

An Update on Surveying Exam Changes

I hope everyone had a good holiday break and a Happy New Year. With the new year comes some changes in the exam process for surveyors. The Texas Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors (TBPELS) has approved changes to the examination requirements for becoming a Registered Professional Land Surveyor (RPLS) in the state of Texas. As of May 2023, the current RPLS exam will be replaced with a combination of the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) Principles and Practice of Professional Surveying (PS) exam and a new Texas Specific Surveying Exam (TSSE).



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The decision to change the exam requirements was made after several years of research, data collection and analysis, and exam development. The process was undertaken by surveying exam workgroups made up of experienced Texas RPLSs and was overseen and recommended by the Surveying Advisory Committee (SAC), as required by the Professional Land Surveying Practices Act and Board rules. The TSSE was developed to supplement the NCEES PS exam and evaluate an RPLS candidate's knowledge of specialized, state-specific topics related to surveying in Texas.

Coleen Johnson, RPLS, TBPELS Board Member, has been part of the exam development and transition process from the start, and stated "The change to utilize the NCEES PS Exam and a newly formatted Texas Specific Surveying Exam is an exciting move forward for the TBPELS and for all future surveyors in the State of Texas. This change will level the playing field as we have allowed candidates who are licensed in other states (who have already taken the NCEES PS exam) to take the current Texas 'Reciprocal Exam' once their application was approved, while requiring Texas SITs to take a different legal and analytical exam to become a Texas RPLS. The new TSSE is focused on questions covering Texas-specific surveying content and following the blueprint established as a result of the PAKS study that went out to all current RPLSs. It was also the consensus of the Surveying Advisory Committee (SAC) that this was a positive move forward for the future of Texas surveyors."

To become an RPLS after April 2023, applicants will need to pass both the NCEES PS and TSSE exams. The exams can be taken in any order after approval of the RPLS application by the Board, and once an exam is passed, the passage of that exam will not expire. The TSSE will be a 4-hour, in-person written exam covering knowledge areas specific to Texas that are not already covered on the national PS exam. It will be offered 3 times per year (once more than the current RPLS exam), tentatively in Spring (March), Summer (June), and Fall (October). Information about the TSSE exam, including exam dates, preparation, specifications, and reference materials will be available on the TBPELS website starting in May 2023.

The NCEES PS exam will be available for registration through the TBPELS starting in May 2023. It is a computer-based exam that can be taken year-round at Pearson VUE testing centers across Texas and the country. For more information about the exam, including test preparation and reference materials, please visit <https://ncees.org/surveying/ps/>.

For more information on the TBPELS exam process and changes, along with exam information and a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit the TBPELS website at <https://pels.texas.gov/lsexams.htm>.

As we work through this process, we will continue to communicate with applicants, educators, TSPS, and the surveying community to make sure this transition is as smooth as possible. We are excited about the opportunity to strengthen the exam process and continue to make sure that the high level of knowledge and professionalism is maintained.