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COMPETENCY EVALUATION EXPERTS

Back to Basics: Improving Language Proficiency of IENs

Partners in Education & Integration of IENs
10th Annual Conference
April 28 & 29, 2016
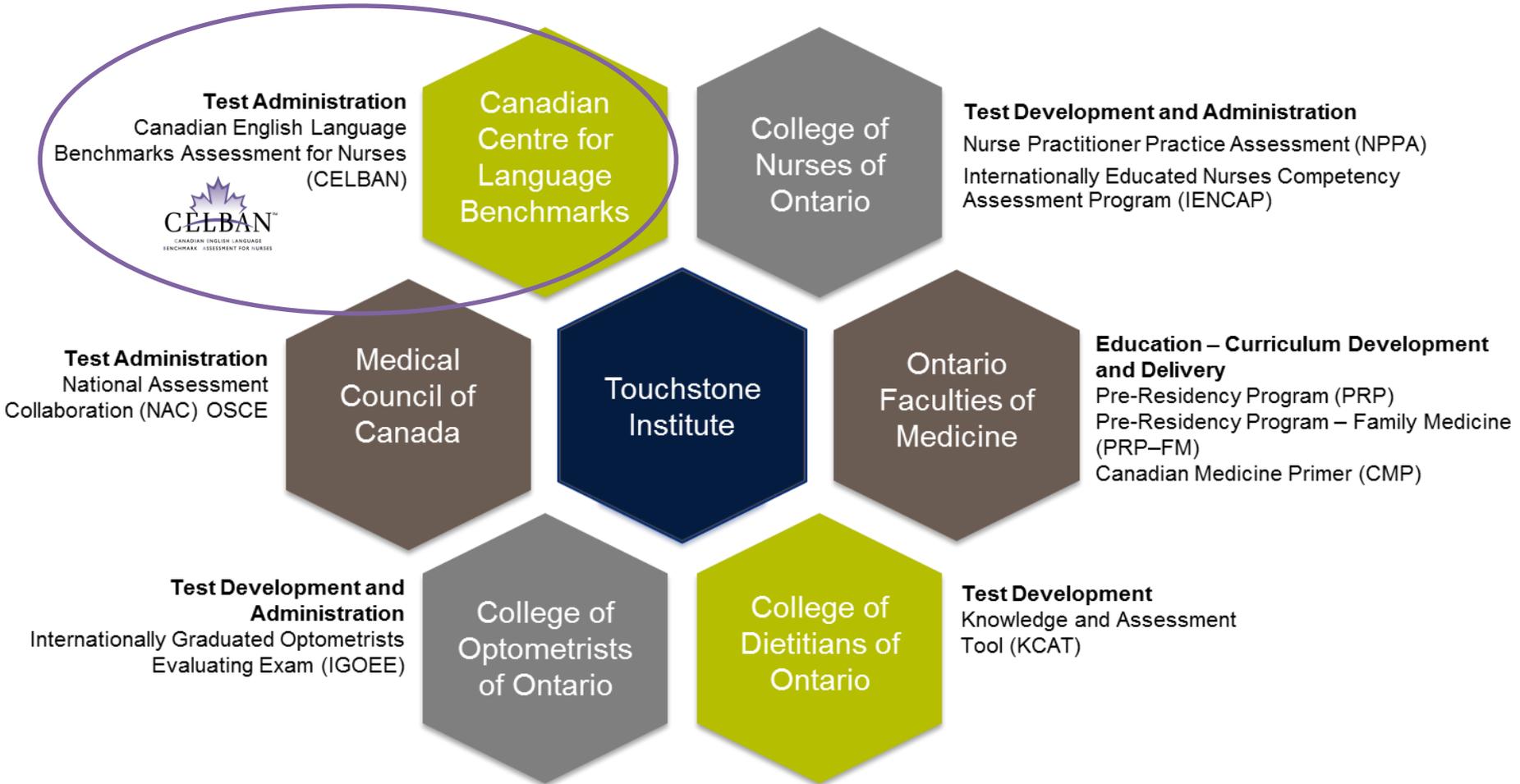Richmond, BC

Project funding by:

Ontario

About Touchstone Institute

- Established as the Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad in 2006 by the Ontario Ministry of Heath and Long-Term Care (MoHLTC) as a component in the Ministry's HealthForceOntario Strategy

- Mandated to provide assessment, evaluation, and training programs for internationally educated health professionals

- The largest purpose-built assessment centre in Canada

- Not-for-profit corporation funded partly with funding from the MoHLTC, with project grants from Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade (MCIIT) and revenue from fees and service contracts with regulators

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Recognizing the Role of Communication

- We observed first-hand the impact of communicative competence on candidate performance on assessments.

- Our Communication Competency Program was launched in March 2014 to do work in the area where professional communication competencies and linguistic proficiency intersect.

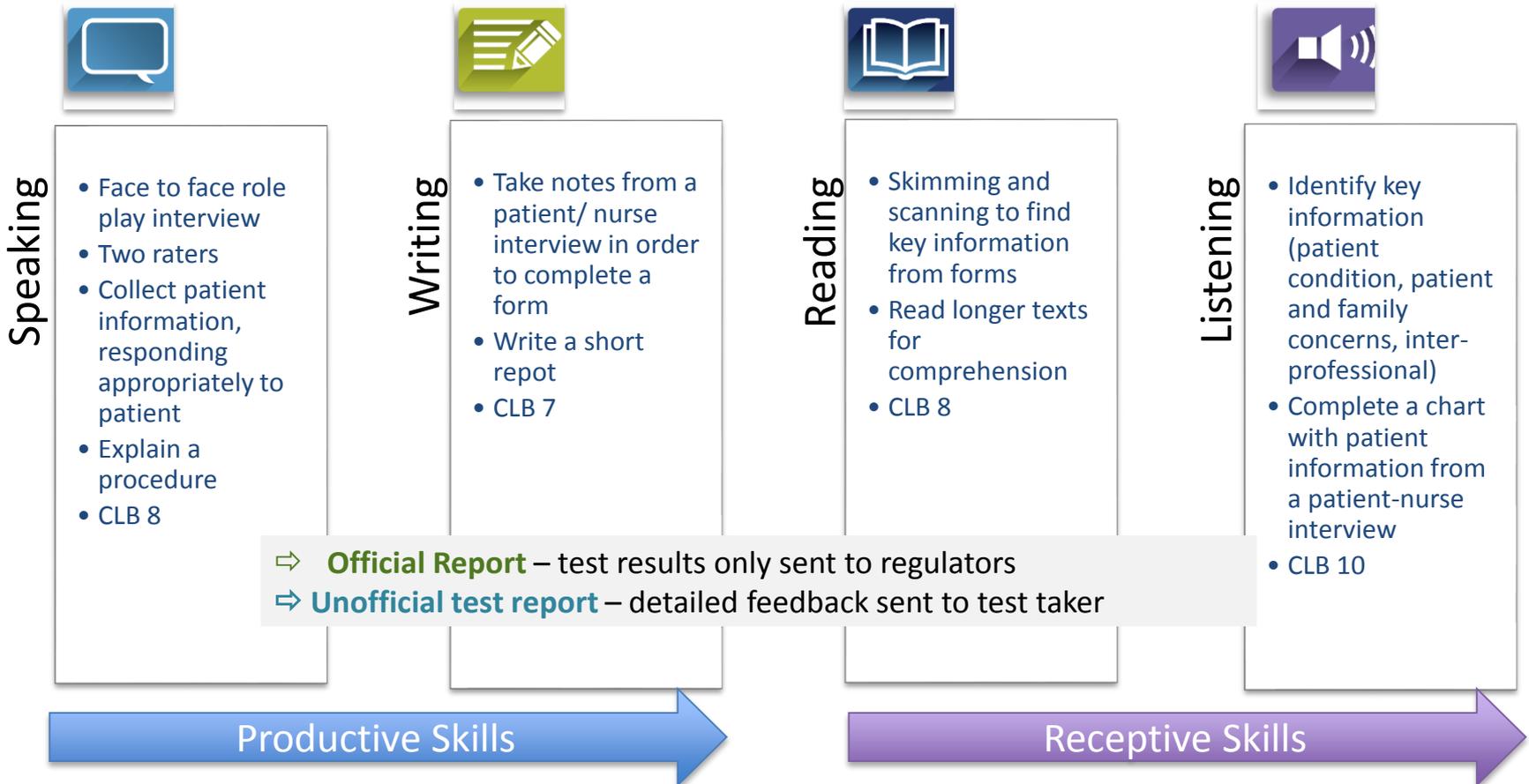- The program was seeded by project funding from MCIIT.

Project Partners

Test Administration
Canadian English Language
Benchmarks Assessment for Nurses
(CELBAN)

CELBAN
CANADIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT FOR NURSES

Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks

College of Nurses of Ontario

Test Development and Administration
Nurse Practitioner Practice Assessment (NPPA)
Internationally Educated Nurses Competency
Assessment Program (IENCAP)

Test Administration
National Assessment
Collaboration (NAC) OSCE

Medical Council of Canada

Touchstone Institute

Ontario Faculties of Medicine

Education – Curriculum Development and Delivery
Pre-Residency Program (PRP)
Pre-Residency Program – Family Medicine
(PRP–FM)
Canadian Medicine Primer (CMP)

Test Development and Administration
Internationally Graduated Optometrists
Evaluating Exam (IGOEE)

College of Optometrists of Ontario

College of Dietitians of Ontario

Test Development
Knowledge and Assessment
Tool (KCAT)
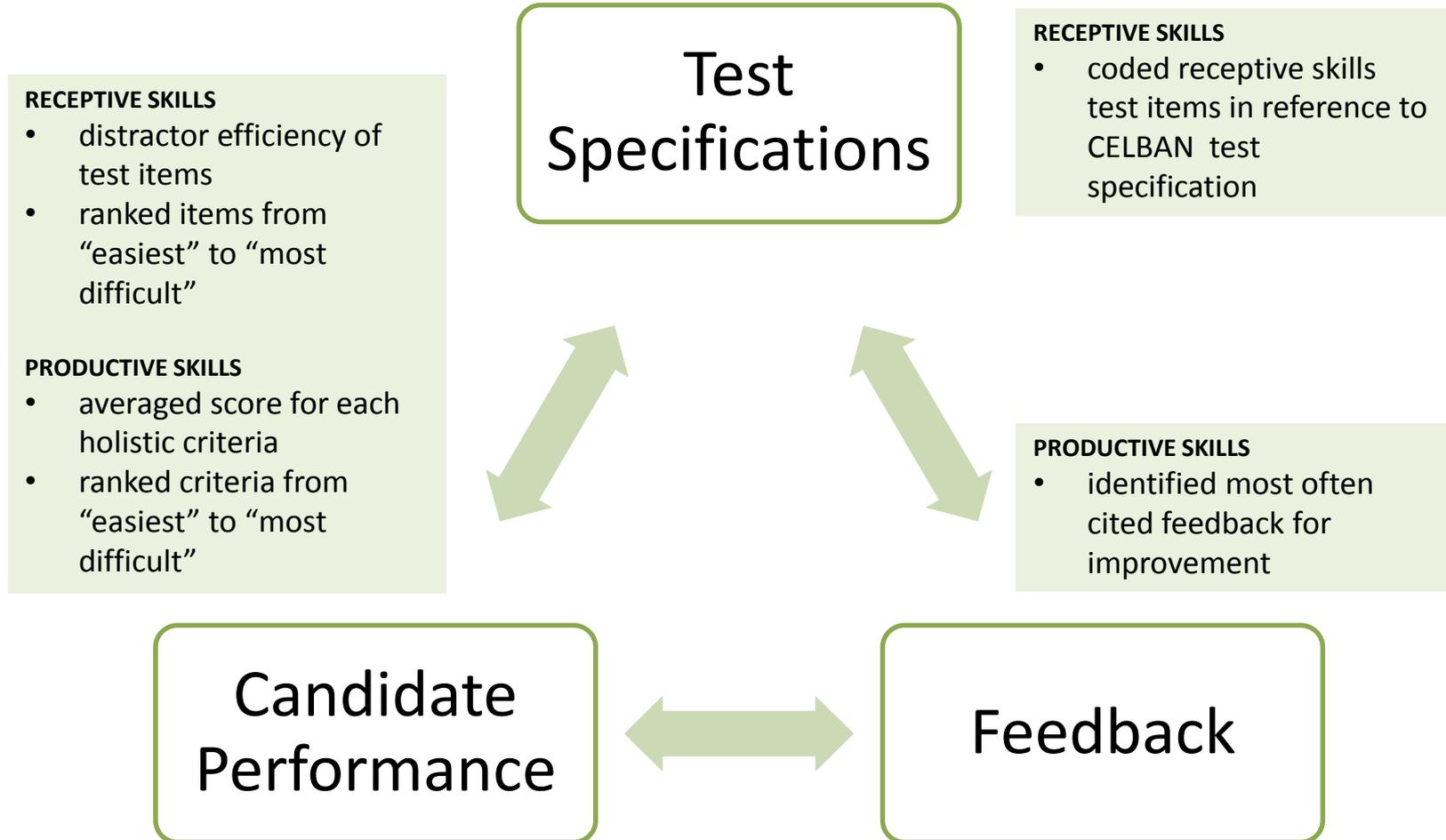
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The CWELBAN Centre

- Touchstone Institute became home to the CELBAN National Administrative Centre in September of 2014.

- In 2013 1,014 CELBAN assessments were administered. As 2014 was a transitional year it is not possible to report on exact number of tests administered. However 770 were estimated before September, and 312 were administered from October to December, for a total of 1,082. In 2015 1,985 assessments were administered, representing an almost 100% increase in test seats.

- To scale test delivery test content also needs to be developed in order to manage test overexposure.

- As part of a test renewal plan, we collected data on the test performance of approximately 2,000 IENs.

- This data provides critical information to guide test renewal but also insights into test taker performance.

CELBAN

Speaking
- Face to face role play interview
- Two raters
- Collect patient information, responding appropriately to patient
- Explain a procedure
- CLB 8

Writing
- Take notes from a patient/ nurse interview in order to complete a form
- Write a short repot
- CLB 7

Reading
- Skimming and scanning to find key information from forms
- Read longer texts for comprehension
- CLB 8

Listening
- Identify key information (patient condition, patient and family concerns, inter-professional)
- Complete a chart with patient information from a patient-nurse interview
- CLB 10

⇨ **Official Report** – test results only sent to regulators
⇨ **Unofficial test report** – detailed feedback sent to test taker

Productive Skills

Receptive Skills

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Study Methods

Test Specifications

RECEPTIVE SKILLS
- distractor efficiency of test items
- ranked items from "easiest" to "most difficult"

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS
- averaged score for each holistic criteria
- ranked criteria from "easiest" to "most difficult"

RECEPTIVE SKILLS
- coded receptive skills test items in reference to CELBAN test specification

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS
- identified most often cited feedback for improvement

Candidate Performance

Feedback

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Methods

- In the first 18 months of our administration we collected data on more that 2,000 CELBAN tests.

- We reviewed the psychometric qualities of CELBAN, that is we did classical test item analysis and calculated facility indices.

- For this particular project, we applied a mixed method design (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

- We applied a reverse engineering methodology (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007) to tag receptive skills (reading and listening) test items, each was coded using language competencies and performance indicators from the new Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Benchmarks, 2010).

- We then compared these competencies to the psychometric analysis to identify the types of items that IENs seemed to find most difficult.

- The productive response skills (writing and speaking) are scored holistically, so we based our analysis on the categories from the rubric which yielded on average the lower/higher test results.

Findings

- Test items that IENs seemed to find more challenging and those that they seem to have found easier are shown in the handout.
  - ✓ easier
  - ✗ more challenging

Productive Skills

Speaking

- ✓ *General Use of Language*: communicate effectively in carrying out the tasks on the test; take initiative for an interaction with some confidence.

- ✓ *Intelligibility*: clarity of speech

- ✓ *Organization*: present main and supporting ideas clearly for a range of purposes (instructions, opinion, description, etc.)

- ✖ *Fluency*: effect of frequency of hesitation and pauses/ uneven tempo on comprehensibility

- ✖ *Use of Cohesive Devices*: use of linguistic features to connect ideas and express sequence, intent, etc.

- ✓ *Use of Vocabulary*: use of appropriate vocabulary to discuss both concrete and abstract topics

- ✖ *Grammar*: effect of incorrect grammar on comprehensibility

Writing

- ✓ **Spelling/Legibility**: comprehensibility of written material

- ✖ **Main Points**: include critical information in forms

- ✓ **Effectiveness**: accuracy and clarity of the information

- ✖ **Grammar**: use a range of grammatical structures correctly for particular communication purposes (chronological description)

- ✖ **Discourse Fluency**: organization, connectivity and coherence of information

- ✓ **Vocabulary**: use a range of vocabulary, appropriate and accurate for purpose

Receptive Skills

Listening

✓ **Get the gist of a conversation**
✓ **Understand advice / suggestions**

Identify:
  - ✓ specific factual details
  - ✓ patients' condition, concern or problem
  - ✓ purpose, cause or reason
  - ✖ main idea when not explicitly stated
  - ✖ intention or expectations
  - ✖ unstated and implicit intentions

Determine:
  - ✓ time / number / amount / quantity / frequency
  - ✖ order of actions or events
  - ✖ mood, attitude, opinion

✖ **Separate relevant details from distracting information**

Reading

✓ **Synthesize information to get the gist or overall idea**

Identify:
  - ✓ purpose
  - ✓ specific factual details
  - ✓ specific responsibilities or requirements
  - ✖ cohesive references
  - ✖ reason, rationale or justification
  - ✖ cause and/or effect

✖ Follow a chronology of events
✖ Make inferences/draw conclusions

Recognize:
  - ✓ an example
  - ✖ evidence or support for a theory, idea or belief

Vocabulary:
  - ✖ advanced vocabulary
  - ✖ meanings of unknown words from the context

Findings

- Of those CELBAN test items that IENs found challenging, we can generalize into three communicative competency areas:
  - Affect, attitude, tone, intention
  - Organization, coherence, cohesion
  - Syntax (grammar), Lexicon (vocabulary)

Affect, attitude, tone, intention

- Relates to pragmatics (intended meanings)
- Ability to make inferences based on linguistic (and paralinguistic) cues
- Ability to understand and produce direct/indirect speech
- What some linguists call "Functional Knowledge"

Functional Knowledge

- The ability to understand the underlying intentions of sentences, utterances or text (receptive) and, conversely, the ability to use suitable utterances to express intent (productive).

Help Mr. Khan with his ambulation.

Request some more blood tests today.

Organization, coherence, cohesion

- Organizing information in an expected and appropriate manner and using/following "signposts"

- Ability to narrate/describe (follow) a sequence of events/an idea/ a process, out of order, where the listener is able to comprehend what happened/should happen and in what order

- What linguists call "Textual Knowledge"

Textual Knowledge

- The ability to correctly apply/interpret rhetorical or conversational organization to oral/written text

Sentence Level

Problems with parallel structure, subject/verb agreement, pronoun references

Mr. Lim, she ran, climbing up the stairs, and fallen down.

Discourse Level

Inability to provide adequate introduction, development (support), conclusion

Communication techniques, e.g., SBAR

Advanced Grammar and Vocabulary

- Grammatical accuracy, range, and flexibility
  - Using grammar to communicate events in a proper chronological order
  - Forming varied and correct/clear questions
- Vocabulary accuracy, range and flexibility
  - Correct use of sub-technical language (administer, position, and record)
  - Use and comprehension of nursing-related metaphors (my stomach is in a knot)
  - Use and comprehension of nursing-related phrasal verbs (watch out for, to bring up, keep tabs on)
- What linguistics call "Grammatical Knowledge"

Grammatical Knowledge

- The focus of most ESL programs.
- Sometimes hindered by what linguistics unkindly call "fossilization"
- Sometimes can be a "different" English

Do you have any diseases?

You take alcohol?

You can stand up?

Resources for CELBAN Test Preparation

- Feedback:
  - A unique characteristic of CELBAN is that test takers receive feedback. Based on the model that feedback is an integral part of assessment (Angelo, 1995), and inspired by Wiggins (1998) and Shohamy (2001), we have developed feedback that addresses the linguistic errors observed and how these impact the communication requirements of safe practice. It is expected that this will facilitate remediation.
- Test Taking Strategies
- Tip Sheets
- Test Practice Materials for IENs
- Curriculum Guidelines for Programs

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