



Policy on Examination Irregularities for Remote Continuous Certification Administrations

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 irregular conduct as defined below in relation to any ABEM-administered remote examination, 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

It is the policy of ABEM that any receipt, possession, or transmission of ABEM examination materials, either before the examination, on site, or in the future, including examination questions and cases in any form, is a breach of ABEM policy and is strictly forbidden. Use of 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 would not necessarily be limited to exclusion from a current 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.

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 continuing certification candidates will report any suspicious behavior they become aware of and will cooperate in the investigation of any suspected examination irregularities. Refusal by an individual to cooperate in an irregularity investigation could result in invalidation of their examination results and prohibition from future participation in ABEM examinations.

Examples of cheating affecting the validity of scores for a remotely administered ABEM examination that would necessitate the withholding of scores pending further investigation would include, but not be limited to, the following:

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

Upon analysis of all available information, 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 involved. In such circumstances, ABEM reserves the right to withhold the scores of candidates not directly implicated in the irregularity and, if necessary, 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 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 will continuously monitor the Internet and other sources for unauthorized reproduction of its examination content and violations of ABEM copyright. ABEM reserves the right to take whatever legal action is indicated regarding any 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 LLSA tests, certain activities are permitted. Refer to the ABEM Policy on Acceptable Use of Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment Test Materials.

APPEALS

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.