ATTENTION

Announcing some changes to API 510, 570 and 653 examination administrations

Beginning with the December 5, 2012 exam administration API will make two minor changes to the API 510, 570 and 653 examination processes. API believes that these changes will help to maintain the value of our credentials by improving the exam experience for all candidates and keeping exam content current, relevant and free of errors.

1. **The number of questions by which test takers will be graded or scored.**

   The API 510, 570 and 653 tests in the past have always contained 150 questions on which candidates were scored. These exams will now contain 125 scored questions, plus 25 questions that will not be scored (otherwise known as "pre-test" items).

   All exam grading will still be based on the number of correct responses. The minimum number of correct responses required to achieve a passing score will be established based on the 125 scored items only. API will continue to utilize the statistical method of equating in order to maintain the same level of difficulty of the exams. The equating process will take into account that 25 of the test questions are now "pre-test" questions and establish an accordingly reduced passing grade for all exams.

   The pre-test questions will appear on all tests for all candidates; so each test taker receives the same, fair experience. Test takers will not know which test questions are scored and which are not.

2. **Exam day will be shortened.**

   The total time allotted to candidates to complete an examination will be reduced from 8 hours to 7 hours. In analyzing the details of tests taken previously, it has become clear that the overwhelming majority of test takers complete their examinations in 6-7 hours. API has therefore decided to officially shorten the length of the exams and is completely confident that candidate performance will not be hindered in any way. The open book section of the exam will remain 4 hours long. The closed book part will now be only 3 hours. This change will also allow candidates and proctors to have a slightly longer lunch break.

FAQ

What stays the same?

The most important thing that will stay the same is that the exams will still yield accurate, fair results for all candidates. The test will still have 150 total questions to be answered. Using pre-test items on an exam in no way impacts scoring or test taker performance, since test takers are unable to identify which questions are scored and which are not. Test takers shouldn't notice any difference at all. The minimum passing score will be calculated based on the 125 scored items. Each scored item will continue to be worth 1 point each.

What is a pre-test question?

Pre-test questions are usually newly-written or recently revised questions. These questions need to be vetted by the candidates before being approved.

What is the purpose of using pre-test questions?

Using pre-test items is a standard practice in the certification industry. It helps determine whether the new questions are valid, reliable and fair to be used for scoring on future exams.

Candidates will continue to be able to challenge every item on the test. When reviewing the challenges we receive on pre-test questions, we will easily find out whether those questions are misleading, unfair, or not written well. We will then be able to improve these questions before they appear on any exams again.

In the long run, pre-testing will allow us to improve the overall quality of the exam questions and reduce the number of challenges received after each exam administration.

Does the use of pre-test question impact how scoring works?

Absolutely not. Exams will be scored in terms of number of correct responses. The passing score will be based on a minimum number based on 125 items. The use of pre-test items does not impact the overall exam difficulty or question difficulty in any way.

How will the passing score be comparable to the score required on the 150 item test?

API makes every effort to select questions that are equal in difficulty for every new examination we develop. However, sometimes there are slight variations in difficulty levels from one exam to the next. API will continue to use the "equating" method to establish comparable scores on the examinations. The equating process essentially adjusts the passing point of each examination to compensate for differences in the difficulty level of the two exams. Thus, the passing point always represents the minimum knowledge required and the absolute knowledge standard is held constant. The test results of candidates only reflect whether they have this minimum amount of knowledge or not. The equating process will take into account that there are only 125 test questions to score and establish an accordingly reduced passing grade for all exams.
Are exams marked on a curve?

No. Marking on a "curve" means comparing the scores of one candidate to all the other candidates who took the examination and assigning grades or passing status according to a fixed percentage. The implication is that whether an individual passes the examination or not might depend on the ability level (or preparation) of all the other candidates who took the examination. This would not be fair for a credentialing examination.