



Policy on Examination Irregularities

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 certification or continuing certification examination scores, or in any irregular conduct as defined below in relation to any ABEM-administered examination or any subspecialty examination of which ABEM is a sponsor, the following policy and procedures will be followed. Any subsequent appeal of a decision resulting from the application of this policy will be handled according to the established appeal process of the candidate's sponsor board.

POLICY

Any unauthorized receipt, possession, or transmission of ABEM examination materials, either before the examination, onsite, or in the future, including examination questions and cases in any form, is a breach of ABEM policy and is strictly forbidden. All test questions and cases are the property of ABEM and may not be copied, duplicated, or shared in any 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, candidates receiving ABEM examination materials through a third party, and ABEM-certified physicians or other persons who provide ABEM examination materials to potential candidates.

ABEM reserves the right to take whatever measures are necessary to protect the integrity of its examinations. This could include, but not be limited to, exclusion from a current or future examination, decertification, and suit for recovery of damages.

PROCEDURES

The validity of scores awarded candidates for their performance on an examination is protected by every means available. If ABEM designees or staff observe or discover candidates engaging in any irregular activity, they are obligated to report those individual(s) to ABEM. Individuals who assist candidates or others in cheating are also in violation of this policy and subject to sanction(s). ABEM will not report a score for any candidate that it has determined may be invalid. The performance of all candidates is monitored and may be analyzed statistically for the purposes of detecting invalid scores.

If evidence by observation, discovery, or statistical analysis suggests that one or more candidate scores may be invalid because of irregular behavior, ABEM will withhold the scores pending further investigation, and affected candidates will be so notified. Candidates 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 results 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 of answers from another candidate or permitting one's answers to be copied.
2. Accessing outside information during an examination administration.

3. Discussing the specific content of the examination with one or more persons, including fellow candidates or diplomates, residency faculty, friends, spouses, and Board preparation course faculty before, during, or after the administration of an examination.
4. Unauthorized possession, reproduction, recording, transmission or disclosure of materials or other information regarding the content of an examination by candidates or others before, during, or after the administration of an examination.
5. Assisting a candidate to cheat on an examination in any manner.
6. Participation in activities claiming to provide actual ABEM examination questions or oral cases.
7. Other evidence indicating that the security of an examination had been compromised.

Upon analysis of all available information in such circumstances, ABEM will determine the validity of the examination scores in question and will notify candidates. If it is determined that the scores in question are invalid, they will not be released, and notification of that determination may be made to legitimately interested third parties. 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 candidates 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 candidates who are involved. In such circumstances, ABEM reserves the right to withhold the scores of candidates not directly implicated in the irregularity and, if necessary, to require such candidates to take an additional examination at a later date under conditions which will ensure the validity of all scores.

Candidates or other persons who are directly implicated in any cheating incident are subject to additional sanctions, including, but not limited to barring the person(s) permanently from all future examinations, terminating a candidate's participation in an ongoing examination, invalidating the results of the candidate's examination, withholding or revoking a certificate, terminating any existing relationship with ABEM, suit for recovery of damages, or other appropriate action. ABEM candidates 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 certified by other sponsor boards who are implicated in an irregularity will be reported to their sponsor board for additional sanctions.

Fees for ABEM candidates will be handled as defined in the Policy on Fees. Fees for candidates from other sponsor boards shall be handled in accordance with the established policies of the sponsor board.

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.

EXCEPTIONS

In-training Examination

Given the educational intent of the In-training examination, residents may discuss the general content of the In-training examination with their faculty and residents in their program. Refer to the ABEM Policy on In-training Examination Irregularities.

Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment (LLSA) Tests

Given the educational intent and accessibility of the LLSA tests, certain activities are permitted. Refer to the ABEM Policy on Acceptable Use of Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment Test Materials.

Continuous Certification Examinations

Given the remote nature of continuous certification examinations, refer to the ABEM Policy on Examination Irregularities for Remote Continuous Certification Administrations.

An ABEM candidate's protest of the decision of the Board is guided by the Appeal Process Related to the Policy on Examination Irregularities. ABEM candidates should refer to this process. Physicians certified by other sponsor boards should request the appropriate appeal process from their sponsor board.

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