



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

**FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the Matter of Daniel Donovan,
Sheriff's Officer Sergeant (PS1563A),
Ocean County

Examination Appeal

CSC Docket No. 2022-462

ISSUED: DECEMBER 6, 2021 (ABR)

Daniel Donovan appeals the promotional examination for Sheriff's Officer Sergeant (PC1563A), Ocean County.

The subject examination was administered on May 25, 2021 and consisted of 70 multiple choice questions. It is noted that during the test administration, candidates were provided with two booklets: Booklet A (Sheriff's Officer Sergeant Supplemental Examination Material) and Booklet B (2021 Sheriff's Officer Sergeant Examination). Booklet A contained stimulus material and Booklet B contained the exam questions.

The appellant's appeal involves Questions 14 and 52 on the examination. The directions for Questions 1 through 15 instruct candidates to read each question and choose the best answer.

Question 14 asks for the most effective way to proofread a report after writing it, so as to ensure that there are no errors. The keyed response is option a, to "[s]lowly read the report aloud." The appellant argues that the question is flawed because it is opinion-based and subjective, with no book, guideline or policy for reference. The Division of Test Development and Analytics advises that the response is based on Jerrold G. Brown and Clarice R. Cox, *Report Writing for Criminal Justice Professionals* (1998) at 235, which observes that "[r]eading your writing out loud will help you discover some errors more quickly." The Commission

observes that although this text was not explicitly cited as a potential source material for the examination in the Sheriff's Officer Orientation Guide for the examination, the guide also stated the following about potential source material:

Please note that the development of test items **IS NOT** limited to the sources provided in this orientation guide. Candidates are encouraged to consult any additional source material they feel will aid them in their preparation for the Sheriff's Officer Sergeant exam.

Regardless, the Commission finds that the keyed response is the best response to Question 14. In this regard, the other responses to this question were: to use spell and grammar check, look for mistakes you commonly make, and to look over the report immediately after writing it. Spelling and grammar check software functions will not catch all errors, particularly mistakes where a different word than intended appears within a sentence.¹ Looking for mistakes one commonly makes may limit one's focus, such that they may overlook other errors. Finally, it is better to walk away from a piece after completing a write-up and wait to review it, as it is commonly understood that one is more likely to catch errors after stepping away for some time and returning to proofread it at a later time with fresh eyes and a clear head.²

Question 52 involves a scenario where the dispatch center has been notified about an unattended package outside of a judge's chambers. The prompt states that the examinee is the first on scene and asks what action the examinee should take first. The keyed response is option c, to gather all pertinent facts. Donovan argues that the best response is option a to immediately notify the dispatch center that you are on scene. Upon review, the Division of Test Development and Analytics, in consultation with a Subject Matter Expert, agrees that based upon the wording of the question, the best response is to immediately notify the dispatcher that you are on scene. Accordingly, the key will be changed to indicate that the correct response is option a.

CONCLUSION

A thorough review of the appellant's submission and the test materials reveals that, other than the scoring change noted above, the appellant's examination score is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet the burden of proof in this matter.

¹ For example, spelling and grammar check functions generally will not alert a writer that they wrote "she sent him a text message" instead of "she sent him a text *message*."

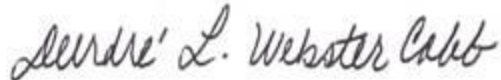
² See e.g., *Editing and Proofreading*, THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL, <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/editing-and-proofreading/> (last visited Oct. 21, 2021); *Beginning Proofreading*, PURDUE UNIVERSITY ONLINE WRITING LAB, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/proofreading/index.html (last visited Oct. 21, 2021).

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be denied.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ON
THE 1ST DAY OF DECEMBER 2021



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