



Policy on Examination Irregularities for Continuing Certification Assessments

BACKGROUND

If the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) has reason to believe that any candidate engaged in an irregular activity, i.e., cheating, affecting the validity of any continuing certification examination scores or in any other irregular conduct in relation to any continuing certification assessment, the following policy and procedures will be followed.

POLICY

It is the policy of ABEM that any unauthorized receipt, possession, or transmission of copyrighted or confidential ABEM-owned content or assessment materials, including module questions in any form (i.e., examination materials), whether before the assessment, while completing the module, or in the future, is cheating, a breach of ABEM policy, and is strictly forbidden. Use of examination materials by any person for the purpose of preparing to complete any continuing certification module is also considered cheating and is strictly forbidden. This includes but is not limited to receiving any examination materials from a third party. Individuals who assist candidates or others in cheating are also in violation of this policy and subject to sanctions.

ABEM reserves the right to take whatever measures it believes to be appropriate to protect the integrity of its assessments and secure ABEM examinations. Sanctions could include but would not be limited to invalidation of scores, exclusion from further participation in continuing certification modules and other ABEM examinations, decertification, and suit for recovery of damages.

PROCEDURES

Examination materials are protected by every means available. ABEM will not report a score for any physician that it has determined may be invalid due to cheating. The performances of all physicians are monitored and may be analyzed statistically for the purposes of detecting invalid scores.

If ABEM discovers evidence suggesting irregular behavior or cheating, ABEM can withhold or revoke the scores pending further investigation, and affected candidates will be so notified.

ABEM believes that physicians who have achieved ABEM certification are professionals who behave honorably unless proven otherwise. This assumes they do not cheat on professional assessments and will not tolerate those who do. It is therefore the Board's expectation that physicians seeking to stay certified will report any suspicious behavior they become aware of and will cooperate in the investigation of any suspected cheating. Refusal by an individual to cooperate in an irregularity investigation could result in invalidation of their assessment results, prohibition from future participation in ABEM examinations, and other sanctions.

Examples of cheating affecting the validity of scores for ABEM assessments that may necessitate further investigation and sanctions would include but not be limited to the following:

1. Copying of answers from another candidate, permitting one's answers to be copied, or in any way collaborating with another individual while completing the module.
2. Unauthorized possession, reproduction, recording, transmission, or disclosure of examination materials by candidates or others, including module questions or answers, before, during, or after the administration of a module.
3. Assisting a candidate to cheat on a module in any manner.
4. Participation in activities claiming to provide actual ABEM assessment questions.
5. Other evidence indicating that the security of a module had been compromised.

If it is determined that cheating has occurred and the scores in question are invalid, they will be invalidated, notification of that determination may be made to legitimately interested third parties (e.g., other sponsor boards and a state medical licensing board), and other sanctions may be imposed. If it is determined that an ABEM copyright has been violated, recovery of damages may be sought.

Although in such circumstances ABEM will make every effort to withhold or revoke the scores of only those physicians directly implicated in the irregularity, in some instances the evidence of cheating, though sufficiently strong to cause doubt on the validity of scores, may not enable ABEM to identify the particular physicians who are involved. In such circumstances, ABEM reserves the right to invalidate the scores of physicians not directly implicated in the cheating and, if necessary, to require such physicians to take an additional module at a later date under conditions that will ensure the validity of all scores.

Physicians or other persons who are directly implicated in any cheating incident may be subject to additional sanctions, including barring the person(s) permanently from all future assessments, terminating a physician's participation in ongoing continuing certification activities, invalidating the results of the candidate's module, withholding or revoking a certificate, terminating any existing relationship with ABEM, suit for recovery of damages, and other appropriate action. Physicians seeking ongoing ABEM certification or other persons subject to additional sanctions will be provided with a written notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond to such charges in accordance with the appeal procedures established by ABEM. Physicians who are certified from other sponsor boards who are implicated in cheating will be reported to their sponsor board. Reports may also be made to state licensing boards and other legitimately interested third parties. Such reports will be clear regarding the extent to which the relevant facts and allegations were confirmed or merely suspected.

ABEM will continuously monitor the Internet and other sources for unauthorized reproduction of its examination materials and violations of ABEM copyrights. ABEM reserves the right to take whatever legal action is indicated regarding any violation of ABEM copyright or cheating.

EXCEPTION

None

APPEALS

Any appeal of a decision resulting from the application of this policy and these procedures will be handled according to ABEM's established appeals process.