

Welcome

Welcome to the premier issue of the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations' newsletter, which will be published several times a year as a means of dissemination information regarding significant changes planned for the future of National Board Dental and Dental Hygiene Examinations. Feedback related to this issue and ideas for future ones are welcome. This issue focuses on the actions taken by the Joint Commission during its recent meeting held in Chicago on March 11 – 12, 2008.

The Joint Commission is the independent agency that is responsible for maintaining routine oversight and developing policy for its examination programs. The American Dental Association's Department of Testing Services is the support agency that implements Joint Commission policy, administers the examinations, and conducts relevant programmatic quality control research.

The Joint Commission consists of 15 members, including six members representing the American Association of Dental Examiners, three members representing the American Dental Association, and three representing the American Dental Education Association. Of the remaining three, there is one member representing each of the following: the American Dental Hygienists' Association, the American Student Dental Association, and the public.

Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations

The Joint Commission took action on a variety of matters during its meeting this year. A summary of the major actions are listed below, and, as appropriate, additional information is provided for further clarification.

- ❖ **Ad hoc Committees:** The Joint Commission adopted a policy that clarifies the composition of future *ad hoc* committees of the Joint Commission such that each committee will include members from each of the stakeholder groups in proportion to their representation on the Joint Commission.

Rationale: This policy was endorsed to ensure that the recommendations resulting from the deliberations of *ad hoc* committees adequately reflect the viewpoints of the stakeholders in accordance with their representation on the Joint Commission.

- ❖ **Test Constructors:** The reappointment of eligible test construction committee members and the appointment of new test constructors and alternates for National Board Dental and Dental Hygiene Examinations for 2009 were approved.

Appointments: A total of 82 test constructors were reappointed for Parts I and II and eight new test constructors were selected. A total of 22 test constructors were reappointed for the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination, and two new test constructors were selected.

Committee Structure Part I: Part I has five test construction committees. Four are discipline-based committees and one is a testlet-based committee. Each committee consists of subject-matter experts and full-time practitioners.

Committee Structure Part II: There are 13 committees that support the Part II test construction effort. Ten of these are discipline-based, two committees are devoted to the development and selection of cases and case items, and the final committee reviews the case materials and conducts quality control. Committee members are subject matter experts and full time practitioners.

Committee Structure Dental Hygiene: There are six Dental Hygiene examination committees, three of which are subject matter committees, two are devoted to the development of cases and case related items, and one committee is responsible for maintaining overall quality of the examination.

- ❖ **Budget:** The 2009 budget proposal and the list of 2008-2009 research and development project and expenditures were approved.

Fees: As a part of the budget, fees were established for 2009. The candidate fee for Part I will be \$265, for Part II will be \$345, and the fee for the print Dental Hygiene examination will be \$180 and \$255 for the computer-based format.

- ❖ **Examination Regulations and Standing Rules:** The Joint Commission approved of revisions in the Examination Regulations and Standing Rules.

Electronic Reporting of Examination Results: The first revision has to do with the electronic reporting of examination results through posting performance information on a secure website. In years past, the Joint Commission required that all performance information was distributed to candidates, state boards, and dental schools via first-class mail. While this was certainly an effective way to disseminate the information, it could take as long as five days for the information to reach candidates and state boards. With regard to dental schools, the Joint Commission gathers performance information for students testing during a month's time and distributes listings of these students and their performance information during the third week of the following month. In some instances, dental schools need information in a timelier manner. In response to requests from school administrators, the Joint Commission has decided to develop and maintain a website for state boards and dental schools. Candidate scores will be uploaded to this site on a weekly basis. Candidates, state boards, and dental

schools will also continue to receive their usual print reports by first class mail for the foreseeable future.

Reporting Examination Results Only as Pass-Fail: The Joint Commission also approved of a change in the system used to report performance information on Part I, Part II, and the Dental Hygiene examination. At the present time, candidates' performance is reported to candidates, state boards, and dental schools as a single standard score and associated pass/fail status. The standard scores range from 49 to 99, with a 75 being the minimum passing score. Candidates, dental schools, and dental hygiene programs also get raw score performance information for all candidates in each of the disciplines covered on the examination. Beginning January 1, 2010, candidate performance will be reported to candidates, state boards, and dental schools only as pass or fail. Standard scores will no longer be developed or reported. Further, the Joint Commission has decided to continue to report raw score performance information in the disciplines covered on the examinations for failing candidates only. This information on failing candidates will be provided to candidates and dental schools. The basis for this decision is related to the fundamental purpose of the examination programs. The purpose of the examinations is to provide state boards with information regarding whether the candidate has acquired the minimum theoretical knowledge and problem solving skills to practice safely. Using a pass/fail scoring system provides the state boards with the needed information. This also will increase security of the examination by eliminating the need for candidates to retake examinations in an effort to improve their scores and thus reduce content exposure. While performance information will be reported exclusively as pass/fail, diagnostic information in the form of raw score performance will be provided to failing candidates to enable them to focus their remediation efforts prior to retesting.

Program Profiles: At the present time, the Joint Commission publishes dental school and dental hygiene program profiles, which are distributed to deans and program directors. Dental Hygiene program directors also receive a five-year raw score performance summary of their students' performance. With the elimination of standard scores and raw scores for passing candidates, the profiles and the Dental Hygiene examination five-year summary will be discontinued as of January 1, 2010.

- ❖ **Re-examination:** The Joint Commission also approved of a change in its eligibility policy regarding re-examination. Effective January 1, 2010, passing candidates will not be allowed to retest unless required or requested by a licensing jurisdiction. The examination results are a component of the licensure decision. Once a candidate has achieved a pass, there is no need to retake the examination unless a licensing jurisdiction requires more recent information. This change will also enhance the security surrounding the program by limiting the exposure of the content.

- ❖ **Alternative Testing Instrument:** The Joint Commission recognized that although Part I is designed to be a component of the licensure decision the score information has been used for other purposes including the admission process for advanced dental education programs. The change to a pass/fail system for Part I might require the development of another instrument to

fill this need. The Joint Commission suggested that the appropriate agency or organization develop an alternative testing instrument for use in the admission process for advanced dental education programs.

- ❖ **Restructuring of Parts I and II:** The Joint Commission approved of the appointment of an *ad hoc* committee to develop a strategic plan for the Joint Commission to investigate the potential consolidation of Part I and Part II into one examination and to study the feasibility of a plan to restructure the National Board Part I and Part II test construction committees.

A consolidated examination would include the basic science component within the context of clinical practice, more closely mirroring the knowledge and skills needed to practice safely. It is recognized that this idea represents a major paradigm shift and the *ad hoc* committee assigned to this task will consider not only the potential consolidation of the examinations into one comprehensive licensing examination but all the potential ramifications outside the examination itself.

The *ad hoc* committee will be charged with exploring a new test construction committee structure that ensures adequate representation by test constructors in all areas of the test specifications as well as representation from general dentistry. The study to restructure the committees might also involve a change in the classification system used to describe the content or an actual change in content assessed by the examinations. The committee will be responsible for developing a structure, mapping test specifications to the proposed new structure, defining selection criteria for practitioners, and reviewing the adequacy of the number and types of proposed test construction committee members.

- ❖ **International Testing:** The Joint Commission approved the appointment of an *ad hoc* committee to gather information and develop a potential framework with specific criteria for international testing. The criteria to be addressed include a definition of international testing, site and vendor requirements, and any financial impact. This committee will report its findings to the Joint Commission in 2009.
- ❖ **Small Grants Program Expansion and Funding for 2009:** The Joint Commission expanded the small grants program to include formally chartered and recognized international programs among the entities eligible for submission of proposals. This will increase the pool of potential applicants and provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas from outside the United States.

Through its IDEA grants program, the Joint Commission funded the research proposed by Kristin S. Victoroff, D.D.S., Ph.D. entitled Interactive Virtual Reality Patient-based Scenarios for Student Achievement. General information and an example of the interactive virtual reality theater proposed for this study can be found at <http://www.case.edu/vicsr>. The sample application is a non-dental one but gives an idea of the possibilities.

- ❖ **Potential Modifications to Part II Case Material:** The Joint Commission directed that staff conduct a study of the feasibility of increasing the number of cases on Part II and reducing the number of multiple choice items nested in cases in order to optimize reliability. During

2006 and 2007, Dr. Steven M. Downing conducted a study entitled *Maximizing Measurement Efficiency and Reliability: Optimum Number of Options for Multiple Choice Items and Optimum Number of Items for Case-based Testlets*. The findings from this study, done as part of the small grants program, indicated that reliability would be enhanced by changing the number of cases and items associated with each case on Part II. The Joint Commission's standing Committee on Research and Development will oversee this new study.

- ❖ **Eligibility Requirements for International Dentists:** The Joint Commission approved of an eligibility policy change for internationally trained dentists. Once dentists who graduated from a non-accredited dental school are enrolled in a predoctoral dental program in the United States, they must request eligibility from the dental school dean where they are enrolled in order to be eligible to take the National Board examinations.

- ❖ **Elected:** The Joint Commission elected Dr. Ron Seeley (ADA) as chair and Dr. Mark Christensen (AADE) as vice chair of the Joint Commission for terms beginning in October 2008.



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