The Family Medicine Board Exam: What to Expect!

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American Board of Family Medicine exam

- Primary Certification and Recertification Exams
  - In 2010 July 12th - July 24th
  - Deadline to withdraw without seat fee 5 days prior to exam date
  - Deadline to change date/ location: 48 hours prior to exam date

- Exam Results: September 2, 2010
- Winter exam: December 1,2,4 2010

American Board of Family Medicine administers

- In-Training Exams
- Certificates of Added Qualifications
  - Adolescent Medicine Exam
  - Sports Medicine Exam
  - Geriatric Medicine

The Board Exam

- No limit to the times a qualified candidate may take the exam
- Those who fail, may take again in December
- Full fees are charged for each examination
The Board Exam

- Must have completed 3 years of residency training, valid and unrestricted medical license and complete 50 credits of CME/ year.
- Application and test-center selection is on-line. First come- first serve
- If license is revoked, certification is rescinded

The Board Exam

- As of 2005 only offered in Computer-Based Format and in all 50 states
- Extra features like brief practice test, time remaining, & unanswered questions shown
- Do not need advance computer skills
- Able to review previous items and change answers

The Board Exam

- Tests cognitive knowledge and problem solving ability
- Questions include diagnosis, management and prevention of illness
- Bring Valid e-ticket and 2 pieces of ID to be admitted
- Registration includes a digital photograph and fingerprint

The Board Exam

- No purses, bags, pagers, PDAs, phones or reference materials - locker provided, snacks okay
- May not take written notes of exam
- May not leave room or make calls
- Erasable board provided for written preparatory work
The Board Exam

• Multiple versions of exam exist. You may have a different version than the person next to you.
• If you need to repeat the exam in December, you will have a different version.
• In 2010, repeat exam offered December 1-8.

Exam Section 1

• Exam Section 1 lasts 120 minute (2 hours).
• Consists of 120 multiple choice questions covering the breadth of the Family Medicine.
• Followed by Optional 15 minute break.

Exam Sections 2 and 3: Modules

• Certification and Recertification candidates must choose 2 modules from a list of 8.
• Prepare in advance for the two selected module topics.
• Once modules selected & confirmed no change allowed.
• Each module composed of 45 multiple-choice questions and lasts 45 minutes.
• 15 minute break between exam #2 and #3, and a 70 minute break after Exam #3.

Module Options

• Ambulatory Family Medicine
• Child and Adolescent Care
• Geriatrics
• Women’s Health
• Maternity Care
• Emergent / Urgent Care
• Hospital Medicine
• Sports Medicine
Exam Section 4 and 5

• Both section consist of 80 Multiple Choice Questions (95 minutes)

• Separated by a scheduled optional break (15 minutes)

• Examinees may take all, part or none of the scheduled breaks

Certification/ Recertification Exam Content 2010

I. Cardiovascular 12%
II. Endocrine 8%
III. Gastrointestinal 7%
IV. Hematologic/Immune 3%
V. Integumentary 6%
VI. Musculoskeletal 12%
VII. Nephrologic 3%
VIII. Neurologic 3%

IX. Nonspecific 9%
X. Psychogenic 7%
XI. Reproductive—Female 4%
XII. Reproductive—Male 1%
XIII. Respiratory 13%
XIV. Special Sensory 2%

Certification/ Recertification Exam Content 2008

IX. Nonspecific 9%
X. Psychogenic 7%
XI. Reproductive—Female 4%
XII. Reproductive—Male 1%
XIII. Respiratory 13%
XIV. Special Sensory 2%

XV. Population-based Care 5%
• This includes topics such as biostatistics and epidemiology, evidence-based medicine, prevention, health policy and legal issues, bioterror, quality improvement, and geographic/urban/rural issues.
Certification/ Recertification Exam Content 2010

- XVI. Patient-based Systems 5%
  - This includes topics such as clinical decision-making, communication and doctor-patient interaction, family and cultural issues, ethics, palliative care, and end-of-life care.

More info

- 20 questions are field-test items and will not be included in the scoring process.
- “Process B” option over
- No True/False Questions

Please remember!

- Once any section of the exam has been ended or timed out, you are not permitted to return to that section

Strategies for Passing!

- If guessing, questions with “all, never, always” usually wrong
- If completely unfamiliar, it is probably wrong
- If series of numbers, midrange values more often correct
- If an answer involves an impaired clinician, that is probably your answer
Strategies for Passing!

- If 2 answers are opposite or very similar, one is usually correct
- If answer is against the principals of Family Medicine, usually wrong
- First hunch often correct
- Longest answer more often correct, if you are unsure

Strategies for Passing!

- You have roughly 1 minute per question, pace yourself!
- Read the stem (questions) carefully
- Read all responses carefully and cross out incorrect options
- Don’t select correct answer until reading all options (cognitive foreclosure)

Strategies for Passing!

- Always answer the questions
  - Do not leave answer blank.
- It is better to guess at response from the remaining options and flag question to return to
- When returning to a question, only change answer if you are sure since 1st thoughtful answer is more likely to be correct

Strategies for Passing!

- Don’t get stuck on a difficult question, pace yourself
- Study where you did poorly in past and in areas you are least comfortable with
- Focus on established medicine- remember there is a 9 month development cycle for the exam- so no brand new information
Strategies for Passing!

• FailSafe ABFM Exam Study Tips
  https://www.theabfm.org/cert/failsafe.pdf
• Tutorial
  https://www.theabfm.org/tutorial/cbt/index.html
• Candidate information booklet-on line and mailed to you

Free Practice tests!

• Practice test and tutorial ABFM website- www.theabfm.org
• Residency In-Training Exam (ITE) requires a login
  https://www.theabfm.org/residency/ite.aspx
• www.familypractice.com go to Board Prep Review Question section

Study Plan

• Download in-training exam from theABFM
  • Take and score test
• > 60pts below passing
  • 1 hr/day 3x/week for 3 months
• Btn 10-50 pt below passing
  • 1 hr/day 2x/week for 2 months
• At or above passing passing
  • 1 hr/day 2x/week for 1 month

Study Plan

• Identify problem areas- both content and test taking – when testing the in-service exam
• The value of the 1st hour studying is much greater than later hours
• Try not to cram!
  • Studying 6 hours / day for 6 days does not equal studying 36 hours over 2-3 months
Scoring
• Pass/ Fail

• Does not depend on how other candidates do- each question graded separately

• Will receive percentile rank and scores by discipline

Scoring
• Passing threshold set by research study involving large volunteer group of family physicians
• The minimum passing score for each exam determined by combining estimates of the minimal knowledge level appropriate for board certification with their estimates of the difficulty of the examination.
• The study and its outcome are reviewed by a committee of the ABFM Board of Directors.

Scoring
• The passing score is not based on failing or passing a particular percentage of candidates, but rather on a score that demonstrates a consensus level of mastery of the vast field of Family Medicine.

Scoring
• Score reports will be available online only about 6-8 weeks after end of testing
• Program directors receive scores of recent graduates
### 2009 Examination Pass Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification or Recertification</th>
<th>Initial Certification 2,438</th>
<th>86.7%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recertification</td>
<td>8,356</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
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**Medical Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other International</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,794</strong></td>
<td><strong>85.9%</strong></td>
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**First time taker**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>9,803</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
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### Maintenance of Certification

- All successful Certification or Recertification candidates will receive a seven-year certificate from the ABFM and will be required to participate in the Maintenance of Certification for Family Physicians (MC-FP) program.

- Any Diplomate who has certified or recertified since 2003 may earn an extension to their seven-year certificate.

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### How to earn the MC-FP Extension

- Process is sectioned into three-year Stages with requirements that must be completed by the end of each Stage.

- The requirements for each Stage are:
  - two Part II modules: Self-Assessment Modules or SAMs- 60-question Knowledge Assessment followed by a Clinical Simulation
  - one Part IV module: Performance in Practice Modules (PPMs) designed as Quality Improvement activities

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### MC-FP Section on Web Site (track your progress)

- Web site also has tutorial
- Shows modules required & completed
- Shows payment info
- Can request status verification letter
- Show Knowledge Assessment and Clinical Stimulation module status, references, and can begin or resume test
Reciprocity agreements

Diplomates of the ABFM may be eligible to seek certification by these colleges

- The College of Family Physicians of Canada
- the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners
- the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Questions?

- Call the support center- 877-233-7437
- Or e-mail help@theabfm.org
- Open Monday- Friday 8:30-9pm
- Saturday 9-5pm

Good Luck!