Frequently Asked Questions About the Regents’ Test

Q: **Must an essay have a thesis statement to pass?**

A: Not necessarily, although an explicit thesis sentence is perfectly acceptable, and many students need one. Good writers can make the implied thesis clear and can organize the essay well enough so that the reader can follow the line of thought without the writer revealing the organizational plan in the introduction.

Q: **Must an essay follow a set formula?**

A: No. There are many “formulas” for writing essays, such as the five paragraph essay form, but if the writer can explain the essay’s main points and support them with examples and details, then whichever way best fits the writer’s style will work.

Q: **May the student modify the topic?**

A: Students may make reasonable modifications to the topic. For example, when writing on the topic, “What courses that you did not take in high school do you now wish you had taken?”, students may state that there are no such courses and explain why. Also, students do not have to discuss specific courses, but may state that they should have taken more courses in an area such as English or history.

Q: **May students use obviously counterfeit statistics and examples?**

A: Students do not have access to an almanac or a set of encyclopedias during the exam. Keep in mind that if examples and statistics are not believable they are ineffective, and thus lessen the essay’s chances of receiving a passing score. Writers who say that the accident rate dropped by approximately 10% after the speed limit was put into effect strengthen their case; writers who say that the accident rate was cut in half when the speed limit was put into effect, weaken theirs.

Q: **May students write essays of comic or satiric intent?**

A: Yes, if you sense of humor fits the topic. Raters will reward the successful and penalize the inept.