



Myths About ACT's Procedures for Investigating Testing Irregularities

Myth: ACT is labeling students as “cheaters.”

Facts: ACT's score review process does not result in a determination of academic misconduct and does not result in a notice to the student's prospective colleges asserting academic misconduct. The purpose of the review process is to determine whether the score in question is reliable enough to be considered an ACT college-reportable score, and it results in a determination of whether the score should retain its valid status. If a score is cancelled as a result of the review, our general practice is to send score report recipients the same notice used for all score cancellations. That letter does not disclose the reason for cancellation and advises that scores are cancelled for many reasons, including those not caused by the student.

Fairness to all students compels ACT to take action when there is substantial evidence that a score is invalid. Colleges, universities, and test takers all have an interest in ensuring that the scores ACT issues are valid, and each group benefits from this substantial evidence standard of review. Students competing for limited college admission and scholarship opportunities should not have to compete against others holding dubious scores.

Courts have rejected the argument that proof of misconduct is required to justify score cancellation, with one court specifically observing that requiring ACT to meet such a high standard would weaken the reliability of the scores used by colleges. ACT applies the standard of review that is both compliant with the law and balances the interests of all.

Myth: ACT will challenge a score solely because of a large score increase.

Fact: ACT does not challenge test scores based merely on large score increases. Thousands of individuals obtain large score increases every year without having those scores become the subject of an official score review. In every official score review, there is additional evidence beyond a large score increase causing ACT to question the score.

Myth: ACT believes some score increases are statistically impossible.

Facts: There are numerous legitimate explanations for an unusual score increase, and students who are in the midst of the score review process routinely provide those explanations and supporting documentation to the ACT Review Panel for its consideration. No determination is made to cancel a score until the student has the opportunity to provide information in support of their scores or chooses to take the ACT again at ACT's expense. The Review Panel considers all information provided by the student in support of his/her score.

Sometimes, a score review involves the use of statistics derived from students' response patterns. The statistics produced by these analyses are occasionally misunderstood by students and their parents as an assertion that ACT believes the student is incapable of achieving their questioned scores. This is not the case, and we explain that such statistics do not relate to a student's ability.

Our statistical analyses are created and rigorously vetted by experts in educational measurement, statistics, and related fields. We have great confidence in the reliability and credibility of these analyses. It is because of our confidence in these analyses and our commitment to fairness that we pursue score reviews to their conclusion.

Myth: ACT's private retest process is unfair.

Facts: A student whose score is being reviewed by ACT may choose to retake the ACT in a private session and at ACT's expense to confirm his/her questioned score. If that student receives an ACT Composite score on the private retest that is no more than three points lower than the questioned score, the questioned score is considered valid, and the score review ends. Students receive their retest score shortly after taking the retest, and they are allowed to keep and use that score as they would any other ACT test score. The test form administered to the student during the private retest is a standard ACT test form that has been qualified for use in all ACT testing. ACT controls for test form difficulty and ensures scale scores from all test forms are comparable through an industry standard equating process. If the student earns a confirming score on the private retest, both ACT and the student have achieved their goal. ACT has restored confidence in the score under review, and the student moves forward with an unquestioned college-reportable score.

Myth: ACT does not review scores earned by a student on their first attempt.

Fact: ACT uses a variety of methods to identify potentially invalid scores, and score reviews can be initiated due to a variety of factors. The decision to initiate an individual score review is based on the totality of the evidence that the scores may be invalid. First-time testers are not excluded from review.

Myth: ACT has a financial interest in pursuing score cancellations.

Fact: ACT does not have a financial incentive to pursue score cancellations. Engaging in lengthy disputes with students provides no financial benefit to ACT. To the contrary, we dedicate substantial financial and other resources to the score review process. We do this to protect the fairness of the ACT exam for all those who take it and for all those who use ACT scores to make important decisions.

Myth: No one has their score validated through ACT’s panel review process or in arbitration.

Facts: The panel review process sometimes ends in a decision to validate a score under review. Each score review is unique, and ACT’s internal review panelists may conclude that there is insufficient reason to invalidate the score; if so, the score review is subsequently closed. Students who disagree with the Review Panel’s decision are provided the opportunity to pursue arbitration before the score is cancelled. Arbitrations are conducted through the American Arbitration Association (“AAA”) using an arbitrator selected by AAA. Both ACT and the student may object to the arbitrator selected by AAA and have another presented for consideration. Arbitrators are independent, neutral third parties. Their objective is to fairly resolve the disagreement by applying the law. Each arbitrator is an independent person who possesses his/her own judgements and perspectives. Accordingly, the arbitrator may disagree with ACT. When that happens, ACT respects the outcome, closes the score review, and allows the score to stand.

Myth: Students are guilty until proven innocent. ACT is the investigator, prosecutor, judge, jury, appeals court and executioner.

Facts: ACT’s score review process is designed to be fair to the student. The review process offers multiple options to the student whose score has been questioned, including submitting the matter prior to cancellation of the score to an independent, neutral third party selected by AAA when other options have been exhausted. During the review process, students may use the scores under review as they would any valid scores, including sending them to colleges and universities. This ensures that students whose scores are ultimately validated through the review process do not suffer the negative consequences of a score cancellation prior to the completion of the review process.

[ACT Test Security Hotline](#)
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