

Cancellation of Scores by Harcourt Assessment

Harcourt Assessment is responsible for reporting scores that accurately reflect the performance of examinees. For this reason, Harcourt Assessment adheres to a set of test administration and test security standards that require the review of all PCAT scores and administrative conditions.

Harcourt Assessment reserves the right to cancel any test score believed to be obtained in a questionable manner. This includes testing/administrative irregularities, questionable score gains, questionable item responses, unusual answer patterns, misconduct, non-compliance with policies, plagiarism, or *any other reason* that would invalidate the score. These reasons are discussed in more detail below. For any of these reasons, Harcourt Assessment may either decline to score the test or cancel the test score. Affected examinees may, at Harcourt's discretion, be given the opportunity to take the test again at no charge.

The cancellation of an examinee's score as a result of these policies in no way suggests that cheating or any other inappropriate action has occurred. A score invalidation is a technicality that may be an inconvenience for both the examinee and Harcourt Assessment, but it is necessary in order to maintain the integrity of the test and to ensure that test scores are as accurate and as reflective of each examinee's ability as possible.

All score cancellations and invalidations are held in strict confidence, with the reason for the cancellation disclosed only to the examinee, except in certain group cases. When Harcourt Assessment cancels a score after the results have already been reported, all Official Transcript recipients are notified that the score has been cancelled, but the reason for cancellation is not disclosed, except in certain cases involving groups of examinees. An examinee whose scores are cancelled may apply to take the test again and pay all applicable fees. Any request to take the test again will be evaluated by Harcourt Assessment with consideration for the reason that the score was cancelled.

Cancellation of Scores Due to Testing Irregularities

Testing irregularities are problems that occur during a test administration. These irregularities include, but are not limited to, possible compromises to the test, inappropriate seating or timing, defective test materials, disruptions to a test administration (such as a power loss or a natural disaster), misconduct, examinees misrepresenting identity, unauthorized access to test contents, receiving or providing assistance of any kind during the test, failing to comply with test administration regulations or with directions given by the test administrator or a proctor, having prohibited materials in the testing room, removing test materials from the testing room, creating a disturbance (such as talking during testing, letting a cell phone ring during testing, or any other action deemed disruptive by the test center staff), and violating any other Harcourt Assessment test administration policy, as described in the *Candidate Information Booklet* or on the PCAT website.

When a testing irregularity occurs, Harcourt Assessment will examine the situation and determine whether corrective action is warranted, including non-scoring of Answer Booklets or cancellation of scores. At Harcourt's discretion, examinees may be given the option either to retest at no additional fee [for PCAT, normally on a future national test date] or to receive a refund of his or her examination fee (unless the affected examinees are found to have caused or been involved in the conduct which resulted in the corrective action, in which event Harcourt reserves the right to withhold either or both of these options). If Harcourt offers a retest and the examinee chooses that option, the examinee must retake the entire examination in order to produce a valid score. These are the only options available to examinees affected by a testing irregularity.

Cancellation of Scores Due to Questionable Item Responses or Unusual Answer Patterns

If the results of a test show unusual similarities in test item responses by examinees who took the PCAT at the same Test Center, or if an examinee's responses to test items show that an unusually large proportion of responses are all the same answer option (for example, an unreasonable preponderance of "A" choices), the examinee's scores may be cancelled. Harcourt Assessment will examine each situation and, in its sole discretion, will determine what corrective action is warranted. When Harcourt Assessment decides to cancel test scores for reasons of questionable item responses or unusual answer patterns, the examinee will be notified before the action is taken. The notice to the examinee will include the options available regarding the planned score cancellation, which may or may not include an offer of a retest.

Cancellation of Scores Due to Questionable Score Gain

If an examinee's scores seem questionable when compared to PCAT scores obtained by the examinee in the previous testing cycle, the scores may be cancelled. When scores are cancelled for this reason, no scores will be reported to the examinee or to any score recipient schools.

Harcourt Assessment follows a strict policy in determining when a score gain is questionable and thus invalid. The following explanation of this policy refers to scaled score points, which are reported on the personal Score Report and the Official Transcripts.

If the score on the most recent test is 50 or more scaled score points greater than the previous test score, an invalidation of the most recent test score automatically occurs due to the large score gain. The most recent test then becomes known as the "Score Gain Test."

The examinee is notified that his or her score on this test has been invalidated and that the score will never be reported to anyone. The examinee will be allowed to retake the test at no additional cost only if he or she contacts PSE Customer Relations within 30 days of the notification from Harcourt Assessment. This retake is referred to as a "Free Retest." The Free Retest must be taken on the next regularly-scheduled national test date. The following policies apply to scores earned on the Free Retest:

If the scaled score on the Free Retest is **within 25 scaled score points above or below** the invalidated score on the Score Gain Test, the score on the Free Retest is validated and scores from the Free Retest **will** be released. The examinee will receive a personal Score Report, and each of the score recipient schools indicated will receive an Official Transcript, which will include the scores from the Free Retest, but not the scores from the Score Gain Test.

If the scaled score on the Free Retest is **more than 25 scaled score points above or below** the invalidated score on the Score Gain Test, the score on the invalidated test remains invalidated and the scores **will not** be released. In addition, the scores on the Free Retest are also invalidated, and the scores **will not** be released. Neither the original Score Gain Test scores nor the Free Retest scores will ever be released to anyone.

Cancellation of Scores Deemed Invalid for any Other Reason

Harcourt Assessment may cancel scores if, in its judgment, other substantial evidence suggests that these scores are invalid. Evidence suggesting that scores must be invalidated include, but are not limited to, inconsistent performance on different parts of the test, inconsistent handwriting, plagiarism (quoting, paraphrasing, or using language that appears in published or unpublished sources without attribution), essay text similar to text found in essays written by other PCAT examinees, and item responses or essays that are in any way not produced exclusively by the examinee. Before canceling a score for any of these reasons, Harcourt Assessment will notify the examinee and provide an opportunity for the examinee to submit an explanation. Harcourt Assessment will review the information submitted by the examinee in response to the notification of score cancellation and may offer the examinee a choice of options, which may include voluntary score cancellation or a Free Retest.