Career Readiness Indicator Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to help guide the process for review of a Career Readiness Indicator (CRI). It is the responsibility of the local education agency proposing the addition of the CRI to gather the information and submit it to Josh Laney, Assistant Director for Workforce Development. Answers should be as concise as possible. Information should be submitted as a completed packet, not piecemeal. Additional information may be included at the discretion of the applying agency if it might be pertinent to the evaluation process.

Contact information for person filling out questionnaire

Full Name of the Career Readiness Indicator:

- ASK Institute – Concepts of Entrepreneurship and Management
- ASK Institute – Fundamental Business Concepts
- ASK Institute – Concepts of Finance
- ASK Institute – Fundamental Marketing Concepts

Agency: MBAResearch and Curriculum Center
Phone number: 614.486.6708 x215
Email: Gleason@MBAResearch.org
Date of submittal: August 28, 2015

Why do we want this CRI?

1. What industry is asking for the CRI? (List multiple if applicable.)

   The A*S*K Institute certifications, like our business and marketing programs, are not specific to individual industries. Rather, they represent broad functional specialties found within all industries. These specialties (business management, finance, marketing, etc.) are among the most in-demand career options available to entry-level applicants and are found, literally, in all industries and all communities throughout the state and nation.

2. What companies within the industry are requesting this CRI? (Attach letters of request on company letterhead.)

   As per above, all companies in Alabama require qualified workers, both specialized by function, and those with cross-functional skills to support all aspects of the company or organization. Available labor data strongly support these needs.

3. What entity, company, or testing agency is the “owner” of the CRI? (Who determines what it takes to earn the CRI?) Provide contact numbers, names, websites, or other info for inquiries.

   The A*S*K Institute (i.e., Institute for the Assessment of Skills and Knowledge of Business) is a function of MBA Research, an Ohio-based not-for-profit research group that studies business via both primary and secondary research to develop national standards for high school and college business administration programs. The organization’s standards research is independent of the education delivery system to ensure that the work represents the specific needs of the business community.

   A*S*K Institute: www.ASKInstitute.org   PH: 800.448.0398

Rev: 8/20/15
13. Is there a practice test available from the CRI issuer or from other parties?

Yes (pre-test)

a. If yes, does the practice test have a cost in addition to the actual exam and if so, how much?

Yes: $7.95  

(Also, various formative tests tied to individual performance indicators. Costs vary considerably.)

b. Can rights to the practice material be purchased once or is there a recurring fee?

Both, depending on specific needs of schools.

14. Who can administer the exam? (Some CRIs prohibit the person who trained the student from administering the exam.)

Requires an independent proctor who meets specific requirements. Teachers may not administer the exam to students within their own department.

15. Is special certification or licensure required for a teacher to administer the CRI?

No

a. If yes, what is the cost for gaining the appropriate licensure?

b. Is this a one-time or recurring fee?

c.

16. Is site, facility, or equipment certification required for administering the CRI?

No.

a. If yes, what costs are included?

b. Is this a one-time or recurring fee?
08/26/2015

Dawn Morrison, Education Administrator
Alabama State Department of Education
P.O. Box 302101
Montgomery, AL 36130-2101
dmorrison@alsde.edu

Dawn Morrison:

I am writing in behalf of my support for the A*S*K* Business Institute credentialing initiatives in assessment. This agency provides our business and marketing program with an industry-based proof of learning credential. I understand that it is a joint initiative of DECA and MBA Research and Curriculum Center. I also am aware that the exams and the certificates are based on performance indicators developed by the business community. This is an enormous benefit for us on the local level to determine the progress of our program through the A*S*K* exams taken by the students enrolled in our program. As a former member of the Eufaula DECA Chapter, Class of 1998, please echo my support for the continued use of this type of credentialing to the appropriate decision panel members.

Sincerely,

Britt Washington
Chairman
Eufaula City Schools
Career Technology Advisory Committee
333 State Docks Road
Eufaula, Alabama 36027
A*S*K Certification Exams

2016 Technical Manual

Detailed technical information regarding the A*S*K Business Institute’s certification exams.

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Background

Accountability in education affects all programs, all grade levels, and all educators. Local school districts, state education departments, and the U.S. Department of Education are all insisting that teachers, schools, and students be more accountable for instructional outcomes—in short, for learning.

Assessment tools offered by MBA Research and Curriculum Center support both formative and summative proof of student achievement. Specific options include authentic assessment tools such as rubrics as well as a wide range of more traditional objective testing alternatives. In addition to testing options designed specifically for, and aligned with, classroom instruction, MBA Research fostered the development of an industry-based certification program via the Institute for Assessment of the Skills and Knowledge of Business (A*S*K Business Institute).

The A*S*K Business Institute is a joint initiative of MBA Research and DECA. It operates as a quasi-independent agency providing objective, industry-based proof of learning for students of business. The Institute is administered by MBA Research staff.

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Purpose of the A*S*K Certification Exams

Historically, few opportunities have been available for marketing and business students to formally document their learning. MBA Research and Curriculum Center seeks to change that paradigm with the A*S*K Institute certification exams. The exams provide third-party documentation of learning achievement as well as offer added value to completion of course work and other learning experiences.

Each A*S*K certificate is based on well-documented performance indicators derived from MBA Research's continuing research of the business community. These industry-validated performance indicators define skills and requisite knowledge required for career success in business, marketing, management, and entrepreneurship.

Although A*S*K exams are typically administered to secondary and postsecondary students completing their programs, the tests (which are not grade-level specific) are appropriate for all students of business—high school students, college students, and even early-career professionals. In essence, A*S*K certification exams are critical tools for all serious students of business administration who wish to document their understanding of key business skills, their willingness to be accountable for their learning, and their interest in positioning for employment and promotion.

The A*S*K Institute certification program offers specific benefits to individuals passing one or more certification exams, including a portable credential for résumés and portfolios; evidence of preparation for college and career advancement; documentation of challenging course electives for college applications; preparation for competitive events (high school as well as college); and personalized recognition of exemplary performance by individual students, faculty members, and programs.

Examinees who earn a score of 70% or higher on any of the four certification exams receive the following recognition: an A*S*K Business Institute certificate; up to five letters of commendation to share with teachers, school principals, school superintendents, parents/guardians, college admission advisors, employers, and mentors; and up to three press releases to send to local media outlets (e.g., newspapers) for publication.

The A*S*K exams also address many specific needs of contemporary professional and technical career programs beyond recognition of high-achieving examinees. Instructors can increase the accountability of their programs relative to national standards by administering the exams. The exams can serve as guides in the development of programs and curricula. Exam results provide useful guidance regarding student knowledge and understanding of certain critical skills and concepts as well as the effectiveness of student learning across the entire instructional program. Pre- and post-assessment results also lend themselves to program improvement and evaluation of student growth throughout a program.

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Development Process

The A*S*K Business Institute certification exams and corresponding pre-assessments are based on industry-validated performance indicators. The exam questions have been developed, reviewed, and edited for validity by professional writers and curriculum researchers who are trained in the development of quality instructional materials, including assessments.

Each multiple-choice test item is developed following these guidelines:

- Each test question must relate to a specified performance indicator and must test key, significant content.
- Each question must contain a complete stem so that students understand what they are being asked to respond to before reading the four alternatives (A, B, C, and D).
- Each question should be stated in a question or completion format.
- The bulk of the content for each item should be put in the stem rather than in the alternatives.
- Each question should be stated simply so that students do not have to guess at what they have been asked.
- Each test item should make students think and move beyond mere regurgitation of information.

While the test items themselves have not been reviewed by industry, an industry review process is underway. All performance indicators have been validated (most, repeatedly) via direct industry input – most recently via online surveys involving hundreds of private sector business leaders nationwide.

All MBA Research instructional materials are routinely reviewed to ensure unbiased presentation. Select items that appear on the A*S*K exams are reviewed during a field-test process coupled with the development of instructional modules.

In addition, a statistical analysis of each A*S*K certification exam is completed at least once per year. Revisions to exams are made based on that analysis. A high percentage of items designated for replacement are selected because of their degree of difficulty. Items that are too easy fail to discriminate between students who know and don’t know the content. Items that are too difficult are also removed. The other key variable impacting exam revisions is the alignment with the national standards for business, marketing, finance, and entrepreneurship. As standards change, so do the test items on the exams. An average of 15% - 20% of all items is replaced annually.

Access to the complete exams is limited to MBA Research staff who have a legitimate need-to-know (e.g., those responsible for loading exam questions into the testing software).

Some individual items, including annual replacement items, are pulled from an existing item bank and, therefore, may have been included in other applications.

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Format

Each A*Š*K certification exam contains 100 multiple-choice test items administered online through a secure online testing vendor. Each test item is composed of a self-contained stem and four alternatives, including three plausible, but not defensible, distractors. Examinees have a total of 100 minutes to complete the exam.

The A*Š*K Business Institute currently offers four certification exams:

- Fundamental Business Concepts
- Fundamental Marketing Concepts
- Concepts of Finance
- Concepts of Entrepreneurship and Management

A pre-assessment/pre-test is also available July 1 through November 30 for each of the four A*Š*K exams.

Scoring

A*Š*K certifications are awarded on the basis of cut scores that represent a level of competence typically expected by industry. While not yet statistically validated, these cut scores are based on experience with comparable exams and with data collected during the content validation. Further, these criterion-based cut scores determine certification independent of other examinees.

Examinees who earn a score of at least 70% are recognized as Certified High Achievers, while examinees who score 90% or higher are recognized as Certified Exemplary Achievers.
Test Administration/Delivery

Exams are delivered via a highly secure, password-protected online system designed specifically for high-stakes testing. Exams can be taken through any modern web browser (e.g., Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Safari) running on a computer connected to the Internet.

Test administration/delivery processes include:

1. The testing administrator (a high-school or postsecondary instructor, in most cases) must recruit and register a testing proctor to monitor the actual testing process. The exam proctor is responsible for supervising the examinees during the actual examination period and may oversee a maximum of 30 examinees. (Assistant proctors should also be recruited if 30+ examinees are expected to take an exam.) Instructors may not serve as exam proctors for students in their classes/departments. To register the proctor, the testing administrator must report the name and contact information for the proctor to MBA Research. Exams administered locally without proper proctor registration in advance will not be honored, and no certificates will be issued to passing examinees. Once registered, the proctor should become familiar with the testing process as s/he will be responsible for addressing any questions that arise during the test.

2. The testing administrator must log in to the online testing system to register each student, thereby creating student testing accounts. The administrator must follow specified instructions to create an identification number for each student and select the test(s) each student will take. If any student will require special accommodations (e.g., extra time, text/font-size option, etc.) during testing, the testing administrator can select the appropriate option when creating the student’s account. Accommodation can be set at any time before activating the student.

3. The testing administrator must enable each student online, which allows students to log in to the testing website as necessary but not take an actual test. The testing administrator should also access and print the students’ login names and passwords.

4. The testing administrator (as well as students, if desired) should take the demo test several days prior to the test date—from the testing site/location that will be used for the actual exams. The demo test is a 10-item trivia test designed to check the technical compatibility of the examinees’ computers with the online testing system. It is important to take the demo test well in advance of the actual testing date so that potential problems can be addressed and fixed in advance.

5. The testing administrator must notify MBA Research when the demo test has been completed. Upon receipt of this notification, MBA Research applies test credits (previously purchased) to the testing site’s/school’s account.

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6. The testing administrator must copy and distribute instructions that detail how to register for the student recognition package online. Then, examinees must individually log in to their online testing accounts and sign up for the recognition package. (Students who wish to receive certificates for their passing test scores must register before taking the A*S*K exam, or they will not receive certificates.) The testing administrator must also collect signed Parent/Guardian Non-Consent Forms from any students under 18 years of age whose parents/guardians do not want their student’s information from the recognition package released. These forms must be submitted to MBA Research prior to testing.

7. On the actual test day, no more than 60 minutes before testing is scheduled to begin, the testing administrator must activate each student who will be taking the test that day. By doing so, the testing administrator authorizes these students to access and complete the selected exam.

8. The testing proctor administers the test. The proctor must be present during the entire testing period to field students’ questions, enforce all policies and procedures for testing, and deter dishonest behavior.

Examinees have 100 minutes to complete the 100-item multiple-choice exam, although individual questions are not timed. Questions appear in random order and vary by computer terminal. Only one test item appears on an examinee’s screen at any one time, but students can click forward and backward to skip and review questions throughout the exam.

Examinees are allowed use of hand calculators and scratch paper during testing, provided that the scratch paper is collected and destroyed at the conclusion of testing. Examinees are not permitted to use references or resources of any kind, access other computer programs while logged in to the testing website, communicate with other students or the testing administrator, or record any element of the exam in any manner.

9. The testing proctor must fill out and return the Exam Certification Form to MBA Research within one hour of the completion of the exam period. The completed Exam Certification Form certifies the test results and documents the individual’s role as proctor.
Reporting Results

Exam results are available in real time to authorized test administrators and can be viewed 24/7 in individual as well as aggregate reports. Individual results, which are available as either .CSV or .TXT files, detail the student's cumulative score on the exam, the number of test questions that the student answered correctly, and the student's test performance broken down by standard/instructional area. Aggregate reports, on the other hand, provide information on the students' test performance as a group or class. The group/class average for the entire exam overall is provided, as well as details about how the group/class performed in each standard/instructional area.

Access to scoring data is hierarchical and determined by the client. For example, a state may give access to districts who may in turn give access to schools, etc. Depending on the level within this hierarchical structure, authorized users may have access to the results for an entire state/province, district/region, or school.

Data are available for download so that each user may organize reports to fit specific needs. All reporting of current data (current fiscal year) are included in the cost of testing. There is a nominal fee for accessing archived data, if available.
Performance Data

Statistical data for each A*S*K certification exam are reviewed at least once annually to determine how effectively the overall exam and individual items within the exam are performing. On average, 10% - 20% of the statistically weakest items are replaced. Additional reviews by subject matter experts focus on item validity relative to the research base (standards and performance indicators).

Relevant data for the period ending June, 2015:

**Fundamental Business Concepts**
Examinees: 682
Certified High Achievers (70% Cut Score): 253 (37.1%)
Certified Exemplary Achievers (90%+): 22 (3.2%)
Mean Score: 64.5
Median Score: 66.0
Variance: 260
Standard Deviation: 16.1
Alpha (Reliability): .93
Scheduled replacements (2016 exams): 20

**Fundamental Marketing Concepts**
Examinees: 1,638
Certified High Achievers (70% Cut Score): 380 (23.2%)
Certified Exemplary Achievers (90%+): 5 (1%)
Mean Score: 57.2
Median Score: 58
Variance: 264
Standard Deviation: 16.2
Alpha (Reliability): .92
Scheduled replacements (2015 exams): 20

**Other A*S*K Certification Exams**
Sample size less than required for analysis.

Psychometric data is based on analysis by statisticians at the Center on Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University.
Additional Documentation

MBA Research and Curriculum Center provides additional forms, checklists, and other documents to aid customers with their assessment programs. The various documents, along with a description of each, are listed below.

- Customized Instructions for Administering A*S*K exams: Provide detailed information to local teachers and administrators regarding A*S*K certification exams, including:
  - An overview of the online testing process
  - Exam administration instructions
  - FAQs and troubleshooting
  - Policies and procedures for proctoring A*S*K exams
  - Roster of examinees preparation
  - Administrator and student instructions for test day
  - Student recognition package instructions
  - Submittal of late student recognition requests and/or corrections
  - Parent/Guardian non-consent for release of information
  - Online assessment glossary of terms

- Proctor Registration Form: Requires the testing administrator to report the name and contact information of the lead testing proctor

- Exam Certification Form: Requires the testing proctor to attest that exams under her/his supervision were administered in accordance with the testing procedures required by A*S*K

- Roster of Examinees Form: Asks for the names of testing examinees as well as indication of which A*S*K exam each examinee completed

- A*S*K Pretest Local Administrator Checklist: Provides step-by-step instructions to the local administrator for preparing for and administering A*S*K pretests

- A*S*K Exam Local Administrator Checklist: Provides step-by-step instructions to the local administrator for preparing for and administering the A*S*K certification exams

- Student Recognition Package Instructions: Details how and when each student should provide information to MBA Research for his/her student recognition package

- Late Recognition Registration and Correction Form: Provides instructions for submitting a late recognition registration or for making corrections/updates to student recognition information after testing is complete

- Parent/Guardian Non-Consent Form: Allows parents/guardians to block the release of their students’ recognition information to media outlets and other interested parties

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Exam Content

Content Breakdown

All A*S*K exams are based on industry-validated performance indicators. Performance indicators are organized into broad content areas and assigned to one of six planning levels:

- **Prerequisite (PQ)**: Content develops employability and job-survival skills and concepts, including work ethics, personal appearance, and general business behavior.

- **Career-Sustaining (CS)**: Content develops skills and knowledge needed for continued employment in or study of business based on the application of basic academics and business skills.

- **Specialist (SP)**: Content provides in-depth, solid understanding and skill development in all business functions.

- **Supervisor (SU)**: Content provides the same in-depth, solid understanding and skill development in all business functions as in the specialist curriculum, and in addition, incorporates content that addresses the supervision of people.

- **Manager (MN)**: Content develops strategic decision-making skills in all business functions needed to manage a business or department within an organization.

- **Owner (ON)**: Content develops strategic decision-making skills in all aspects of business that are needed to own and operate a business.

Each performance indicator is assigned to one of six curriculum-planning levels that represent a continuum of instruction ranging from simple to complex. The levels can serve as building blocks for curriculum development in that students should know and be able to perform the performance indicators at one level before tackling more complex skills and knowledge at the next level. The levels can also be used as the basis for developing an unduplicated sequence of instruction for articulation between high school and postsecondary business courses.

Specific exam questions are aligned with Bloom’s taxonomy to help ensure that each exam addresses critical performance issues appropriate to industry standards.
Content Focus

All specifications outlined below are estimates. Specific exam content changes frequently and without notice on the basis of continuing item analysis, content validations, and other variables. These specifications are for general information only.

**Fundamental Business Concepts**

Level: Career-Sustaining*

Questions: 100 multiple-choice

Content specifications (projected, approximate percentages):

Business Law: 1%
Communications: 10%
Customer Relations: 9%
Economics: 16%
Emotional Intelligence: 5%
Financial Analysis: 28%
Human Resource Management: 2%
Information Management: 5%
Marketing: 2%
Operations: 16%
Professional Development: 5%
Strategic Management: 1%

*Questions may address performance indicators at this level and lower level(s).

**Fundamental Marketing Concepts**

Level: Specialist*

Questions: 100 multiple-choice

Content specifications (projected, approximate percentages):

Channel Management: 9%
Marketing-Information Management: 22%
Market Planning: 6%
Marketing: 6%
Pricing: 5%
Product/Service Management: 18%
Professional Development: 1%
Promotion: 21%
Selling: 12%

*Questions may address performance indicators at this level and lower level(s).
Concepts of Finance

Level: Specialist*

Questions: 100 multiple-choice

Content specifications (projected, approximate percentages):

Business Law: 5%
Compliance: 5%
Customer Relations: 5%
Emotional Intelligence: 5%
Financial Analysis: 28%
Financial-Information Management: 33%
Professional Development: 12%
Risk Management: 7%

*Questions may address performance indicators at this level and lower level(s).

Concepts of Entrepreneurship/Management

Level: Owner*

Questions: 100 multiple-choice

Content specifications (projected, approximate percentages):

Business Law: 3%
Business Admin: 2%
Channel Management: 2%
Communications: 1%
Economics: 2%
Emotional Intelligence: 1%
Financial Analysis: 14%
Human Resources Management: 7%
Management: 4%
Marketing-Information Management: 3%
Market Planning: 17%
Operations: 9%
Pricing: 8%
Product/Service Management: 12%
Professional Development: 2%
Promotion: 9%
Selling: 1%
Strategic Management: 3%

*Questions may address performance indicators at this level and lower level(s).
Performance Indicators

The content of each A*S*K exam is based on performance indicators, or competencies, drawn from the National Standards for Business Administration, Finance, Management and Administration, and Marketing. Specific performance indicators within these standards may change without notice on the basis of continuing secondary research, validation by industry professionals, and other variables.

For more information on the specific performance indicators tested on each of the different A*S*K certification exams, go to http://www.askinstitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=37&Itemid=57.
Sample Questions

In addition to differences in the content focus, each A*S*K certification exam differs slightly in terms of the levels of questions being asked. Using Bloom's taxonomy as the model, questions are selected to represent all six levels as indicated below:

Knowledge and Comprehension, including definitions, basic information, meaning of basic terms and concepts, and transfer of knowledge into new or different context.

Examples:

1. Which major marketing function communicates information to consumers about a business's products?
   a. Promotion
   b. Channel management
   c. Product/Service Management
   d. Pricing

2. What type of software program allows businesspeople to combine graphics, transparencies, slides, and text for an on-screen display of information?
   a. Application
   b. Publishing
   c. Operating
   d. Presentation

Application and Analysis, including use of information and concepts in hypothetical situations and recognition of meaning as used in various settings and situations.

Examples:

1. A tornado destroyed a local business. This is an example of a(n)__________ risk.
   a. pure
   b. uninsurable
   c. speculative
   d. predictable

2. Calculate the total amount of the sale, using a sales-tax rate of 6%:
   2 CD ROMs @ $14.95 each
   1 CD player @ $39.99 each
   1 headphone @ $21.55 each
   a. $91.44
   b. $95.94
   c. $91.34
   d. $96.93
Synthesis and Evaluation, including development of conclusions, ideas and recommendations for action based on hypothetical situations and data.

Examples:

1. Dan and Sarah are planning to open a business. Sarah is unable to devote full time to daily business operations but plans to provide financial support. Which form of business partnership would you suggest to Sarah?
   a. Open
   b. Close
   c. General
   d. Limited

2. While at work, employees see that a customer has been in an accident. The customer appears to be unconscious. What should they do?
   a. Take careful notes
   b. Start CPR
   c. Call 911
   d. Move victim to a more comfortable position