

# Reported Scores for the GED® Test

## Introduction

This brief overview outlines the reasons why percent-correct scores are not used as the reported scores for the GED® test. This overview defines percent-correct and scaled scores and provides the reasons for reporting scaled scores.

The GED® test is a **standardized test** widely used in the US and internationally to evaluate candidates' attainment of high school equivalency, readiness for higher education, and demonstration of academic competencies associated with credit-bearing college courses. A **standardized test** is one administered in a predefined manner so the condition of testing is consistent for all test takers in terms of aspects such as (1) the number of test questions administered, (2) time allowed for taking the test, and (3) test scoring and reporting procedures. Standardized tests are widely used in educational and professional fields for purposes of school accountability, college or profession admissions, or certification/licensure. Standardized tests provide a common ground to evaluate and compare test-takers' performances on a particular subject matter of interest.

Policy makers, educators, parents, and test takers often ask why the results of standardized tests are reported as **scaled scores**. These stakeholders are more familiar with **raw scores** or **percent-correct scores** that are frequently used in reporting results of low-stakes (e.g., classroom) tests. They sometimes also ask why it is not appropriate to use those latter two types of scores to compare results across different test administrations.

In order to have consistency in score interpretation and comparison (and similar to what is done for most standardized testing programs), GED Testing Service (GEDTS) transforms raw test scores into a set of values different from such raw score points obtained directly from a test. These transformed results are called **scaled scores**, and they are reported by GEDTS rather than percent-correct scores derived from the raw score points. This standardization allows scores reported from a test to have consistent meaning for all test takers and across different test administrations.

## Raw and Percent-Correct Scores

A raw score is the sum of number of points a test taker obtained on a test. A percent-correct score is related to the raw score and can be calculated by dividing the raw score with the total number of points on the test. If a test taker has answered 30 out of 40 questions on a test correctly (with each question worth of 1 point), his or her raw score would be 30 points and the percent-correct score would be 75% (that is, 30 divided by 40). Though the percent-correct score is easy to calculate and understand, it is mostly used in low-stakes (e.g., classroom) tests for score reporting but not in high-stakes standardized tests.

One aspect of standardized tests is that multiple versions of a test must be created as a way of alleviating test security concerns, but these versions all need to be equivalent in terms of attributes such as coverage of the content, difficulty, etc. GEDTS, as with other standardized testing programs, develops multiple forms of the same test according to prespecified content and statistical specifications. However, regardless of how much effort has been made to abide by such specifications, multiple test forms are never *exactly* equal in difficulty (Holland & Dorans, 2006). This makes it impossible to use percent-correct scores to compare test takers' performances on different forms of a test. Since getting 60% correct score on a more difficult form may mean a test taker has more knowledge or skills than another test taker getting 70% correct on an easier form. In other words, percent-correct scores cannot be compared across different forms since such scores do not have the same meaning.

In order for stakeholders (e.g., jurisdictions, testing programs, school districts) to make consistent decisions based on assessment results, scores reported from standardized tests need to be comparable. Scores must have the same meaning regardless of which form a test-taker has taken. Therefore, percent-correct scores cannot be used as reported scores in standardized testing programs simply because such raw-point based scores are not comparable across different test forms.

## Scaled Score

GEDTS, a standardized testing program, reports scaled scores in order to achieve score comparability and comply to the best industry practice for high-stakes test scores. Statistical procedures are applied to convert raw scores onto a common scale to account for differences in test form difficulties. After score adjustments, a test taker needs to have slightly higher raw score on an easier form and lower raw score on a more difficult form to get the same scaled score. Details of how GEDTS creating scaled scores can be found in the GED technical manual (GED Testing Service, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, using scaled scores allows for meaningful score interpretations and comparisons. Although percent-correct scores are easy to calculate and understand, they are often misinterpreted and cannot be compared across different test forms. Scaled scores, on the other hand, can be compared across test forms and should be reported so that test scores can be interpreted more accurately.

## Interpreting GED® Test Scores in a South African Context

GED® test scores are interpreted according to three performance indicator levels.

A student who achieves a minimum score of 145 on all four subjects has passed the GED® test and is awarded a high school equivalency credential from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Washington, D.C.

A student who achieves scores of 165 through 174 on any of the GED® test modules is considered to have the necessary skills needed to start college/university-level courses in that subject area, without the need for placement testing or developmental/remedial education courses, such as the SATs or the National Benchmark Tests (NBTs), depending on the policies of the institution to which they are applying.

A student who achieves scores of 175 through 200 on any of the GED® test modules is considered to have demonstrated some of the same skills that are taught in college/university-level courses in that subject area. For reference purposes, in the United States, these students may be eligible for up to 10 semester hours of college/university credit, depending on the policies of the institution they are attending or to which they are applying.

Queries should be directed to the South African representatives of the GED® test by email at [info@ged.org.za](mailto:info@ged.org.za) or by telephone at 011 728 0212.

## References

GED Testing Service (2018). *Technical Manual, GED Test*. Retrieved from [https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/GED\\_Technical\\_Manual.pdf](https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/GED_Technical_Manual.pdf).

Holland, P. W., & Dorans, N. J. (2006). Linking and equating. In R. L. Brennan (Ed.), *Educational measurement* (4th ed., pp. 187–220). Westport, CT: American Council on Education and Praeger.