STATE OF NEW JERSEY

: FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
: OF THE
: CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of :
Joseph Carter Jr., Fire Officer 1 :
(PM1194S), Jersey City :
: Examination Appeal
CSC Docket No. 2016-2677 :
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ISSUED: OCT 2 5 2016 (RE)

Joseph Carter Jr. appeals the calculation of his final score for the promotional examination for Fire Officer 1 (PM1194S), Jersey City. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a final score of 75.480 and his name appears as the 145th ranked eligible on the subject list.

It is noted for the record that this two-part examination consisted of a written multiple-choice portion and an oral portion. Candidates were required to pass the written portion of the examination, and then were ranked on their performance on both portions of the examination. The test was worth 80 percent of the final score and seniority was worth the remaining 20 percent. Of the test weights, 31.35% of the score was the written multiple-choice portion, 22.49% was the technical score for the evolving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the evolving exercise, 4.28% was the oral communication score for the evolving exercise, 19.23% was the technical score for the arriving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the arriving exercise, and 7.59% was the oral communication score for the arriving exercise.

On appeal, the appellant stated that he calculated a higher final average using the method in the orientation guide.

In reply, as to the scoring of the examination, every candidate received a Candidate Feedback Report at examination review which explained standardization in layman's terms and provided all the calculations relative to the individual candidate. Standardization preserves the relative weighting of each of the

components of the examination. Under this process, a standardized z-score represents both the relative position of an individual score in a distribution as compared to the mean and the variation of scores in the distribution. Z-scores will form a distribution identical to the distribution of raw scores; the mean of z-scores will equal zero and the variance of a z-distribution will always be one, as will the standard deviation. This places all scores on the same scale, that is, it provides a score that is directly comparable within and between different types of scores. A negative z-score indicates the score is below the distribution mean, while a positive z-score indicates the score is above the distribution mean. These scores are then "normalized." Standardization allows for the comparison of scores that are from different normal distributions. When an examination has multiple disparate scores, weighting each of them and adding the weights together results in a nonsensical final average, since each score has a different normal distribution. The appellant's calculations do not include standardized scoring and are simply incorrect.

The appellant was provided with a copy of his candidate feedback report, and told that all candidates were given a final average using this method. He was informed that the calculations in his letter do not include standardization and are incorrect. The appellant responded that it was unfair to candidates that the orientation guide did not explain standardized scoring, which needed to be explained prior to the examination rather than after. He argues that this was an administrative error and that his score should be recalculated in the manner which he used.

CONCLUSION

The appellant is arguing that a statistically incorrect method of scoring should be used because candidates were not informed of standardization of scores. The argument raised by the appellant reflects a basic misunderstanding of scoring. As evidenced above, there is no statistical basis for adding three diverse scores to arrive at a final average without standardization. The testing process involves different test, multiple choice and oral, and seniority, so it is critical that scores be standardized before they are combined, which puts all scores onto the same playing field. Without standardization, the final score has no meaning, as all of the variables are not in proportion to one another. Put another way, the scores for the multiple choice exam, the oral exam, and seniority are not on the same scale until they are standardized, regardless of weighting.

The appellant takes umbrage with the fact that candidates were not informed of standardized scoring prior to taking the examination. Candidates do not have the authority to determine proper scoring methods. *N.J.S.A.* 11A:4-1(b) gives the Civil Service Commission (Commission) the statutory authority to rate examinations, and Commission staff rated this examination in a proper manner. *See N.J.A.C.*

4A:4-2.15(a). The fact that candidates were not notified of the manner of scoring has no bearing on the Commission's authority, responsibility or decision regarding scoring, nor does it have any bearing on how candidates prepared for or performed on the examination.

A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

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 COMMISION
THE 19th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2016

Robert M. Czech

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Chairperson
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