

BOARD OF PHARMACY SPECIALTIES

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

XI. Examination Administration, Scoring, and Reporting

A. General Information

Throughout this policy, the term psychometric consultant refers to a firm or individual qualified to provide comprehensive examination development and administration services, under contract to BPS.

BPS' psychometric consultant is required to act in the best interests of BPS and its candidates and certificants. Appropriate security and confidentiality policies and procedures are required to be maintained with regard to BPS proprietary information at all times. The psychometric consultant is also responsible for obtaining appropriate documentation of confidentiality from BPS specialty council members and other subject matter expert volunteers who participate in BPS activities that are managed or conducted by the consultant's staff.

Unless specifically stated, all of the policies and processes of BPS and the psychometric consultant described herein apply to every specialty certification offered by BPS.

All BPS specialty certification examinations are administered in paper-and-pencil format, with 200 4-choice multiple choice items per examination. All exams are administered on a single date annually, currently the first Saturday of October, using a single form of the examination for each specialty. The 200 items are randomly distributed between two books. The first 100 items are administered in a morning session on test day, and the second 100 items are administered in an afternoon session on the same day. Candidates for recertification by examination take only the first 100 items during the morning session.

B. Examination Administration

1. Role of BPS in designating sites and facilitating exam administration

- a. Based on previous experience, BPS designates approximately 20 exam cities at the beginning of the examination cycle in January.
- b. BPS designates additional alternate domestic and foreign sites in accordance with established policy.
- c. Domestic alternate sites must have 10 or more candidates for any combination of specialties and certification/recertification exams, and be at least 200 miles from an established designated site.
- d. Alternate sites outside the continental U.S. sites may be established with fewer than total 10 candidates, but will be charged an examiner fee and a site fee (if not provided by the candidate(s)). (See Policy XVIII- Fees)
- e. Candidates unable to test on the established BPS test date for religious reasons may take the examination on the following day (only). Such candidates must document their religion-based need and will be charged an examiner fee and site fee (if not provided by the candidate). (See Policy XVIII- Fees)

- f. Candidates assigned to military bases are eligible to have examinations administered at DANTES Sites. These exams are administered by government-approved examiners, but candidates must pay the additional costs of examination shipment to and from the base and any other charges incurred by BPS. (See Policy XVIII- Fees)
- g. All applications for alternate sites must be received by BPS no later than July 1, along with requesting individual applicants' application materials.
- h. BPS notifies the psychometric consultant of all exam cities and approximate numbers of candidates for each specialty, for examination printing and shipment to sites by the date stipulated in the current contract for testing services.
- i. BPS provides the psychometric consultant with a list of site-related requirements
- j. BPS posts on its web site a list of all designated and alternate examination sites, including detailed room location (obtained from psychometric consultant). A link to MapQuest or similar locator service is provided for each site.
- k. Any last minute changes related to a particular exam site are immediately posted on the BPS home page. Other means of communication with candidates, including local press may be utilized as appropriate.
- l. BPS produces and mails to each Chief Examiner (identified by psychometric consultant) demographic survey forms and rosters of examinees scheduled for each site. These are color-coded by specialty. (See h. below.) Lab value conversion charts are also provided for distribution to graduates of foreign pharmacy schools upon request.
- m. Specialty color codes for admission permits :

	AM	PM
1. Nuclear Pharmacy –	Yellow	Gold
2. Nutrition Support Pharmacy-	Green	Apple Green
3. Oncology Pharmacy -	Pink	Red
4. Pharmacotherapy –	Blue	Turquoise
5. Psychiatric Pharmacy-	White	Tan
- n. Approximately 2-3 weeks prior to the examination day, BPS sends each paid and approved exam candidate an admission ticket to their exam site by U.S. mail. Foreign candidates' admission tickets are sent by FedEx, with tracking.
- o. Admission tickets are color coded by specialty (See h. above) and include the following information:
 - 1. Specialty
 - 2. Exam city, date, and time
 - 3. Candidate's name and mailing address
 - 4. Detailed exam site location
 - 5. Candidate's Identification number (in BPS database)
- p. A transmittal letter is sent with the exam admission ticket which reminds candidates to monitor the BPS web site for any last minute changes in exam sites, weather closures, etc. and emphasizes other pertinent policies important to the candidate.

- q. On examination days, BPS staff remains on call by the psychometric consultant to respond to unanticipated policy or candidate-related questions.
- r. BPS develops a “Statement of Confidentiality for BPS Examinations” which each candidate is required to sign at the examination site. This is a component of the exam site security processes detailed in the “Instruction Manual for the Administration of the Board of Pharmacy Specialties Examinations”.

2.Role of psychometric consultant in providing sites and proctors, and administering exam

- a. When notified by BPS of requested examination cities/sites, the psychometric consultant identifies specific site locations, chief examiners, and additional proctors as needed to meet anticipated candidate numbers.
- b. Specific site information is provided to BPS for its records and posting of exam locations on the web site and listing on admission tickets.
- c. Psychometric consultant is contractually responsible for providing any special accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requested and justified by applicants, and reported by BPS.
- d. Psychometric consultant employs and supervises all examination administration staff, including chief examiners and proctors. The level of staffing of examination sites is determined by BPS and the psychometric consultant and specified in the contract for testing services. BPS staff or Board/Specialty Council members may be authorized to observe examination administration, but are not involved in the administration itself. No other observers are authorized.
- e. The psychometric consultant in consultation with BPS develops an “Instruction Manual for the Administration of the Board of Pharmacy Specialties Examinations” specific to the requirements of BPS exams. This is updated annually or as needed, provided to BPS for final approval, and prescribes all aspects of examination handling, processing, and administration at examination sites. It also provides specific scripts for use during exam administration process.
- f. Utilizing secure shipment methods, the psychometric consultant ships required quantities of exam books, answer sheets, and other materials to each chief examiner in advance of the examination day. Detailed policies and procedures are in place to ensure the integrity of the exam shipment to and from exam sites.
- g. Detailed policy and procedures are in place (see “Instruction Manual for the Administration of the Board of Pharmacy Specialties Examinations”) regarding the entire examination administration process, including room set-up, candidate check-in, instruction scripts, managing irregularities or security issues, collection of materials at the end of the exam, shipment back to consultant’s location, etc.
- h. In addition to distribution of other testing materials, exam administration staff distribute to foreign-trained candidates who request it, a “Table of SI Conversion Units for Common Laboratory Tests”.

- i. On the examination day(s), the psychometric consultant has staff available to respond to questions or issues from individual sites. Questions related to BPS policy are referred to BPS for resolution.
- j. Psychometric consultant monitors return of all materials after the exam administration, ensures complete returns, and follows up on delayed or missing materials. Irregularities are reported to BPS and followed up appropriately per consultant's policy and procedure.

C. Examination Scoring and Reporting

1. Role of BPS in examination scoring and processing
 - a. BPS receives material from the Chief Examiner at each site following the exam, including backup photocopies of answer sheets and candidate comment forms.
 - b. After ascertaining that all sites have reported, BPS tabulates the candidate comment forms, for information of staff, BPS Board, and Specialty Councils.
 - c. Psychometric consultant sends preliminary results and recommendations for establishment of cut score to BPS and respective Specialty Council members as soon as scoring has been completed.
 - d. BPS schedules and staffs telephone conference calls of each specialty council with the psychometric consultant following finalization of the key to review exam results and determine the passing point of each certification and recertification exam.
 - e. BPS receives the hard copy and electronic reports of candidate pass/fail status and two copies of score reports for each candidate from the psychometric consultant.
 - f. BPS uploads pass/fail information into its database and generates pass/fail letters for each candidate.
 - g. Each failing candidate is mailed a copy of his/her score report with a transmittal letter from the Executive Director of BPS.
 - h. Each passing candidate is mailed a copy of his/her score report with a transmittal letter from the Executive Director of BPS and a form to be used for requesting a letter to be sent to his/her employer about his/her certification.
 - i. BPS files the second copy of each candidate's score report in his/her hard copy file in secure storage at BPS offices. No score information, other than pass/fail status, is maintained in BPS' electronic database.
 - j. BPS orders certificates from its certificate printing contractor for all new certificants. Certificates cite the individual's full name, without academic or professional degrees or titles. When received from the printer, these are sent by FedEx, with tracking, to new certificants.
 - k. BPS also sends all new certificants a specialty-specific BPS lapel pin.
 - l. After candidates have had a chance to receive their pass/fail letters, BPS issues a news release with names of new certificants and adds those names to rosters of certificants on its web site.

- m. BPS will accept requests for hand scoring of examination answer sheets, upon the written request of a candidate and payment of the appropriate fee. Such requests are transmitted to the psychometric consultant for action. When the result is received back from the psychometric consultant, BPS informs the candidate, takes any other necessary action, and files the report in the candidate's hard copy file.

2. Psychometric consultant's role in scoring and issuing score reports

- a. After examination materials are returned following an exam, the psychometric consultant performs scoring following established sound policies in accordance with the contract with BPS.
- b. Answer keys are loaded into calibrated machine scoring devices and initial scoring runs are performed.
- c. Psychometric consultant reviews the results for gross errors and examines item statistics to identify potential problem items.
- d. Psychometric consultant prepares a list of items on each examination for review by the Specialty Council Chair and Vice Chair for possible double-keying or other adjustment of the key.
- e. Such items are transmitted by secure methods to and back from the Chair and Vice Chair for joint review and feedback to the psychometrician.
- f. Final adjustments to the key are made and final machine scoring is performed.
- g. Psychometric consultant prepares a written report to BPS for each Specialty Council summarizing the candidates' performance on the examination and recommending possible cut score(s) based on the most recent passing point study results and psychometrically sound equating methods (typically linear equating and equipercentile methods). For the first exam administration following a Passing Point Study standard-setting process, that score is recommended without further equating.
- h. At a Passing Point conference call with the Specialty Council and psychometric consultant (convened and staffed by BPS), the passing point is finalized, based on discussion of the consultant's recommendation(s).
- i. The psychometric consultant applies the agreed-upon passing point to the scoring data for each examination, and generates reports to BPS, including
 - 1. Alphabetical lists of examinees by form, indicating score and pass/fail status
 - 2. Individual score reports including candidate's name, ID number, specialty and exam code, in addition to specific information about their performance on the overall exam and by domain, and average and ranges of scores for all candidates.
- j. At the time hard copy score reports are generated, psychometric consultant also provides an electronic version to BPS for automated entry of pass or fail information into the BPS database.

- k. Psychometric consultant permanently retains records of examination administrations and candidates' performance in a secure database.
- l. Psychometric consultant tabulates the results of demographic questions completed by candidates just prior to receiving the examination. These reports are sent to BPS with or shortly after the examination results.
- m. Psychometric consultant is responsible for performing hand scoring of BPS answer sheets in response to requests transmitted from BPS. When the process is complete, consultant sends a report of results to BPS. If score changes are warranted for the candidate, consultant makes the changes in their records.