affairs of others is the definition of ____.

- A. vocation
- B. profession*
- C. divinity
- D. customer service

____ is one of the reasons for the Declaration of Independence.

- A. Inalienable rights
- B. Bill of rights
- C. Parliamentary rights
- D. Refusal of rights*

The U.S. Supreme Court decision that allows peace officers to “stop and frisk” is ____.

- A. Miranda v. Arizona
- B. Chimel v. California
- C. Terry v. Ohio*
- D. Duran v. City of Douglas

If either the conduct or a result of that is an element of the offense occurs inside this state, according to the Penal Code, this falls under ____.

- A. Territorial jurisdiction*
- B. Rules of Criminal Procedure
- C. Consolidation and Joinder of Prosecution
- D. Severance

When directing traffic, ____ long blast/s of the whistle should be used to attract drivers' attention to stop.

- A. one*
- B. two
- C. three
- D. four

One of the influences that may affect an adolescent's encounter with the police is ____.

- A. geographic turf
- B. peer pressure*
- C. status
- D. minor mischief

____ established that police officers performing a discretionary function enjoy an immunity that shields them from liability.

- A. Tennessee v. Garner
- B. Ware v. Reed
- C. Milstead v. Kibler*
- D. Garrity v. New Jersey

Social scientists have conceptualized that individuals are entitled to equal rights and _____.

- A. merit
- B. dignities*
- C. democracy
- D. power

Frozen fright consists of physical shock, disorientation, and _____.

- A. numbness*
- B. instinct
- C. reaction
- D. arousal

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, a victim has the right to receive from _____ adequate protection from harm and threats of harm.

- A. courts
- B. law enforcement agencies*
- C. correctional facilities
- D. legislature