**Written Assessment Example Prompts and Scoring Criteria
(for the SMEQA website)**

**Work Sample Essay**

In this type of assessment, applicants are provided with data, information, policies, or memos. Their task is to review the materials and provide a structured response based on the materials. This may involve interpreting the data, discussing the pros/cons of a policy, or designing a communication plan or roadmap to address the materials. The work product should be tied to one or more competencies and reflect the type of task and work applicants would be assigned upon first starting the job.

**Work Sample Essay Example**

*Imagine you are asked to modernize and update [example]. Create a research plan to outline how you would identify pain points for [example].*

**General Essay: Short Answer**

This type of assessment requires the applicant to provide short answer responses to a set of questions based on a given scenario. Each question should be tied to a specific competency and have explicit scoring criteria and instructions. You may have one or multiple questions per competency. This method is more open-ended and can be subject to a SME’s interpretation.

**Short answer example**

*There are currently 10 different systems that support 30 different programs within an agency. The agency plans to consolidate these 10 systems into just one. You have been brought on to help with this initiative.*

1. *What questions would you want to answer? What assumptions would you make?*
2. *What would you propose to the agency for how to accomplish this?*
3. *What would a potential project plan / roadmap look like?*

**General Essay: Long Answer**

This type of assessment requires the applicant to provide a longer essay response based on a given scenario. The essay response should allow applicants to demonstrate their proficiency level across the various competencies. This method is more open-ended and can be subject to a SME’s interpretation.

**Essay prompt example**

*You’ve been tasked with solving “x” using “y” methods. Detail the steps you’d take. What would you do if a stakeholder blocked your efforts? What other alternative methods would you consider?*

**Whiteboard Challenge**

This type of assessment can be done in-person or virtually (either live using remote collaboration tools or via a video recording). This requires the applicant to “whiteboard” a response to a given scenario that shows their method of solving problems.

**Whiteboard challenge example**

*Draw and then explain the high-level flow of the last project you worked on.*

**Sample Scoring Criteria**

Scoring criteria should be defined when the assessment is created. Based on the scoring criteria, the applicant will either not meet or meet the associated required competency and required proficiency level being tested. If the hiring action is using the assessment both as a pass/fail assessment against the minimum bar and to later create categories, applicants can also note if the applicant “exceeds” the requirement on the scoring sheet. In this case, the reviewer should be provided with a definition of what it means to “meet” vs “exceed” the required proficiency level. SMEs can also define what a “good” answer looks like ahead of time while they are creating the assessment.

Giving applicants a maximum word count and a suggested amount of hours to complete will help keep the applicant burden manageable.

**Example competency scoring: Written Communication**

**Meets Requirements:** There are fewer than 6 spelling/grammatical errors in the submission.

**Exceeds Requirements:** There are fewer than 3 spelling/grammatical errors in the submission.

**Example competency scoring : Laws and Regulations**

*Refer to the answer key table when reviewing applicant’s answers on their worksheet.*

**Meets Requirements:** Accurately identified at least 4 issues in the provided materials and provided the evidence and applicable reference citation for each issue.

**Exceeds Requirements:** Accurately identified the additional 2 considerations (total 6) in addition to attaining the “Meets Requirements” definition.

**Example competency scoring: Analytical Ability**

**Meets Requirements:** The submission encompasses the issues and evidence that were identified in the answer key table. A recommendation is provided.

**Exceeds Requirements:** In addition to meeting the “Meets Requirements” definition, the applicant’s summary includes mitigating factors.

Click here to visit example scoring templates for pass/fail written assessments or assessments that also used to place applicants into categories.