

Student Occupational Competency Testing in Pennsylvania



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR METALWORKING SKILLS MACHINING LEVEL 1 CREDENTIALING TESTS

Mandatory Use of NIMS

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has mandated the use of NIMS Machining Level 1 tests as the acceptable occupational competency test for students in machining related approved CTE programs. The NIMS credentialing tests are drawn from industry-validated metalworking standards. Both performance and theory tests are developed and piloted by the industry.

Students enrolled in the following PDE-approved programs are required to use the NIMS Machining Level 1 credentialing tests: **48.0501/Machine Tool Technology/Machinist** and **48.0599/Precision Metal Working, Other**.

NIMS Credentialing Tests

PDE and NIMS have partnered to provide NIMS credentialing tests in Machining Level 1 areas. Earning NIMS credentials requires a performance test and an online theory test. The performance requirements and theory tests are drawn directly from the NIMS Standards and are written and piloted by industry. Machining Level 1 credentials are designed to meet entry-level requirements for on-the-job skills. These 12 credential test areas are:

1. Measurement, Materials and Safety
2. Job Planning, Benchwork, and Layout
3. CNC Mill Operations
4. CNC Mill Programming Setup & Operations
5. CNC Lathe Operations
6. CNC Lathe Programming Setup & Operations
7. Drill Press I
8. Grinding I
9. Milling I
10. Quality Inspector
11. Turning I (Between Centers)
12. Turning I (Chucking)



**ONLY ONE COUNTS TOWARDS
THE PENNSYLVANIA CERTIFICATES**

NIMS Testing Process

The NIMS credentialing tests certify a student's skills as measured against the NIMS Standards. Test site coordinators should manage the NIMS testing process just as they do the NOCTI process, including all policies and security measures. NIMS certifications require both performance and theory exams.

Multiple-Choice Test – The multiple-choice online test will be administered through the use of the NIMS online testing system. Test site coordinators or instructors must register all students taking the NIMS Level 1 tests as part of this occupational competency testing program on the NIMS website.

Performance Test – The performance component is administered locally by each school in accordance with the NIMS policies and procedures. The performance exam will be the manufacturing of a part, the set-up and operation of a machine or the writing of a program that will manufacture a specific part. A third-party committee evaluation is conducted to validate that a part made by a student to prints approved by NIMS meets all specifications with allowable tolerances. A positive evaluation of a part establishes a student's eligibility to take the required related theory examination for the credential being sought. Performance exams are required for all NIMS credentials – except Measurement, Materials and Safety. Most Machining Level 1 performance exams require the student to machine a part based on a NIMS-provided print. Costs of materials and supplies required for the performance component of the test are the responsibility of the school.

Testing Window

NIMS Level I credential tests can be administered beginning in the first year that a student is enrolled in an approved CTE program and continue throughout the student's enrollment in the program. For secondary concentrators graduating in 2026 all NIMS credentialing tests must be complete by **APRIL 30, 2026**. Student data on the NIMS Verification Form must be submitted to Penn State Greater Allegheny by **MAY 15, 2026**.

Ordering and Costs

For each student who wishes to receive NIMS credential certificates, PDE will assume the cost of an Entry Level I Machining one-year subscription and scoring and reporting services for this occupational competency testing program. Included in the subscription are 12 Machining and 1 Metalforming tests with unlimited retakes. Restrictions are put into place after the second failed attempt.

Pennsylvania's 2025-2026 account code **CZEY40** and a valid PAsureID must be used to purchase subscriptions for students on the NIMS online testing system. There is no longer a separate registration fee and students can print their earned NIMS credential certificates at any time. This code must be used only by secondary students who are part of this statewide testing program.

Reports and Required Forms

NIMS test results are provided electronically to PDE. Students should be encouraged to make their first attempt on each NIMS credentialing test when they are sufficiently prepared. Additional attempts will not be reported to PDE for inclusion in federal data reporting. Test site coordinators are responsible for verifying student data and submitting PDE's electronic NIMS Verification Form by **MAY 15, 2026**.

PDE will forward reports to test site coordinators who are responsible for verifying student data and submitting the **NIMS Verification Form** to the Education Resource Center at Penn State Greater Allegheny by **MAY 15, 2026**. The **NIMS Verification Form** is available at the [testing program website](#).

Receiving Pennsylvania Certificates

PDE has determined that only the first attempt for each NIMS credentialing test will be reported and used in determining students' eligibility for Pennsylvania certificates. Additional attempts are considered to be test retakes, which are not permitted (refer to page 8 for more detail about test retakes) and are not accepted by PDE.

Both PDE and NIMS recognize the Measurement, Materials and Safety and the Job Planning, Benchwork and Layout credentialing tests as being basic skills tests (numbers 1-2 above); therefore, only one of these two tests may be counted towards a Pennsylvania certificate. Students that take only the NIMS machining skills tests (numbers 3-12 above) are eligible for a Pennsylvania certificate if they meet the performance level requirements. The following performance levels and requirements are used:

ADVANCED LEVEL – This level reflects the technical skills, knowledge and abilities required to successfully perform the duties of an entry level job, in a safe and effective manner with minimal supervision.

Requirements: Pass **FOUR or more credentialing tests on the first attempt.** (This could include one of the basic skills tests.)

Certificate: *Pennsylvania Skills Certificate*

COMPETENT LEVEL – This level reflects the technical skills, knowledge and abilities required to adequately perform duties on the very first day of job, in a safe and effective manner with an appropriate amount of "new employee" supervision.

Requirements: Pass **THREE credentialing tests on the first attempt.** (This could include one of the basic skills tests.)

Certificate: *Certificate of Competency*

BASIC LEVEL – This level does not meet the competent level. Students who do not meet above the basic level are not eligible for Pennsylvania certificates.

INCOMPLETE – This means the student did not take at least three NIMS credential tests.

Certificates will be sent to test site coordinators when the *NIMS Verification Form* is submitted and approved by the Education Resource Center at Penn State Greater Allegheny.

Allowable Accommodations

Review [NIMS accommodations](#) online. NIMS offers the following accommodations for learners with IEPs:

1. **Readers** – The NIMS Online Testing Center has a built-in reader that can read all test questions and answers aloud. Alternatively, a third party (not an instructor) may sit with a student to read the exam aloud. In similar fashion, translators may sit with any student needing language assistance during testing. NIMS does not require notification when readers are used.
2. **Visual Assistance** – Paper versions of the online tests are available. Schools may request paper tests by sending the student's name, test name, and proctor's contact information to support@nims-skills.org. Schools may request multiple paper tests once and NIMS will ship the test kits in a single mailing. NIMS always mails paper tests directly to the test proctor.

The paper test kit includes one test, one scantron form, and one pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope for returning the test to NIMS for scoring. During paper test administration, students may use a pen or pencil, blank paper, calculator, any edition of the [Shop Reference for Students and Apprentices](#), and any edition of the *Machinery's Handbook*. When test administration is complete, it is the responsibility of the test proctor to return the tests to NIMS using the provided envelope. When requesting a paper test, schools are encouraged to contact NIMS 7-10 business days prior to scheduled testing to allow for ample time to mail the test kit(s).

Additional Information

[Review the Guide to Student Occupational Competency Testing in Pennsylvania](#) for additional information on administering NIMS for this testing program. Also, visit the [NIMS website](#) at www.nims-skills.org and under the credentialing tab download the *Guide for Educational Training Programs*, *Guide to Establishing a MET-TEC Committee*, *Accommodations for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)* and other resources; view the Credentialing 101 Video Tutorial; and download the Credentialing 101 Kit.

For assistance with NIMS credential testing process, contact NIMS Testing Support at support@nims-skills.org. For assistance with Pennsylvania requirements and required forms/reports, contact the Education Resource Center at Penn State Greater Allegheny at (412) 675-9065 or testing@careertechpa.org.