



## Guidelines for Standardized Testing

### 1. Role of tests.

In accordance with University policy, as well as procedures approved by the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, the admissions committee evaluates each candidate rigorously, holistically, and sympathetically, with an eye towards assessing the candidate's capacity to contribute to the kind of campus community that will enable the University to fulfill its mission. Although each evaluation includes the results of standardized testing, these results do not comprise the sole or main criterion for admission. There are no cutoff or threshold scores—that is, no scores below which candidates are automatically denied admission, and no scores above which they are automatically offered admission. Instead, results from standardized testing comprise one factor among many.

### 2. Required tests.

The University requires that every candidate for first-year admission and every candidate for sophomore transfer admission submit results from either the SAT or the ACT. For students whose native language is not English, the University may also require an approved test of English proficiency.

### 3. Other tests.

In addition to results from the tests listed above, the admissions committee considers results from SAT Subject, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other national or international exams. The committee may also consider results from state-mandated end-of-course or end-of-grade tests.

### 4. Reporting of scores.

No candidate may be offered admission unless the University has received official results from the SAT or the ACT. It is the candidate's responsibility to make sure that official results are reported directly to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions by the appropriate testing service. The admissions committee may, in rare cases and in its discretion, accept as official score reports that are provided by a candidate's high school.

For SAT Subject, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate exams, the admissions committee considers either official results reported directly by the testing services or unofficial results self-reported by candidates on their applications for admission. Candidates who are offered admission and choose to enroll must submit official score reports from the testing services in order to receive academic credit or advanced standing.

### 5. Highest scores.

In evaluating candidates who submit results from more than one sitting of the SAT or the ACT, the admissions committee considers only the highest scores earned. For the SAT, the committee considers the highest section scores earned across all test dates. For the ACT, the committee considers the

highest subject-based scores earned across all test dates. When candidates submit results from both the SAT and the ACT, the admissions committee considers the test with the stronger results; if the results are equivalent, the committee considers both tests.

Regardless of which scores and tests the admissions committee considers, the committee evaluates all test results for anomalies and discrepancies, as noted in 7 below.

## **6. Use of scores.**

In using results from the SAT, the committee focuses primarily on the scores earned on each of the three sections and secondarily on combined scores. When the scores on the Critical Reading and Writing sections differ significantly, the committee considers the higher score to be the more predictive of the candidate's likely performance at Carolina. The committee does not, however, consider the higher score a simple substitute for the lower, or ignore the lower score entirely.

In using results from the ACT, the committee focuses primarily on the subject-based scores and secondarily on composite scores.

## **7. Review of scores.**

The admissions committee reviews for consistency all test scores submitted by or on behalf of each candidate. When anomalies or discrepancies are discovered, and when they cast reasonable doubt on the validity of the highest test scores earned by a candidate, the committee asks the appropriate testing service to review the results of the test. In doing so, the committee neither assumes nor alleges any wrongdoing on the part of the candidate, since irregularities in testing can occur for any number of reasons. Rather, the committee aims simply to resolve any questions that could harm both the candidate and the University if not answered in an appropriate and timely way.

Both the SAT and ACT have clear and well-researched procedures for validating test results. Both organizations, for example, routinely compare the current scores of test-takers against their previous scores. Both conduct internal reviews when they receive inquiries—which they consider strictly confidential—from test proctors, school officials, admissions officers, or anonymous sources. When such an internal review finds no substantial evidence that a test score is invalid, the candidate is never notified. When a review reveals irregularities that, in the view of the testing service, call the validity of a score into question, the service provides the student with a variety of opportunities to address those irregularities before it decides whether to cancel the test score.

In reviewing test scores for consistency, the admissions committee compares those scores to one another and to the candidate's academic record. When a candidate submits results from both the ACT and the SAT, the ACT composite score is routinely compared to the combined score on Critical Reading and Math. If one score is substantially greater than the other—the equivalent of 300 or more points on the SAT—then the committee asks the appropriate testing service to review the results.

The committee also requests a review when the highest ACT or SAT score is dramatically stronger than the candidate's academic record or recent end-of-course or end-of-grade testing. For example, the committee may request a review when it receives a composite or combined score at or above the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile, coupled with a class rank at or below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile; or a Critical Reading score at or above the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile, coupled with a recent end-of-course English test at or below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. Because such comparisons are more subjective than comparisons between ACT and SAT scores, they require a greater degree of professional judgment. For candidates who attend highly competitive high schools, for example, the committee may reasonably conclude that above-average test results are not inconsistent with below-average grades or ranks in class.

Since neither testing service discloses reasons for invalidating scores, the admissions committee does not assume wrongdoing on the part of candidates whose scores are cancelled. At the same time, because the committee cannot consider candidates on the strength of scores that have been invalidated, candidates whom the committee previously considered admissible may be denied admission, or have their admission revoked, if their scores are cancelled by a testing service. For that reason, candidates whose test scores are under review by a testing service will not be offered admission or allowed to enroll at the University until the service has completed its evaluation.

If a testing service initiates a review after a candidate has already enrolled at the University, the candidate will be allowed to remain enrolled until the review is completed. If the score is subsequently cancelled, the admissions committee will reconsider the candidate's application for admission in light of any other official test scores that the candidate may have submitted. If the committee concludes that the candidate would not have been admitted on the strength of the other scores, the candidate's admission will be revoked and his or her enrollment discontinued.

*Adopted November 8, 2011*