

Public Safety Civil Service Commission

Exam Integrity and Cheating Guidelines

Cheating and other conduct that erodes exam integrity is prohibited by PSCSC Rule 2.29, the PSCSC's Exam Code of Conduct, and state and local law. This guideline describes the Civil Service Department and Public Safety Civil Service Commission's general approach to exam integrity and cheating. It is intended to provide information and examples of prohibited and conduct. This guideline does not create and may not be relied upon to create any new civil service rights. The Public Safety Civil Service Commission and Civil Service Department staff retain full authority and discretion over the exam process.

Applicability

This guidance applies to all participants in the Public Safety Civil Service (PSCSC) civil service exam processes, including candidates, assessors, exam development committee members, observers, consultants, and staff.

Why Exam Integrity Matters

Under PSCSC Rules, promotional civil service exams must be fair, competitive, merit-based, and job-related. Maintaining exam integrity is essential to ensure that:

- All candidates have equal access and opportunity to participate in a competitive exam process
- Exam results accurately reflect candidate performance
- Achievement is based on merit, not access or influence
- Each exam process complies with PSCSC Rules and governing law
- Confidence in the civil service system is maintained

Conduct that compromises, or appears to compromise, exam integrity may require Commission action, even if the exam outcome is not ultimately changed.

What Is Cheating Under PSCSC Rules?

For purposes of PSCSC promotional exams, cheating includes any act or attempt that:

- Could provide one or more candidates with an unfair advantage on an exam
- Involves unauthorized access to, information about, or disclosure of exam materials and/or exam content
- Violates exam security or confidentiality requirements, or
- Undermines the integrity or fairness of the exam process

Cheating may occur before, during or after an exam and may involve actual or attempted violations by a single individual or amongst two or more parties.

Examples of Cheating. This is not a complete list.

Before Exam

- Obtaining, attempting to obtain, or utilizing exam questions, scenarios, scoring criteria, answers or answer keys in advance of the exam.
- Disclosing exam content to candidates who have not yet tested.

During Exam

- Using unauthorized exam materials, notes, reference materials, electronic devices, tools/resources/applications, or outside assistance
- Having another person take an exam on one's behalf or taking the exam on another's behalf.
- Providing unauthorized assistance to a candidate while they are taking an exam, or receiving unauthorized assistance as a candidate during an exam.

After Exam

- Sharing or discussing exam content only after all candidates have completed the entire test.
- Sharing or distributing exam questions, scenarios, scoring criteria, answers or answer keys in any format.
- Tampering or interfering with an examination and/or scoring process.

Assessor, Committee Member, or Staff Conduct

- Coaching or preparing specific candidates using secure or live exam content
- Providing hints, guidance, or scoring preferences tied to the actual exam
- Adjusting scores, ratings, or rankings outside established PSCSC procedures
- Disclosing, distributing, or otherwise allowing unauthorized access to confidential exam materials or candidate information
- Failing to follow PSCSC exam security or confidentiality requirements

What Is Not Cheating

The following activities, when conducted in compliance with PSCSC Rules, are examples of actions that do not constitute cheating:

- Studying or preparing using authorized materials

- Forming a study group, develop practice materials, quizzing each other on material from the bibliography to help prepare for the exam
- Asking exam staff questions in a manner that does not disrupt other candidates
- Submitting a good-faith exam protest or review in accordance with PSCSC Rules
- Participating in civil service sponsored orientation sessions

Important PSCSC Rules and Principles

- Attempts to cheat are the same as cheating
- Confidentiality obligations continue after exam administration
- Intentional and unintentional violations may both result in corrective action
- Violations may affect exam validity, candidate status, or exam outcomes
- Violations may result in investigation, disqualification, loss of eligibility, forfeiture of opportunities to participate in PSCSC activities other than examination, and potential discipline by the employee's department.

What are the Consequences of Cheating?

Cheating or other conduct that erodes exam integrity may violate PSCSC Rule 9.29, state law, and/or SMC 4.08.160 and may result in penalties such as discipline or dismissal, fines and/or jail time (SMC 4.08.210).

Additionally, Public Safety Civil Service exam staff may:

- Remove from the examination site or process any examinee whose conduct threatens the operations of the examination process.
- Remove an examinee's name and score from the eligibility register, disqualifying them from consideration for hiring or promotion.
- Refer any prohibited or problematic behavior of current City employees to their appointing authority for investigation of possible policy violations.

Questions

If you are unsure whether a particular action is permitted under PSCSC Rules/policies/guidelines, **seek clarification before acting**. Protecting exam integrity and equity in the civil service process is a shared responsibility.

Authorizing Policies

- [PSCSC Code of Conduct- Promotional Exams](#)
- [PSCSC Rules of Practice and Procedure](#) 9.29, Prohibited Employee Conduct in Examinations
- [Seattle Municipal Code](#) Section 4.08.160 and 4.08.210
- [Revised Code of Washington 41.08](#), Civil Service for City Firefighters
- [Revised Code of Washington 41.12](#), Civil Service for City Police