

American Board of Emergency Medicine

Certifying Exam

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. **What is the Certifying Exam?** The Certifying Exam is the final step to becoming ABEM Certified. If you pass the Qualifying Exam, ABEM staff will reach out to you in the following year to schedule a seat for the Certifying Exam. The in-person, half-day exam assesses skills and competencies through two case types: Clinical Care Cases and Communication & Procedural Cases.

Clinical Care Cases are guided scenarios that are discussion-based to show how you prioritize patient care and interact with various sources of clinical information. Case content areas include Clinical Decision-Making and Prioritization.

Communication & Procedural Cases will assess procedural skills, complex communication, professionalism, and other technical skills. Scenarios could involve standardized patient actors or procedural equipment. Case content areas include Reassessment, Difficult Conversations, Managing Conflict, Ultrasound, Procedures, and Patient-Centered Communications.

[Learn more about the Certifying Exam Content and Review Sample Cases.](#)

2. **Where does the Certifying Exam take place?** The exam takes place at the AIME Center in Raleigh, North Carolina. The AIME Center is a state-of-the-art facility designed for certification assessment. Other medical specialty boards also use the AIME Center. The AIME Center ensures that physicians receive a reliable and fair exam experience. Additional information about the AIME Center selection can be found [here](#).

There is not currently an equivalent assessment center available on the West Coast. If a center emerges in the years ahead, ABEM will assess if that may be a center for future use.

3. **When is the Certifying Exam, and how do I schedule my exam?** Multiple exam administrations will take place each year, allowing physicians more flexibility in scheduling. The scheduling process takes place at the beginning of each year to assign eligible physicians to each exam administration for that year. Physicians will receive a survey to denote their preferred administration weeks and be able to register for an available exam appointment within their assigned administration window. [Learn more about Certifying Exam registration and scheduling.](#)

Scheduling flexibility will be offered for active military deployment schedules, religious observances, pregnancy/family leave, and fellowship commitments. In response to feedback from the community, ABEM provides registration windows for physicians to access available exam appointments based on geographic location in order to provide a more equitable travel experience for those traveling from farther away.

4. **What is the best way to prepare for the Certifying Exam?** The exam assesses competencies that an emergency physician should be capable of demonstrating before embarking on a career of independent practice while meeting the standards of the specialty. ABEM cannot endorse any specific preparation course, as this would be a conflict of interest for the Board. Successful candidates meet the Board's standards for practice as exemplified in the [EM Model](#) and ABEM's [KSAs](#).

ABEM provides a variety of resources, including sample cases with videos, case summaries and references, scoring guidelines, procedure and ultrasound lists, orientation videos, and a Know Before You Go Guide. Physicians are encouraged to review in detail the [Certifying Exam](#) website and available resources for further information.

5. **Where can I learn about the logistics of the exam?** Find logistical information, including the dress code, travel insights, times, and locations, in the [Know Before You Go Guide](#). ABEM also shares this information with physicians when they register for the Certifying Exam and in the weeks leading up to it, to help them be better prepared.

6. **What does ABEM provide for test takers who may need various accommodations?** Candidates with documented disabilities and who need specific ADA accommodations are required to complete a request for accommodations in advance following [ABEM policy](#). There is no guarantee ABEM can accommodate these needs onsite if you do not have a pre-approved request.

Onsite accommodations at the AIME center include:

- Wellness and meditation/prayer rooms
- Accommodations for nursing mothers
- Allowance for candidates to have medical aides as needed in the testing rooms

7. **What is the estimated cost of the Certifying Exam to candidates?** Current Certifying Exam fees and registration windows are available on the [ABEM website](#). ABEM has maintained the costs for initial certification for the last 10 years and has committed to not raise initial certification costs through the end of 2028.

8. **How does ABEM evaluate the Certifying Exam?** ABEM evaluates the Certifying Exam using rigorous, standardized processes to ensure fairness and validity. The exam is criterion-referenced and there is no curve. ABEM reviews content for bias, ensures cases reflect real-world Emergency Medicine, and sets passing scores using a modified Angoff method. After each exam administration, ABEM undergoes extensive post-examination analysis, including scaling, equating, and use of a multifaceted Rasch Model, to help ensure candidates are scored fairly regardless of exam version or examiner differences.

Because the skills that are being tested are often unique to the case type, the scoring criteria can also be unique to the case type. [Review the scoring information provided on the website.](#)

9. **What happens if you do not pass the Certifying Exam?** By [policy](#), physicians who do not pass must wait 9 months to reattempt the Certifying Exam. ABEM emails physicians information on the next steps and notifies them when scheduling begins. Physicians are permitted a maximum of five attempts to pass the CE within six years of board eligibility, as defined by the ABEM Policy on Board Eligibility. Previous attempts at the Oral Certification Examination count toward these five attempts.

10. **Is there data that supports the need for the Certifying Exam?** ABEM's initial certification process serves to independently verify that a physician has met a national standard. ABEM conducted years of research before developing the Certifying Exam. A [validity study published in 2026](#) provides important early evidence for the Certifying Exam. [Additional research citations.](#)

11. **How is the Certifying Exam different from the previous Oral Exam?** The Certifying Exam tests competencies that are not tested on the Qualifying (written) Exam or the former Oral Exam.

ABEM's Becoming Certified Initiative gathered extensive input from emergency physicians, healthcare leaders, international experts on physician assessment, and the public about all aspects of the initial certification process. We learned from that feedback that ABEM should create an assessment that is even more relevant to practice and assesses additional competencies the former Oral Exam format could not (e.g., communication and procedural skills). Learn more about the [Key Findings](#) and [Stakeholder Feedback](#).

12. **The AIME Center is in North Carolina which is considered a restrictive state for reproductive rights. Will pregnant candidates be able to get care in case of emergency situations?** ABEM has partnered locally with Wake Emergency Physicians so that any candidate or examiner experiencing an unanticipated and urgent emergency situation will get the care that they need.