

History of Recommended Minimum GED® Test Passing Standards

Sources: *Bridges of Opportunity: A History of the Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials* (2001) and *Technical Manual: 2002 Series GED Tests* (2009)

First Test Series: 1943 – 1977

For most of its history, the GED Test standard score scale ranged from 20 to 80 with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

From 1943 to 1976, the *Commission on Accreditation* recommended that a high school or state (jurisdiction) should grant a GED credential if an otherwise-qualified GED examinee met the “35 OR 45” standard. That is, the candidate earned either:

1. **a standard score of 35** or above on each of the five tests in the battery,
OR
2. **an average standard score of 45** on the five tests in the battery.

Some states required both—as in “35 AND 45.” Still others chose to establish one specific score requirement such as a minimum of 40 on each test.

Second Test Series: 1978 – 1987

For the first three years of the 1978 test series (1978, 1979, and 1980), the passing standard remained at the “35 OR 45” standard. That is, the candidate earned **either**:

1. **a standard score of 35** or above on each of the five tests in the battery,
OR
2. **an average standard score of 45** on the five tests in the battery.

Some states required both—as in “35 AND 45.” Still others chose to establish one specific score requirement such as a minimum of 40 on each test.

In 1981, the *Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials* (the parent commission of GED Testing Service) elevated the recommendation to a minimum requirement, that the candidate earn **either**:

1. **a standard score of 40** or above on each of the five tests in the battery,
OR
2. **an average standard score of 45** or above on the five tests in the battery.

This was the “40 OR 45” standard. This permitted the continuation of the “35 AND 45” standard (at least 35 on every test, with an average of 45 on all tests) set by most U.S. states at the time. As an example of the variety in passing standards set by the jurisdictions, the Technical Manual for the 1988 series GED Tests listed 27 states, the District of Columbia, and 4 other jurisdictions as implementing the “35 AND 45” standard. Other combinations of score requirements included: 40 minimum score (1); 40 OR 45 (6); 40 OR 50 (2); 45 average (1); 40 AND 45 (16); 40 AND 50 (1); and 42, 45, 45 AND 45 (1). Canada’s jurisdictions chose higher minimums: 40 AND 45 (1), and 45 minimum (9).

The new standard was in place from 1981 through the end of the Second Series in 1987.

Third Test Series: 1988- 2001

From 1988 to 1997 the passing standard continued at the “40 or 45” standard, meaning that test-takers were required to earn **either**:

1. **a standard score of 40** or above on each of the five tests in the battery,
OR
2. **an average standard score of 45** or above on the five tests in the battery.

Beginning in 1997 and continuing through the end of the Third Series in 2001, the nationwide minimum score requirement was raised – for only the second time in its history – to “40 AND 45,” meaning that test-takers were required to earn **both**:

1. **a standard score of 40** or above on each of the five tests in the battery,
AND
2. **an average standard score of 45** or above on the five tests in the battery.

Fourth Test Series: 2001 – 2013

In 2002, the fourth test series was released and used a standard score range of 200 to 800 with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100.

At the same time, the new U.S. and IAFAS minimum score requirement was raised – for the third time in its history – to “410 AND 450,” meaning that test-takers were required to earn **both**

1. **a standard score of 410** or above on each of the five tests in the battery,
AND
2. **an average standard score of 450** or above on the five tests in the battery.

Note: Canada’s requirement on the Fourth Series is a 450 minimum score on both the individual content area tests and an average for all five tests in the battery.

The Fourth Series is being continued in 2014 and beyond in certain locations and settings, and the passing standard will remain at the “410 and 450” standard everywhere except Canada, where it will remain at the 450 minimum standard.