



# **ABO WQE Procedures Manual**

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American Board of Ophthalmology

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# 1. Examination Overview

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The Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) is the first of two evaluations in the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) certification process. Administered in person only at computerized testing centers nationwide, the WQE is designed to evaluate the breadth and depth of the basic science and clinical knowledge candidates acquired during training. The next WQE will be administered on **Saturday, September 21, 2024** in an approximately five-hour testing period that includes a tutorial and break time.

Once the WQE is successfully completed, candidates will be invited to register for the Oral Examination, the second and final assessment of the certification process.

*Note: These policies are subject to change without notice at the discretion of the American Board of Ophthalmology.*

## 1.1. Test Purpose Statement

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*The Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) is a 250 multiple-choice question examination designed to evaluate the breadth and depth of the basic science and clinical knowledge of candidates who have satisfactorily completed an accredited program of education in ophthalmology. It is necessary to pass this examination before being admitted to the Oral Examination.*

## 1.2. Exam Content

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### Topic Areas

- Lens and Cataract
- Cornea, External Disease, and Anterior Segment
- Glaucoma
- Neuro-Ophthalmology
- Oculofacial Plastic, Lacrimal, and Orbital Surgery
- Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus
- Optics and Refractive Management
- Retina, Vitreous, and Intraocular Tumors
- Uveitis

For additional information about the content of the examination, check out the [WQE Content Outline](#).

### Source Material

Questions (items) that appear on the Written Qualifying Examination (WQE) assess the breadth and depth of a candidate's basic science and clinical knowledge following the completion of an accredited residency program in ophthalmology.

All WQE content is written and reviewed by diverse teams of board-certified subject matter experts who must cite verifiable sources when submitting their questions for peer review. References are not limited to one specific source or set of sources, however. As an independent standard-setting and assessment organization, the ABO neither requires nor endorses the purchase of any curriculums, practice tools, or textbooks. Some WQE content may be sourced from the American Academy of Ophthalmology's BCSC Basic and Clinical Science Course book series, for example, but the volunteers who create examination questions are encouraged to draw from relevant, high-quality, peer-reviewed sources.

To help set candidate expectations, the ABO publishes a freely available consensus-based [content outline](#) that lists the topics to be covered on the examination. The Board recommends that candidates look to the content outline as a starting point for building a personalized program of review; however, this document is not intended to serve as a comprehensive study guide.

## 1.3. Exam Format

All questions in the Written Qualifying Examination are single, one best answer questions. This is the traditional, most frequently used multiple-choice format. It consists of a statement or question followed by four options that are in alphabetical or logical order. The response options in this format are lettered (e.g., A, B, C, D). Examinees are required to select the best answer to the question. Other options may be partially correct, but there is only **ONE BEST** answer.

### Strategies for Answering Single One Best Answer Test Questions

- Read each question carefully. It is important to understand what is being asked.
- Try to generate an answer and then look for it in the option list.
- Alternatively, read each option carefully, eliminating those that are clearly incorrect.
- Of the remaining options, select the one that is most correct.
- If unsure about an answer, it is better to guess since unanswered questions are automatically counted as wrong. No points will be subtracted for incorrect responses.

## 1.4. Exam Statistics

Statistics from the previous five (5) years of WQE administrations are listed below. The Board has administered certification examinations since 1916. To date, the ABO has held 245 initial certification examinations and certified 33,703 ophthalmologists.

Year	Total Candidates	1st Time Takers	1st Time Takers Passed	Repeat Takers	Repeat Takers Passed	Overall Passed	Overall Failed
2023	625	498	428 (85.9%)	127	76 (59.8%)	504 (80.6%)	121 (19.4%)
2022	611	497	419 (84.3%)	114	60 (52.6%)	479 (78.4%)	132

							(21.6%)
2021	642	538	452 (84%)	104	59 (56.7%)	511 (79.6%)	131 (20.4%)
2020	584	528	456 (86.4%)	56	16 (28.6%)	472 (80.8%)	112 (19.2%)
2019B	498	419	405 (96.7%)	79	31 (39.2%)	436 (87.6%)	62 (12.4%)
2019A	538	465	460 (98.9%)	73	25 (34.2%)	485 (90.1%)	53 (9.9%)

## 2. Exam Registration

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### How to Apply

Eligible ophthalmology residents slated to graduate this spring (prior to August 1) will receive Invitation to Certification Letters from the ABO via their residency programs in April. To register, follow the instructions in the letter to access your [Candidate Status Page](#) and complete the application steps. Registration includes the submission of your valid, [unrestricted medical license](#), a current photo, and the \$1,950 examination fee. Once registration is approved, candidates will receive an email from the ABO detailing how to schedule an examination appointment. Examination appointments will be offered at nationally distributed testing centers on September 21, 2024.

✿ If you are an [eligible ophthalmology resident](#) and did not receive this letter, please [contact us](#).

## 2.1. Name Changes

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To be admitted to your exam, you will need to present an unexpired U.S. or Canadian, English-language, government-issued identification (such as a driver's license or passport) which includes your photograph and signature. The first and last name on the ID **must match exactly** the name on your [Candidate Status Page](#). The only acceptable difference would be the presence of a middle name or a middle initial.

If there is a discrepancy, contact the [Board Office](#) immediately. In this request, please send us a copy of official documentation demonstrating your name change (i.e. driver's license, passport, marriage license, divorce decree, or legal name change document) and we will process the change for you.

## 2.2. License Proviso

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If you are unable to submit an unrestricted medical license during registration, you can apply for a license proviso to complete the exam. **Please note: a license proviso is only granted for candidates applying for the WQE for the first time.** Medical licenses must then be uploaded by November 1 of the current year.

## 2.3. ADA & Testing Accommodations

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The ABO complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to mitigate the effects of an ADA-qualifying disability on the testing activity. To accommodate individuals with disabilities, the ABO will make reasonable modifications to its examinations that do not fundamentally alter the requirements of the examination or the measurement of the skills or knowledge the ABO examinations are intended to test. To request these accommodations, please review our [ADA & Testing Accommodations Policy](#) and download the [Accommodation Request form](#) (PDF).

- \* The ABO requests that all documentation be received by four (4) months prior to the exam the candidate wishes to take.

## 2.4. Nursing Mothers

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Nursing mothers who would like to request break time and private space for pumping during this examination may do so by sending an email to [info@abop.org](mailto:info@abop.org) no less than 90 days before the examination. Please submit requests immediately after registration; due to test center space restrictions, we may be unable to fulfill requests received less than 90 days prior to testing. For additional information, please review our [Nursing Mothers Policy](#).

## 2.5. Religious Observances

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For candidates that are unable to examine on Saturday due to religious observances, we will offer the examination on the preceding Friday. Candidates must contact the [Board Office](#) to request the date change at least 90 days prior to testing.

## 2.6. Military Service Credit

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Active duty United States military service members will be reimbursed 50% of all paid certification fees. Check out our [Military Personnel Refund Policy](#) for more information.

- \* Military ophthalmologists may also qualify for [GI Bill® reimbursement](#).

## 3. Exam Administration

The WQE will be administered in person only at computerized testing centers nationwide. The exam is conducted **once per year in the fall**.

Date	Registration	Fee	Location
Saturday, September 21, 2024	April 3 – July 1	\$1,950	Pearson VUE test centers nationwide


 Late registrations will be accepted through **August 1** with an additional \$300 late fee.

### 3.1. Exam Scheduling

Scheduling for the 2024 WQE will open in April. At this time, all registered candidates will receive scheduling information via email, which will include a scheduling link to each candidate's unique Pearson VUE account. This scheduling link will also be accessible on the [Candidate Status Page](#). A test center location closest to your address on file with the ABO will be pre-populated in your account as a starting point; however, you can enter any address in the US, its territories, or Canada to find a different location.

All appointments should be scheduled by **August 1, 2024**. We encourage you to select an appointment as soon as you are able in order to secure a spot at your preferred testing center. If you choose to wait, please note that availability at testing centers will continue to fluctuate. You will have the option to reschedule your exam appointment prior to August 1 if a spot opens up at a testing center that is more convenient for you.

After you schedule your test, [Pearson VUE](#) will send a confirmation letter listing your test date, your testing time, the address and phone number of the test center, and directions to the test center.

 For additional help scheduling your test, contact [Pearson VUE](#) at 833-976-2389.

### 3.2. Exam Day Procedures

The total examination appointment time is as follows:

**5.5 hours** at the testing center

**5 hours** in the examination appointment

**4.5 hours** in the exam

- **2.25 hours** in Section 1
- **10 minutes** for optional break



- **2.25 hours** in Section 2

You are instructed to arrive at the test center **30 minutes** before your scheduled appointment time. This will give you adequate time to complete the necessary [sign-in procedures](#), which includes showing your government issued ID, having your digital photo taken and providing a digital signature. When a test section closes, you may **not** return to it (i.e. answers submitted in Section 1 cannot be changed after starting Section 2)



If you arrive more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, you may be refused admission and forfeit the exam attempt and any applicable fees.

## Unscheduled Breaks

Breaks are already built into your testing schedule, but you will also be permitted to take an unscheduled break (if needed). However, please know that the exam clock will **not** stop, and the test proctor is likely to flag frequent or extended breaks as potential exam security issues that will need to be reviewed by ABO exam administration personnel.

## 3.2.1. Before the Exam Appointment

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- 1.) Add the ABO's phone number, 610-664-1175, to your contacts. Should you need us on exam day for any reason, ABO staff will be available from 7 AM to 7 PM ET. The phone number for your testing center can also be found in your appointment confirmation, which is accessible via your [Candidate Status Page](#).
- 2.) Familiarize yourself with the location of your testing center. Directions to your testing center can also be found in your appointment confirmation.
- 3.) Ensure that you have a [valid driver's license or other government-issued ID](#) ready to present to the proctor at the testing center. The first and last name on the ID **must match exactly** the name on your [Candidate Status Page](#).
- 4.) Review Pearson VUE's [Candidate Rules Agreement](#), as this must be signed on your exam day. To help things go smoothly, please bring as little as possible with you. You will not be permitted to keep your phone or other personal items with you at your computer station (you will be provided with a location for storage).
- 5.) Check your email just before you leave for the testing center to ensure that there have been no last-minute changes. If you notice a change, call the ABO and a staff member will immediately escalate your situation to Pearson VUE for quick resolution.

## 3.2.2. During the Exam Appointment

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- 1.) ABO candidates are provided with an optional whiteboard and marker for use during the examination. Should your test proctor neglect to offer you a whiteboard and marker, it is your responsibility to request these materials prior to being seated and beginning your examination. During the test, please adhere to your test center's rules regarding the use of whiteboards, avoid displaying your board in ways that would allow other test-takers to view your notes, and do not remove your board from the testing area. Other forms of note-taking are not permitted.
- 2.) Once the proctor has seated you at your computer station, you will have the option to complete a brief [tutorial](#). We encourage you to accept the tutorial option so that you can see how to appropriately select your answers and mark selected questions for later review. Your tutorial time will not deduct any minutes from your allotted testing time.
- 3.) Alert your test proctor if you run into any issues. Do not hesitate to [escalate the issue](#) to the ABO if necessary.

## 3.2.3. After the Exam Appointment

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- 1.) You will have the option to print a confirmation document that your test has been submitted. This is proof that your examination has been completed and will be reviewed by the ABO.
- 2.) Be sure to collect any personal items from the storage area before you leave the testing center.
- 3.) If you are dissatisfied with your experience at the testing center, please let us know by sending the details of the incident and the location of your testing center to the [Board Office](#) and we will open an investigation. In your note, please include the best phone number to reach you in case we need additional details.
- 4.) Within 24 hours of completing your appointment, you will receive an email invitation to complete a brief survey about your examination. We would greatly appreciate your feedback about the quality of your testing experience and your recommendations for future improvements.

## 3.3. Cancellations

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Administering a board certification examination requires a significant commitment on the part of the Board and our candidates. As such, we encourage you to carefully consider your future availability prior to registering for an examination and taking the steps necessary to ensure that you can appear for your exam as scheduled. In the event that an unanticipated issue requires you to change your plans, please consider the following policies:

Registered candidates who are **Board Eligible** may:

- **Withdraw** prior to the [registration deadline](#) to receive a refund minus a \$300 administration fee. To withdraw, email the [Board Office](#).
- **Cancel** after the [registration deadline](#) has passed but at least 61 days before the test. Doing so will forfeit 50% of the registration fee. You will be refunded the balance. **Cancellations received within 60 days of the examination are fully non-refundable.** To cancel, email the [Board Office](#).
- **Reschedule** a testing appointment, as space allows, until 48 hours prior to the exam.

Registered **candidates who are no longer Board Eligible are also ineligible for refunds** in any amount, regardless of the date of withdrawal or cancellation. Candidates who are not board eligible may reschedule their WQE, as space allows, until 48 hours before the examination. For more information, please consult the [Board Eligibility Policy](#).

✿ If you have already scheduled your examination appointment, you will need to cancel your appointment on your Pearson VUE account (accessible from your [Candidate Status Page](#)) prior to sending your written cancellation request.

## 3.4. Test Day Concerns

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If you run into **any** issues or concerns at the testing center, flag your test proctor immediately. If your issue or concern is not properly handled by the test proctor, please alert the ABO promptly at 610-664-1175. ABO staff will be on stand-by from 7 AM to 7 PM ET in the event of an issue. To expediate the process, be prepared to provide ABO support staff with your:

- First Name
- Last Name
- ABO ID# (located on your [Candidate Status Page](#))
- Cell #
- Description of the issue

All test day issues/concerns will be escalated with high importance to Pearson VUE for prompt resolution. ABO staff will follow-up with all candidates that experience test day issues as quickly as possible.

✿ Each candidate is entitled to a fair examination and will never be penalized due to test center issues.

## Post-Exam Issues

The ABO expects Pearson VUE staff to treat our candidates with the utmost respect and professionalism. If your exam day experience did not meet your expectations, please refer to [this section](#) for details on how to

report your issue to the ABO for further investigation.

## 3.5. Exam Scoring & Results

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The score required to pass the Written Qualifying Examination is determined by a standard-setting methodology. This method requires a group of peers to estimate the minimum level of clinical decision-making and medical knowledge an ophthalmologist requires to practice competently. The examination employs a criterion-referenced passing standard, which means scoring is not done “on the curve,” i.e., that a certain percentage of candidates will pass or fail. For every administration, it is possible for all examinees to pass if they achieve a score at or above the passing standard. Continue on to the [WQE Score Report](#) section to learn more about what to expect when you receive your score report.

### Results

Results are released 6-8 weeks following the examination. The ABO does not release information regarding the specific number of items needed to pass. Percentile ranks are not released to candidates because an individual’s performance on this examination in relation to peers is not being assessed and does not affect your score. Continue on to the [WQE Score Report](#) section to learn more about what to expect when you receive your score report.

### Why so long?

The ABO is often asked why it takes 6-8 weeks to issue your WQE results. We understand that waiting for this important news is difficult and that the digitized examination format creates an expectation for immediate feedback. However, please be assured that the extended timeline ultimately works to your benefit. During this post-examination period, extensive quality assurance checks take place to ensure that your test result is fair and accurate. For example, all WQE content is re-reviewed by teams of subject matter experts in accordance with psychometric standards to identify potentially flawed questions. If the ABO determines that a question with more than one correct answer (or no correct answer) has made it onto the WQE, then test-takers are not penalized for this item.

### What’s next?

**Successful Candidates:** Congratulations – you are one step closer to becoming a diplomate of the ABO! In your WQE results letter, you will be invited to register for the Oral Examination, the final stage in the certification process.

**Unsuccessful Candidates:** Do not worry – you can try again! You will be notified when registration for the next WQE administration opens. Keep in mind the [Board Eligibility Policy](#) requires successful completion of board certification requirements (written and oral examination) within seven years of residency graduation.

## 3.5.1. WQE Score Report

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Approximately 6-8 weeks after completing the WQE, you can expect to receive your Candidate Score Report. This report is made available electronically for download on your [Candidate Status Page](#).

Your WQE Candidate Score Report will provide you with your:

- Total scaled score
- Overall pass/fail result
- Performance level in each subject area

### Total Scaled Score

Your raw score (the number of items you answered correctly) on each examination is transformed into a reporting scale ranging from 200 to 1000 and shared with you in your report.

*Example:*

**Your Total Scaled Score: 714**

To pass the WQE, your scaled score must total 700 or higher. Your score is calculated using only your individual examination performance. Scoring is not done “on the curve” or in relationship to your peers. For every administration of the WQE, it is possible for all examinees to pass if they achieve a score at or above 700. Because your score is not impacted by peer performance, you will not receive a percentile ranking or other peer performance indicators in your score report.

### Pass/Fail Result

While your total scaled score provides you with an indication of how well you performed, the ABO will clearly indicate for you whether or not your test outcome met the passing standard in order to move onto the Oral Examination.

*Example:*

**Your Total Scaled Score: 714**

**RESULT: Pass**

### Subject Area Performance Levels

At the bottom of your report, you will see a table containing the list of subject areas covered by the WQE, along with a performance level rating for each subject.

- If you see a **Level 1**, this indicates your subject area performance was **at or above** the minimum proficiency level.
- If you see a **Level 2**, this indicates your that subject area performance was **below** the minimum proficiency level.

If you are looking for direction on how to prepare for the Oral Examination or to re-take the WQE, your subject area performance levels can help you identify potential areas for enhancing your ophthalmic knowledge.

*Example:*

Subject Area	Your Performance Level
Lens and Cataract	Level 2
Cornea, External Disease, & Anterior Segment	Level 1
Glaucoma	Level 1
Neuro-Ophthalmology	Level 1
Oculofacial Plastic, Lacrimal, and Orbital Surgery	Level 1
Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus	Level 2
Optics and Refractive Management	Level 1
Retina, Vitreous, and Intraocular Tumors	Level 2
Uveitis	Level 1

## Additional Scoring Information

Candidates ask whether more detailed performance feedback is available. While this is something we provide on the Quarterly Questions assessment for Continuing Certification, our purpose for initial certification is different. At the time of initial certification, the ABO's primary goal is to assess whether or not an ophthalmologist meets the standards we've set for knowledge, skills, and experience based on the education they've already received during ophthalmology residency training. Our examinations answer that question in a Yes/No or Pass/Fail manner. Initial certification examinations are not designed to probe the degree to which candidates exceed the standards or fall below them; therefore, these tests are not an appropriate tool for teaching. And, since initial certification candidates do not compete against one another, we do not rank their performance.

## 3.5.2. Re-score Requests

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If you receive your [WQE Score Report](#) and believe an error has been made in the calculation of your results, please write to the [Board Office](#) to request a re-score. In taking this step, please understand that re-scoring is limited to verifying two things: 1) that the responses that were scored under your name were indeed made by you, and 2) that the scoring process correctly transformed your responses into a scaled score. The re-score process does not include a re-review of test questions, reconsideration of incorrect/correct answers, changes to the passing standard, or an investigation of testing conditions. ([Concerns about test centers or testing conditions](#) should be reported to the ABO immediately, on the day of the

examination.)

## 4. Candidate Resources

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The ABO has carefully curated a collection of must-see resources to help candidates in their preparation for the WQE. These include:

- [Content Outline](#)
- [Sample Questions & Analysis](#)
- [Exam Tutorial](#)
- [Informational Webinar](#)
- [Test-Taking Tips](#)
- [In-Exam Whiteboard](#)

Candidates are highly encouraged to review each of these resources prior to attempting the WQE.

### 4.1. Content Outline

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The American Board of Ophthalmology has developed a [content outline](#) (PDF) for the Written Qualifying Examination (WQE). The purpose of this document is to identify the basic science and clinical knowledge necessary for competent performance by candidates who have satisfactorily completed an accredited program of education in ophthalmology.

#### About the WQE Content Outline

The content outline for the WQE lists the topics you can expect to see on the examination and the percentage of questions that will come from each topic area. The content outline was updated in August 2017 after a review and revision process. This WQE content outline is effective for the 2019 WQE administration and will remain in effect for 3-5 years from development in accordance with best practices in test development. Changes may be made sooner if there are significant changes to the field that warrant re-review.

Development of the WQE content outline adhered to psychometric guidelines for exam development and relied primarily on existing evidence-based literature and expert consensus. Expert consensus was provided by volunteer practicing ophthalmologists representing the following subspecialties: Cataract/Anterior, Cornea/External Disease, Glaucoma, Neuro-Orbital, Oculoplastics, Pathology, Pediatrics/Strabismus Segment, Refraction and Optics, Retina-Vitreous, and Uveitis. These volunteers included representatives of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and other ophthalmology subspecialty societies. The volunteers also represented a great diversity in gender, age, practice type, and geography.

- Brandon Ayres, MD, ASCRS
- Megan Collins, MD, AAPOS
- Neda Esmaili, MD, ASOPRS
- Dan Gombos, MD, AAOOP
- Jonathan Jonisch, MD, ASRS



- Frank LaRosa, MD, AESC
- Amy Lin, MD, Contact Lens Assn of Ophthalmologists
- Sarwat Salim, MD, AGS
- Adrienne Scott, MD, The Retina Society
- H. Nida Sen, MD, Uveitis Society
- Christopher Ta, MD, The Cornea Society

Following the development of the content outline, the weights (percentages) were established through a practice analysis survey sent to the ABO diplomate community in January 2017. The survey asked diplomates to weigh the importance of each content outline task for safe and effective practice, and 548 unique responses from diplomates were compiled and presented to the ABO Initial Certification Committee for final review and approval.

Candidates are encouraged to use this outline to prepare for the WQE; however, this outline is a study tool, not a study guide. In addition to reviewing the content outline, the ABO suggests talking to peers and colleagues about what resources they have used and found most helpful, or contacting a professional society such as the American Academy of Ophthalmology or a subspecialty organization for advice, recommendations, and information about their educational materials.

 The WQE Content Outline is available as a [PDF](#).

### Providing Feedback on the WQE Content Outline

The American Board of Ophthalmology is committed to the continuous improvement of its assessment tools and processes for certification. Suggested updates for the next version of the WQE Content Outline may be sent to [ContentOutline@abop.org](mailto:ContentOutline@abop.org). Comments must reference the specific section of the outline to which you are referring and provide a source/documentation for the content you are recommending. All comments will be directed to the appropriate review committee. General questions about the certification process and examinations should be sent to [info@abop.org](mailto:info@abop.org).

## 4.2. Sample Questions & Analysis

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The ABO, with help from its subject-matter experts (SMEs), have pulled real exam questions from its WQE item bank. These sample questions, which have been utilized in previous iterations of the exam, span across all nine subjects of the [WQE Content Outline](#) (PDF). After being presented with each question, you will find the corresponding answer and accompanying analysis provided by our SMEs. This analysis not only details why the correct answer is correct, but also why the other answers, or distractors, are incorrect.

Review the [WQE Sample Questions](#) (PDF) to get a better sense of what kinds of questions you can expect to see on this year's WQE.

## 4.3. Exam Tutorial

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In collaboration with Pearson VUE, the ABO has helped put together a customized [Exam Tutorial](#) to show candidates how to use the computer-based testing functions prior to sitting for their examination. In this tutorial, candidates will learn how to:

- Identify the time and progress left on the exam;
- Flag questions to come back to later;
- Utilize the scratch pad to jot down notes; and,
- Highlight and strikethrough answers to eliminate distractors

Following the tutorial, candidates will be able to test these features as they answer real WQE questions in a sample test. An answer key for the sample test can be found [here](#) (PDF).

**Please note:** this tutorial is timed in order to simulate the actual WQE. Similar to the WQE, you will not be able to return to a previous section once time has run out. If you time-out of the tutorial, you can always re-access it [here](#).

## 4.4. Informational Webinar

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In preparation of the 2023 exam administration, ABO staff put together the following on-demand webinar that details the most important information every candidate needs to know about prepping for and taking this exam. This 12-minute video covers board prep materials, sample exam questions, and exam scoring, along with a special preview of what to expect on the day of the exam. Everything you'll see and hear is also explained in more detail in this Candidate Manual.



<https://player.vimeo.com/video/837926187>

✿ If you're short on time, you can [download the slides](#) and read them instead.

## 4.5. Test-Taking Tips

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The following tips are offered by the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) as suggestions for taking the Written Qualifying Exam (WQE):

- Be familiar with the [exam format](#) so that you will know the type of questions that will appear on the test and how to answer them. Before taking the exam, make sure that you have taken the [WQE Tutorial](#).
- When starting the testing session, read the tutorial slowly and carefully. This portion of the test is not timed. If you do not understand the tutorial, ask the proctor to assist you.
- When you begin your test, note how many items will appear in each section so that you will know how to pace yourself and budget your time efficiently.
- If you get stuck on an item, move on to another item in that section, especially when time is a factor. Come back to the skipped questions later, if you have time.
- Read each question carefully and briefly contemplate the answer. Then, read all of the answer choices provided. Discard answer choices you know are not correct before selecting the best answer.

- Since there is no penalty for guessing the answer to a question you don't know, take an educated guess and select the best answer of the choices given.
- You will do your best work on the exam if you stay focused and calm. If you start to feel anxious, take a moment to relax before resuming work on the test. Research shows that test anxiety is normal.
- If you have time left after you have finished each section, you may wish to go back and make sure that you have answered all of the questions. Research shows that re-evaluating answers you were unsure about and changing your response may be in your best interest.

#### References:

- Coffey, Jean S., et al. "Changing Test Answers: A Scoping Review." *Nurse Education Today*, vol. 133, 2024, pp. 106052–106052, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2023.106052>.
- Smith, L. *The Effects of Confidence and Perception of Test- Taking Skills on Performance*. *North American Journal of Psychology*: 2002, 4.1, pp. 37-51.
- Zbornik, J. *Strategies, Structure Can Improve Test Scores*. *What Works in Teaching & Learning*: Apr 2006, 36.4, p. 9.

## 4.6. In-Exam Whiteboard

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ABO candidates are provided with an optional whiteboard and marker for use during the examination. Should your test proctor neglect to offer you a whiteboard and marker, **it is your responsibility to request these materials** prior to being seated and beginning your examination. During the test, please adhere to your test center's rules regarding the use of whiteboards, avoid displaying your board in ways that would allow other test-takers to view your notes, and do not remove your board from the testing area. Other forms of note-taking are not permitted.

## 5. Policies & Disclosures

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The ABO believes in the premise “trust but verify.” We trust that in the pursuit of board certification, you will conduct yourself with respect for the certification credential, your professional reputation, and your patients. However, we also will ask you to comply with basic security and identity verification measures to ensure fairness for all candidates and to protect the integrity of the exam.

It is a violation of federal law to reproduce, in whole or in part, ABO examination content in any way. Candidates who share or receive ABO examination content also risk the lifetime loss of eligibility for board certification. Of note, there is no advantage to providing content to or receiving content from other candidates because the questions for each examination form will be unique.

### 5.1. Candidate Agreement

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I hereby apply to the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) for the issuance of a certificate of qualification as a specialist in ophthalmology and for examinations relative to that certificate, all in accordance with and subject to the Rules and Regulations of the ABO. A complete copy of the [Rules and Regulations](#) are available on the ABO website. By electronically signing this Application and Agreement and submitting it to the ABO, I understand and agree that the ABO may confirm the information contained herein and may request from third parties confidential information relating to my medical training and background. I further agree to be legally bound by and to abide by all of the terms and conditions of this Application and Agreement and the Rules and Regulations of the ABO. I agree that upon the issuance to me of a certificate of qualification, I shall become bound by the Bylaws of the ABO and shall remain bound by the Rules and Regulations of the ABO as they may be amended from time to time.

I hereby certify that the information given in this Application and Agreement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge, that any photographs submitted are recent photographs of me and that I have read and accept the terms and conditions of this examination set forth in the Rules and Regulations of the ABO. I understand and agree that eligibility for the written and oral examinations is determined by the Credentials Committee, and that the Written Qualifying Examination will be supervised by proctors and the Oral Examination by examiners who are responsible to the ABO and are empowered by the ABO to ensure that the examination is conducted ethically and in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the ABO. I understand and agree that (i) any misrepresentation in this Application and Agreement or in any other document or other information I submit to the ABO (including the verification of my identity when I submit this Application and Agreement and when I take the examinations), or (ii) any offer of financial benefit to a director, officer, employee, proctor, or other agent or representative of the ABO in order to obtain a right, privilege or benefit not usually granted by the ABO to similarly situated candidates, or (iii) any irregular behavior before, during or after the examination such as copying answers, sharing information, using notes, or otherwise giving or obtaining any unauthorized information or aid, evidenced by observation, statistical analysis of answer sheets, or otherwise, on any portion of the Written or Oral Examinations will be reported to the ABO and will constitute grounds for the ABO to bar me permanently from all future examinations, to terminate my participation in the examinations, to invalidate the results of my examinations and any prior examinations, to withhold my scores or certificate, to revoke my certificate, and/or to take any other

appropriate action, including legal action. I also understand and agree that the ABO may withhold my scores and may require me to retake one or more portions of the Written and/or Oral Examinations if the ABO is presented with evidence demonstrating to the ABO, in its sole discretion, that the security of those portions of the examination may have been compromised, notwithstanding the absence of any evidence of my personal involvement in the compromising activities. I recognize that the examination questions of the Written Qualifying Examination and the materials and questions utilized in the Oral Examination are copyrighted as the sole property of the ABO and must not be removed from the test area or reproduced in any way and that reproduction of copyrighted material, in whole or in part, is a federal offense and also may subject me to the sanctions listed above. I understand and agree that the decision as to whether my grades and other performances on the ABO's examinations qualify me for a certificate of qualification rests solely and exclusively in the ABO, and that its decision is final.

I hereby waive and release and shall indemnify and hold harmless the ABO and persons in their capacities as the ABO's directors, members, officers, committee members, employees, and agents from, against and with respect to any and all claims, losses, costs, expenses, damages, and judgments (including reasonable attorney's fees) alleged to have arisen from, out of, with respect to or in connection with any action which they, or any of them, take or fail to take as a result of or in connection with this application, any examination conducted by the ABO which I apply to take or take, the grade or grades given me on the examination and, if applicable, the failure of the ABO to issue me a certificate of qualification or the ABO's revocation of any certificate of qualification previously issued to me.

## **5.2. Copyright Notice and Agreement**

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All ABO initial certification and continuing certification examinations, including the content and wording of examination questions, constitute confidential ABO information protected by copyright law. Any unauthorized receipt, possession, or transmission of ABO written, computer-based or oral examination questions, content, props, or other materials ("Examination Materials"), either before the examination, on-site, or after an examination administration, in whole or in part, by any means, including but not limited to reconstruction from memory, is strictly forbidden. Use of ABO Examination Materials, including that which may have been reconstructed from memory, for the purpose of examination preparation or training is also strictly forbidden.

I agree not to reproduce Examination Materials in whole or in part in any way, including but not limited to reconstruction from memory.

## **5.3. Non-Disclosure Policy**

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As noted in previous sections, all ABO examinations and Examination Materials are confidential and are protected by copyright law. The Examination Materials are made available to examinees solely for the purpose of becoming certified or maintaining certification in the specialty of ophthalmology. You are expressly prohibited from disclosing, publishing, reproducing, or transmitting any ABO examination or Examination Materials, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, verbal or written, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose.

## 5.4. Exam Irregularity Policy

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I further understand that any violation of the Exam Irregularity Policy and/or the [Non-Disclosure Policy](#) and/or the [Acknowledgement/Cooperation Agreement](#), or the giving or receiving of aid in connection with any ABO examination, or engaging in any other conduct that subverts or attempts to subvert the integrity of the examination or the ABO certification and maintenance of certification process is sufficient cause for the ABO to:

- Bar me from the examination and/or future examinations;
- Terminate my participation in the examination;
- Withhold and/or invalidate the results of my examination;
- Withhold my certificate;
- Revoke my certificate;
- Require me to pay the costs of the ABO's investigation; and/or
- Take other appropriate action against me, including legal action.

The ABO reserves the right to take whatever measures are necessary to protect the integrity of its examinations.

## 5.5. Consent for Data Use and Release

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To help analyze the effectiveness of my training program, and for the non-commercial purposes of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and its Ophthalmology Review Committee, I hereby authorize ABO to release, in confidence, to the ACGME, the director of the program in which I have trained, and to the chair of the department of which the program is a part, the results of my performance on the examinations conducted by ABO. I also authorize ABO to use and disclose the data I submit to ABO and results of my performance on the ABO examination for ABO's internal, non-commercial mission and purposes. Additionally, where permitted by law, I authorize ABO to release data, including personally identifiable information, to other external entities in accordance with [ABO's Data Collection, Use, and Sharing Policy](#). ABO may also disclose data when required by law.

## 5.6. Acknowledgement/Cooperation Agreement

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In the event the ABO investigates a potential examination irregularity, I agree to cooperate fully with the ABO and to provide all relevant information in my possession to the ABO. I understand and agree that the

failure to cooperate fully with the ABO will subject me to the disciplinary sanctions set forth above.

*I have read the policies and this Application and Agreement carefully and I understand, agree to, and accept the obligations that the policies and the Application and Agreement impose on me.*

*I declare a dedication to provide ophthalmic services with compassion, respect for human dignity, and integrity.*

*By submitting this Application and Agreement electronically, I agree that this electronic form shall have the same legally binding effect as an original paper version would have.*

## **5.7. Competency with Technology**

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Consistent with the ABMS/ACGME General Competencies in Systems-Based Practice, the ABO requires its candidates to possess sufficient competencies in information technology, including the use of personal computers, the internet, and email, for correspondence and completion of examinations and modules throughout their participation in ABO certification activities.