

# ARRANGING FOR AND ADMINISTERING AN NBME WEB-BASED EXAMINATION



This document provides a basic orientation to the main activities involved in administering NBME web-based exams offered as a service to medical schools, residency programs, or other organizations.

## Staffing

At medical schools, the NBME Executive Chief Proctor (ECP) has the overall responsibility for ordering/planning the test administration and for assuring that related pre- and post-test activities have been completed. At residency programs or other organizations, these responsibilities may be carried out by a designated individual approved by the NBME.

The following additional staff must be appointed to support test administration activities:

- Chief Proctor (CP) to manage the specifics of the test administration
- Technical Support Coordinator (TechC) to assure that test administration system requirements are met

## Responsibilities of the Chief Proctor

The exam must be administered in a secure, proctored setting. The CP will have access to a web-based *Chief Proctor Resource Site*, which houses all of the system applications and resources to support the test administration. The main duties of the CP are to:

- Become oriented to the NBME web-based proctoring software for exam delivery.
- Ensure that testing room physical arrangements for the computerized exam create a positive, secure working environment in which examinees can feel comfortable and do their best work.
- Conduct the exam in strict compliance with the procedures outlined in the Chief Proctor's Manual.
- Recruit one proctor for every 20 to 25 examinees expected in each testing room, plus additional staff to relieve proctors, if necessary.
- Start the test session, monitor the progress of examinees, end the test session, confirm the examinee group for scoring, and file an electronic Report of Test Administration.

On the *Chief Proctor Resource Site*, CPs can access the Chief Proctor's Manual and tutorials, administer a practice exam, and perform other necessary tasks associated with test administration cycle.

## Responsibilities of the Technical Support Coordinator (TechC)

The TechC has the primary responsibility for assuring that all computers used for the test administration can deliver the exam securely and successfully.

Specific duties of the TechC are to:

- Set up a dedicated workstation/laptop in each testing room for use by the CP.
- Run an NBME exam compatibility check on at least one workstation or institutional laptop to be used for test administration.
- Have knowledge of the operating system (OS), virus checker, and browser version that reside on institutional workstations/laptops or examinee laptops.
- Be knowledgeable about the network architecture of the testing rooms.
- Verify that internet connection speed is adequate (minimum T1) for testing.
- Be available on the test day to resolve technical problems that may arise.

Standard NBME web-based testing system requirements are shown at the end of this document.

## Ordering the Examination

The examinations are available to request through the online ordering system on the *NBME Services Portal (NSP)*. ECPs and those with parallel responsibilities at residency programs or other organizations will have access to this portal. The following information must be provided in the web-based exam order:

- Test date
- Expected number of examinees
- Number of any examinees who need extra testing time and the corresponding exam length (1.5x or 2x the standard time limit allocated for other examinees)
- Test session start and end times
- Names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for the CPs assigned to each testing room

Order submission triggers system e-mails to the CPs with the information they need to perform pre-test setup tasks. In order to allow adequate time to complete these tasks, the order should be placed *at least two weeks prior to the test date*. However, orders can be placed up to 2 calendar days before the test date. Please note that for the majority of NBME web-based tests, test administration is limited to a single day. The online ordering system has been configured to allow multiple testing days only for specific exams.

## Administering the Examination

The pacing varies by exam. For examinations created by faculty through the Customized Assessment Services program, this is determined by the number of questions selected for the exam and the timing (72 or 90 seconds per question) chosen during the test construction process. For other NBME web-based exams, where the number of questions is fixed, the pacing is determined by the NBME, and averages 75 seconds per question.

Total test session time includes a 15-minute tutorial, the time allotment for responding to all questions, and, depending on the exam, an untimed post-test survey. There may also be structured “off the clock” breaks for specific exams.

After examinees have been admitted and seated, the CP starts the test session and communicates a start-up code to examinees for login purposes. The CP can monitor the progress of all examinees after they launch their

exams, and end the test session when they finish. The *Chief Proctor's Manual* includes complete instructions on how to troubleshoot technical or other problems that may occur during the session.

## Assigning Examinees to a Test Administration Roster

The NBME has developed a roster system to support the administration and scoring of its web-based examinations. It is divided into two parts:

- a *master roster* for maintaining records for all examinees
- a *test administration roster* to be created prior to each test date

The roster system resides on the *NSP*. Those with access to the test administration roster function can populate the roster with the examinees scheduled to take a web-based exam up to the test date and before a test session is launched. This function is assigned by the User Account Administrator (UAA) and can be given to anyone with knowledge of the examinee group to be tested. Test administration delays may occur if this roster is not completed prior to the start of the test session.

## NBME Test Administration Support

NBME staff will be available for test administration support on your test date(s) to respond to technical or procedural issues that may arise. NBME staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (exclusive of NBME holidays).

## Score Reporting

After the CP ends a test session and files a Report of Test Administration, a Roster Confirmation will appear listing the examinees that tested in the session. The CP can exclude any records that would be invalid (e.g., if an examinee left due to illness) and then confirm the group to be submitted for scoring.

For most NBME web-based exams, the score report and related performance feedback are posted to the *NBME Services Portal* within 48-72 hours. For other exams, such as those created using NBME Customized Assessment Services, the turnaround time could be longer.

## Test Administration Resources

- Access online tutorials for the NBME web-based proctoring system on the ECP Resources tab of NSP.
- Contact [nbmewebtest@nbme.org](mailto:nbmewebtest@nbme.org) or 215-590-9298 with any questions about test administration activities.

## Standard NBME Web-Based Testing Requirements



The [standard NBME web-based testing requirements](#) apply to exams delivered over both wired and wireless networks. Examinees may use personal laptops, either Macs or PCs, to take an exam.