The *HiSET*® Exam and Federal Programs

ETS — in response to states' interest in continuing to offer a reasonably priced high school equivalency test available in paper-and-pencil format — developed the ETS High School Equivalency Test (*HiSET*®). States have responded enthusiastically to the *HiSET*® program, but have sought assurances that it will be recognized for purposes of meeting federal education requirements, such as to qualify for federal student aid (grants, loans and work-study funds).

To alleviate these concerns, ETS reviewed all major federal education and training laws and regulations that reference high school equivalency assessments. As outlined in the appendix that follows, these programs including, but not limited to, the Higher Education Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Adult Education Act, and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, leave the decision to states to recognize high school equivalency alternatives and the awarding of credentials.

In addition, a student who has passed the HiSET exam in a state that has approved it as a test of secondary school-level knowledge will be given the same enlistment priority by the Department of Defense as they would for passing any other high school equivalency test approved by the state. In other words, states, not the federal government, make the determination of what constitutes an alternative for a high school diploma.

ETS is happy to answer any questions and concerns that a state may have. For assistance, please contact:

Douglas Garcia
Director, ETS HiSET Program
dgarcia001@ets.org

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APPENDIX

REFERENCES TO HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY IN MAJOR FEDERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT	SPECIFIC CITATION
General Definition of Institution of Higher Education [20 U.S.C. 1001]	Sec. 101 General Definition of Institution of Higher Education.— (a) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—For purposes of this Act, other than title IV, the term "institution of higher education" means an educational institution in any State that— (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, or persons who meet the requirements of section 484(d)(3); NOTE: The Higher Education Act regulations further define the "recognized equivalent of a high school diploma" as: (1) A General Education Development Certificate (GED); (2) A State certificate received by a student after the student has passed a State-authorized examination that the State recognizes as the equivalent of a high school diploma; (3) …
Eligibility for Student Loans [20 U.S.C. 1091]	Sec. 484 Student Eligibility.— (d) STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES.—In order for a student who does not have a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such certificate, to be eligible for any assistance under subparts 1, 3, and 4 of part A and parts B, C, D, and E of this title, the student shall meet one of the following standards:
Higher Education Program Participation Agreement [20 U.S.C. 1094]	Sec. 487 Program Participation Agreements.— (a) Required for Programs of Assistance; Contents.— … (11) In the case of any institution whose students receive financial assistance pursuant to section 484(d), the institution will make available to such students a program proven successful in assisting students in obtaining a certificate of high school equivalency.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT	SPECIFIC CITATION
GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) [20 U.S.C. 1070a–21]	Sec. 404A. Early Intervention and College Awareness Programs Authorized.— (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary is authorized, in accordance with the requirements of this chapter, to establish a program that encourages eligible entities to provide support, and maintain a commitment, to eligible low-income students, including students with disabilities, to assist the students in obtaining a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) and to prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education, by providing—…
High School Equivalency Program and College Assistance Migrant Program (HEP and CAMP) [20 U.S.C. 1070d]	Sec. 418 Maintenance and Expansion of Existing Programs.— (a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall maintain and expand existing secondary and postsecondary high school equivalency program and college assistance migrant program projects located at institutions of higher education or at private nonprofit organizations working in cooperation with institutions of higher education. (b) Services provided by high school equivalency program The services authorized by this subpart for the high school equivalency program include—… (1) recruitment services to reach persons— … (C) who lack a high school diploma or its equivalent; (2) educational services which provide instruction designed to help students obtain a general education diploma which meets the guidelines established by the State in which the project is located for high school equivalency;

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA)	SPECIFIC CITATION
Title I – State Plan [20 U.S.C. 6311]	Sec. 1111(c) Other Provisions to Support Teaching and Learning.— Each State plan shall contain assurances that — … (14) the State educational agency will encourage local educational agencies and individual schools participating in a program assisted under this part to offer family literacy services (using funds under this part), if the agency or school determines that a substantial number of students served under this part by the agency or school have parents who do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or who have low levels of literacy.
Title I – Part D Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk [20 U.S.C. 6421]	Sec. 1414(c) State Agency Applications (16) provides an assurance that the State agency will work with children and youth who dropped out of school before entering the correctional facility or institution for neglected or delinquent children and youth to encourage the children and youth to reenter school once the term of the incarceration is completed or provide the child or youth with the skills necessary to gain employment, continue the education of the child or youth, or achieve a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent if the child or youth does not intend to return to school;

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act	SPECIFIC CITATION
General Definitions: [20 U.S.C. 2302]	Sec. 3 General Defintions (24) SCHOOL DROPOUT. —The term "school dropout" means an individual who is no longer attending any school and who has not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
Accountability [20 U.S.C. 2323]	Sec. 113 Accountability … (2) State Performance Measures (A) CORE INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL. —Each eligible agency shall identify in the State plan core indicators of performance for career and technical education students at the secondary level that are valid and reliable, and that include, at a minimum, measures of each of the following: … (I) A secondary school diploma. (II) A General Education Development (GED) credential, or other State-recognized equivalent (including recognized alternative standards for individuals with disabilities).

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT	SPECIFIC CITATION
Youth Training Programs Definition of "Out-of-School Youth" [29 U.S.C. 2801]	Sec. 101 Definitions.— (33) Out-of-school youth.—The term "out-of-school youth" means— (A) an eligible youth who is a school dropout; or (B) an eligible youth who has received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent but is basic skills deficient, unemployed, or underemployed.
Definition of "School Dropout" [29 U.S.C. 2801]	(39) School dropout.—The term "school dropout" means an individual who is no longer attending any school and who has not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
Indicators of Performance [29 U.S.C. 2871]	Sec. 136 Performance Accountability System.— (2) Indicators of performance.— (A) Core indicators of performance.— (i) In general.—The core indicators of performance for employment and training activities authorized under section 134 (except for self-service and informational activities) and (for participants who are eligible youth age 19 through 21) for youth activities authorized under section 129 shall consist of— …. (IV) attainment of a recognized credential relating to achievement of educational skills, which may include attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or occupational skills, by participants who enter unsubsidized employment, or by participants who are eligible youth age 19 through 21 who enter postsecondary education, advanced training, or unsubsidized employment. (ii) Core indicators for eligible youth.—The core indicators of performance (for participants who are eligible youth age 14 through 18) for youth activities authorized under section 129, shall include— (I) attainment of basic skills and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills; (II) attainment of secondary school diplomas and their recognized equivalents; and (III) placement and retention in postsecondary education or advanced training, or placement and retention in military service, employment, or qualified apprenticeships.
Job Corps [29 U.S.C. 2882]	Sec. 142 Definitions.— (5) Graduate.—The term "graduate" means an individual who has voluntarily applied for, been selected for, and enrolled in the Job Corps program and has completed the requirements of a vocational training program, or received a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent, as a result of participation in the Job Corps program.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT	SPECIFIC CITATION
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Definition of "Adult Education" [20 U.S.C. 9202]	SEC. 203. DEFINITIONS. In this subtitle: (1) Adult education.—The term "adult education" means services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals— (A) who have attained 16 years of age; (B) who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and (C) who— (i) lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society; (ii) do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or (iii) are unable to speak, read, or write the English language.
Indicators of Performance [20 U.S.C. 9212]	Sec. 212 Performance Accountability System (2) Indicators of performance.— (A) Core indicators of performance.—The core indicators of performance shall include the following: (i) Demonstrated improvements in literacy skill levels in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem solving, English language acquisition, and other literacy skills. (ii) Placement in, retention in, or completion of, postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement. (iii) Receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
YouthBuild [20 U.S.C. 2918a]	Sec. 173A (c)(2)(A)(iv)(III) secondary education services and activities, including tutoring, study skills training, and dropout prevention activities, designed to lead to the attainment of a secondary school diploma, General Education Development (GED) credential, or other state-recognized equivalent (including recognized alternative standards for individuals with disabilities);