

HEIghten® Civic Competency and Engagement

Test-at-a-Glance

Description of the Examination

The *HEIghten*® Civic Competency and Engagement (CCE) assessment evaluates college students' knowledge of civic practices and institutions, their skills in understanding and participating in civic life, and their attitudes, preferences, and degrees of engagement in civics more generally. The assessment focuses on three key areas: Civic Competency (CC), Civic Attitudes (CA) and Civic Participation (CP).

For the ***Civic Competency*** component, students will be assessed on their:

- a) ***Civic Knowledge***, including their knowledge of facts, concepts and principles (e.g., democratic processes, government structures, voting, etc.) across various contexts (local, national, international and past or present); and
- b) ***Civic Skills***, including both analytic and participatory skills. Analytic skills include the ability to apply political and civic knowledge to systematically analyze civic-related issues or scenarios (e.g., determining who won a debate). Participatory skills include the ability to make reasoned judgments about political and civic situations or problem-solving processes, especially in group and/or community contexts (e.g., understanding which skills are needed to win a debate).

For the ***Civic Attitudes*** component, students will be asked to self-report on their reactions to realistic situations in ways that demonstrate their:

- a) ***Civic Efficacy***, including their belief that they can understand and influence government and political affairs; and
- b) ***Democratic Norms and Values***, including their belief in basic principles of a democratic and diverse society, with a sense of responsibility to take civic action.

Finally, for the ***Civic Participation*** component, students will be asked to self-report their civic and political behavior across various contexts including information on their:

- a) ***General Participation*** across campus, local, national, state and international contexts;
- b) ***Volunteering*** across campus, local, national, state and international contexts;
- c) ***Discussion of Political/Civic Issues*** on campus, with friends and family and on social media; and
- d) ***Personal Investment in Participation***, such as reading newspapers, following web-based sources, listening to the radio, and watching television on national and international issues.

Format of the Examination

The *HEIghTen* Civic Competency and Engagement assessment features several types of questions for each of the three key areas. For Civic Competency, item formats include:

- Single-selection multiple choice
- Multiple-selection multiple choice
- Drop-down menus
- Situational judgment

The stimuli for all Civic Competency items are embedded in realistic contexts (campus, local communities, state, national and international levels), and include a variety of maps, texts, graphs, tables and charts. Situational judgment items are used to measure Civic Skills, and use a combination of real data and hypothetical scenarios. These questions require students to analyze a set of circumstances and evaluate or choose a correct answer or course of action.

For Civic Attitudes, item formats include:

- Hypothetical scenarios followed by Likert-type items on a four-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

Hypothetical scenarios about various civics-related issues are presented, followed by reactions or quotations from people involved in the scenario. Students must indicate on the four-point scale how they feel about each quotation. The hypothetical sets allows students to express civic attitudes through various campus and real-world scenarios.

For Civic Participation, item formats include:

- Multiple-selection multiple choice (Context of participation including on campus, in the local community, at the state-level, national-level, or international level)
- Single-selection multiple choice (Number of hours volunteering)
- Likert-type items on a four-point scale (Never, Occasionally, Weekly, or Daily)

Assessment Content

The list below shows the knowledge and skills assessed within the Civic Competency section of the assessment as well as detailed descriptions of the content that appear in the Civic Attitudes and Civic Participation sections. The numbers in parentheses indicate the approximate percentages of questions within each section of the assessment.

I. Civic Competency (37.5%)

1. Civic Knowledge (18.75%)

a. Possession of:

- i. Foundational and conceptual knowledge of government structures and processes enabling attentive and effective civic/political participation
- ii. Factual information about and understanding of institutions and processes of government, major political, economic, and social conditions or issues, stands of political parties

- b. Ability to:
 - i. Relate national practices and events to a global or international perspective
 - ii. Relate historical events to the current political scene, such as major social and political movements and conflicts
 - c. Understanding of:
 - i. Fundamental principles of democratic processes, human and civil rights, and rule of law
 - ii. Legal aspects of citizenship, voting and representation
2. *Civic Skills (18.75%)*
- a. Analytic Skills
 - i. Ability to:
 1. Evaluate an issue in light of evidence (in light of the reliability of different sources)
 2. Track issues in the media
 3. Describe public debates, identify and evaluate potential solutions, or see impact of different choices on issues of concern
 4. Recognize potential effects of laws or policies on different communities or groups and understand their perspectives
 5. Distinguish evidence-backed facts from unsubstantiated opinions
 6. Explain diverse positions on democratic values or practices; take a position and defend it
 7. Recognize justifications for a position on political and social issues (including those involving diverse communities)
 8. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of potential approaches to civic and political problems and be reflective about decisions and actions
 9. Be reflective about the potentials and challenges of social media in politics
 - ii. Understanding of:
 1. The dimensions of complex social issues or policies and ability to apply core ethical and democratic principles, as well as examine the perspectives offered by different disciplines or groups or sources
 2. Cultural and human differences that frequently bear on political activities and related perspective taking

b. Participatory and Involvement Skills

i. Ability to:

1. Apply political skills in articulating arguments for different audiences and reaching compromises
2. Analyze social or political systems to plan processes of problem solving and public action
3. Identify how civic and democratic dimensions can be integrated into various disciplines and contexts; how knowledge can be employed for public purposes
4. Apply ethical standards to evaluate political decision-making practices, processes and outcomes and to understand principled dissent and effective leadership

ii. How to Understanding of:

1. How to choose the most effective mode of participation
2. How to participate respectfully and constructively, both individually and in collaboration with diverse others
3. The importance of listening and deliberating in collective decision making; the productive use of conflict
4. Organizational leadership and group skills: modes of enhancing cooperation in groups, building cohesiveness, avoiding the premature closing of discussion
5. Distinctions between personal and group goals

II. Civic Attitudes (37.5%)

1. *Efficacy (18.75%)*

- a. Interest in being informed about and attentive to civic and political information from a variety of sources
- b. A sense of concern about social issues (that may involve emotional responses)
- c. Willingness to practice participatory, involvement and analytic skills (see previous categories)
- d. Sense of individual and collective civic or political efficacy, competence, or agency
- e. Persistence in the face of challenges

2. *Democratic Norms and Values (18.75%)*

- a. Respect for the historical principles of American democracy
- b. Attitudes toward participation in diverse groups
 - i. Positive attitudes towards pluralism
 - ii. Comfort with and respect for diverse perspectives
- c. Valuing civic engagement and a sense of personal responsibility in a community
 - i. Willingness to make an effort to further the public good (locally, nationally and in the global community)
 - ii. Sense of social and civic responsibility and commitment to the public good
 - iii. Values with the potential to build community cohesion at local, national and global levels
 - iv. Sense of a politically engaged identity (civic-mindedness)
 - v. Sense of community or solidarity with diverse groups or constituencies

- vi. Recognizing the background of one's own attitudes and civic engagement
- vii. Concern about persistent social injustice and other public problems

III. Civic Participation (25%)

- 1. General Participation
 - a. Vote
 - b. Voice an opinion
 - c. Protest
 - d. Taking action
 - e. Petitioning
- 2. Volunteering
 - a. Civic participation and volunteering/service learning
- 3. Discussion of Political/Civic Issues
- 4. Personal Investment in Participation