



## **Policy on In-training Examination Irregularities**

### **BACKGROUND**

If the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) has reason to believe that any resident or other individual engaged in an irregular activity, i.e., cheating, or other conduct (defined below), the following policy and procedures will be followed. This policy is specific to the In-training Examination because it is permissible for residents to discuss the contents of the examination with their faculty and fellow residents under specific circumstances. These specific circumstances are defined below.

### **POLICY**

Any unauthorized receipt, possession, or transmission of ABEM examination materials, either before the examination, onsite, or in the future, including examination questions in any written or electronic form, is a breach of ABEM policy and is strictly forbidden. All test questions are the property of ABEM and may not be copied, duplicated, or shared in any written or electronic form. Use of any ABEM examination materials by any person for the purpose of examination preparation or training is also considered cheating and is strictly forbidden. This includes, but is not limited to, residents receiving ABEM examination materials through a third party, and ABEM diplomates or other persons who provide ABEM examination materials to residents.

If the residency program director, residency program faculty, or their designees observe or discover such irregularities, they are obligated to report the individual(s) to the Board. Individuals who assist residents or others in cheating are also in violation of this policy and subject to sanction(s). ABEM reserves the right to take whatever measures are necessary to protect the integrity of its examinations. This could include, but would not be limited to, exclusion from a current or future examination and suit for recovery of damages.

Discussion by residents about the content of the In-training Examination with others is prohibited during the administration of the examination. For purposes of this policy, the In-training Examination administration is defined as the multiday testing window during which the examination is being administered to residents anywhere. However, once the multiday testing window has closed and the examination is no longer being actively administered at any testing location, residents may discuss examination content with faculty and fellow residents so long as the examination and test questions are not used or shared in any written or electronic format.

### **PROCEDURES**

The validity of scores awarded residents for their performance on an examination is protected by every means available. ABEM will not report a score for any resident that it has determined may be invalid, that is, does not represent a reasonable assessment of a resident's knowledge or competence as sampled by the examination. The performance of all residents is monitored and may be analyzed statistically for the purposes of detecting invalid scores.

If there is evidence (e.g., by observation, discovery, or statistical analysis) suggesting that one or more resident scores may be invalid because of irregular behavior, ABEM will withhold the scores pending further investigation, and the affected program directors will be notified. Residents or others suspected of cheating are required to cooperate in the investigation of such incidents. Refusal by an individual to cooperate in an irregularity investigation could result in invalidation of their examination score and prohibition from future participation in any ABEM examinations.

The Board defines cheating as any activity or behavior intended to gain unfair advantage for oneself or others in taking an examination. Examples of cheating that would necessitate the withholding of scores pending further investigation would include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Copying answers from another resident permitting one's answers to be copied
2. Accessing outside information during an examination administration
3. Unauthorized possession, reproduction, recording, or disclosure of examination materials by residents or others, including examination questions or answers, before, during or after the administration of an examination
4. Assisting a resident to cheat on an examination in any manner
5. Participation in activities claiming to provide actual ABEM examination questions
6. Other evidence indicating that the security of an examination had been compromised

Upon analysis of all available information, ABEM will determine the validity of an examination score, and if it is in question, ABEM will notify the resident's program director and any suspected residents who are potentially affected by the incident, for further investigation. If it is determined that the score in question is invalid, it will not be released, and notification of that determination may be made to legitimately interested third parties. And, 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 the scores of only those residents directly implicated in the irregularity, in some instances the evidence of cheating, though sufficiently strong to cast doubt on the validity of scores at one or more residency programs, may not enable ABEM to identify the particular residents who are involved. In such circumstances, ABEM reserves the right to withhold the scores of all residents taking the examination, including those not directly implicated in the irregularity and, if necessary, to require such residents to take an additional examination under conditions that will ensure the validity of all scores.

A resident or other person directly implicated in any cheating incident are subject to additional sanctions, including, but not limited to barring him/her permanently from all future ABEM examinations, invalidating a score of the resident's examination, terminating any existing or future relationship with ABEM, suit for recovery of damages, or other appropriate action. Residents 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.

ABEM reserves the right to take whatever legal action is indicated with regard to any persons, including organizers or trainers in board preparation courses or program faculty, directly implicated in the violation of ABEM copyright or examination irregularities.

### **EXCEPTION**

Residents are permitted to discuss the content of the In-training Examination with fellow residents and faculty at a participating program, if all residents at the program site have completed their testing.

### **APPEALS**

Individual protests of the decision of the Board are guided by the Appeal Process Related to the Policy on Examination Irregularities. Residents and others should refer to this process.

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