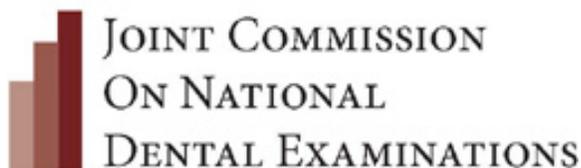


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## Newsletter

Summer 2008

- [2008-2009 Innovative Dental Assessment Research and Development Grants Program](#)
- [The Redesigned National Board Dental and Dental Hygiene Profiles](#)
- [National Board Examination FAQs](#)
- [National Board Examinations Testing Checklist](#)
- [Eligibility Confirmations](#)
- [Changes in Score Reporting for NBDE Part I](#)

### 2008-2009 Innovative Dental Assessment Research and Development Grants Program

The Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations, an agency of the American Dental Association (ADA), is once again sponsoring the Innovative Dental Assessment Research and Development Grants Program (IDEA Grants Program). Submission of proposals for the IDEA Grant Program begins July 1, 2008 for the 2008-2009 funding cycle. The announcement of the grants program was posted on the [ADA.org](#) and the American Educational Research Association Web site [www.aera.net](#). The announcement was also emailed to dental deans and academic deans, advanced dental education program directors, and dental hygiene education program directors.

A downloadable copy of the request for proposals can also be accessed on [ADA.org](#). All proposals received by the Joint Commission will be reviewed for completeness and evaluated by reviewers familiar with the focus of the proposed research or development activity. At its meeting in April 2009, the Joint Commission through its Steering Committee will make decisions regarding the final disposition of proposals. The deadline for the receipt of proposals for the 2008-2009 funding cycle is October 1, 2008.

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- ▶ [Board Exams](#)
- ▶ [NBDE Part I](#)
- ▶ [NBDE Part II](#)
- ▶ [Dental Hygiene](#)
- ▶ [DAT Information](#)

Since the inception of the grant program in 2005, the Joint Commission has provided funding to support four research studies. Some projects have spanned several years and the grants have ranged from thirty to sixty thousand dollars.

## **The Redesigned National Board Dental and Dental Hygiene Profiles**

The Part I and Part II profiles describe the performance of enrolled dental school students during the period of November 1 through October 31 and May 1 through April 30 respectively. Likewise, the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination profiles describe the performance of enrolled dental hygiene program students on the March examination.

At its March 2007 meeting, the Joint Commission determined to redesign these profiles so that they focus on the pass-fail performance of students grouped by dental school or by dental hygiene program rather than rank by average score. Profiles were redesigned for essentially two reasons. First, licensure examination programs typically report performance in terms of pass-fail status and not scores. The purpose of the examination is to provide information regarding the candidate's competence to practice. Second, there are few practical or statistical differences among ranks based on average scores for programs. Ranking programs emphasized relative differences in performance that may not be meaningful. The redesigned profiles provide the school average in each discipline and the national average, as well as school pass-fail rate and national pass-fail rate to individual schools.

## **National Board Examination FAQs**

A list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) for each of the National Board Examinations has been posted on the web site of each examination. These FAQs address the most common questions related to each examination. Some examples of the topics covered by these FAQs include: applying for the examination, requesting changes or corrections to the application, examination rules and regulation, information on the examination and study materials, re-examination and refund information, how to schedule a testing date, scoring and score reporting, test center procedures, and testing accommodations.

The FAQs are a quick and easy way to get the most up-to-date information on the National Board Examinations. They are a good resource for the candidate preparing to test as well as faculty and/or administrators who counsel candidates. The FAQs will be updated regularly to reflect any changes or new information. We recommended that candidates check the site as their testing date

approaches.

The FAQs for Part I, Part II and Dental Hygiene can be found online with the following links:

- [Part I](#)
- [Part II](#)
- [Dental Hygiene](#)

## National Board Examinations Testing Checklist

Preparing for the National Board Examinations can be stressful with many details to remember. To assist candidates as they go through the process, a check list has been developed for each examination listing the most important steps a candidate needs to consider or complete to have an uneventful testing experience. The document can be printed to use as a guideline as the testing day approaches.

The checklists for Part I, Part II and Dental Hygiene can be found online with the following links:

- [Part I](#)
- [Part II](#)
- [Dental Hygiene](#)

Candidates who experience concerns about scheduling issues, testing conditions, or any unresolved problem should inform the Test Administrator before leaving the test center and record this information in the appropriate section of the post-test survey. For issues requiring further action, candidates must contact the Joint Commission office within five business days of the testing appointment.

## Eligibility Confirmations

After a candidate submits an application to take a National Board Examination, they receive confirmation of their eligibility and information to how to schedule a testing date. In the past, the applications for each testing program were processed once a week and therefore eligibilities were sent out once a week. For a candidate who just missed the processing day, it meant an extra week before they received their eligibility confirmation.

Several new processes have been put into place to improve the turn around time from receipt of application to notification of eligibility. Applications are now processed daily instead of weekly. In addition, eligibility confirmation is now being sent by email to those candidates who provide an email address. The impact of these changes is almost instantaneous confirmation of eligibility

for the majority of candidates. The use of email to communicate eligibility confirmation went into effect for Part I and Part II at the end of May and for Dental Hygiene during the beginning of July.

The emails originate from [education@ada.org](mailto:education@ada.org) . The use of email for eligibility confirmation is explained as the candidate completes the online application. Due to the restrictions of the filters on some email systems, candidates are encouraged to check their email spam folder if they do not receive their confirmation as expected.

Candidates who do not have an email address will continue to receive their eligibility information by regular mail. Early feedback indicates candidates appreciate the improved speed of notification.

### **Changes in Score Reporting for NBDE Part I**

Since the introduction of the restructured Part I examination in 2007, the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations has been asked to provide information regarding the use and interpretation of the Part I scores resulting from its administration and, perhaps more importantly, the relationship of these scores to those achieved by candidates on the traditional Part I administered prior to 2007.

In recent years, Part I has undergone some significant changes as a part of the Joint Commission's ongoing efforts to enhance the validity and fidelity of its examinations. Prior to 2007, the Joint Commission developed and administered a conjunctive Part I examination. This traditional conjunctive Part I consisted of four, 100 stand-alone, multiple-choice item tests in the areas of anatomic sciences, biochemistry/physiology, microbiology/pathology, and dental anatomy. A standard score was awarded on each of these tests, and an average score was computed. The standard scores range from 49 to 99, with the score of 75 being the minimum passing score. Candidates could fail individual tests, but still achieve an average score of 75 or higher, in which case the candidate only needed to retake the individual tests failed. If the average score fell below 75, the candidate had to retake the entire Part I examination in order to gain National Board certification.

Beginning in 2007, the Joint Commission began developing and administering a comprehensive Part I examination. The comprehensive examination includes 400 items in the same content areas as those included on the conjunctive Part I intermingled throughout the examination. Unlike the conjunctive Part I, the comprehensive Part I examination includes 80 testlet-based, multiple-choice items in addition to 320 independent or stand-alone multiple-choice items. For the purposes of the Joint Commission, a testlet is comprised of a short clinical scenario and a series of associated items. In order to respond successfully to

**the items, the candidate must comprehend the content, the scenario, and the item. Only one standard score, with the associated pass/fail status, is awarded to candidates on the comprehensive examination. Raw scores have been reported to candidates and dental schools for study purposes only.**

#### **Use and interpretation of Part I scores.**

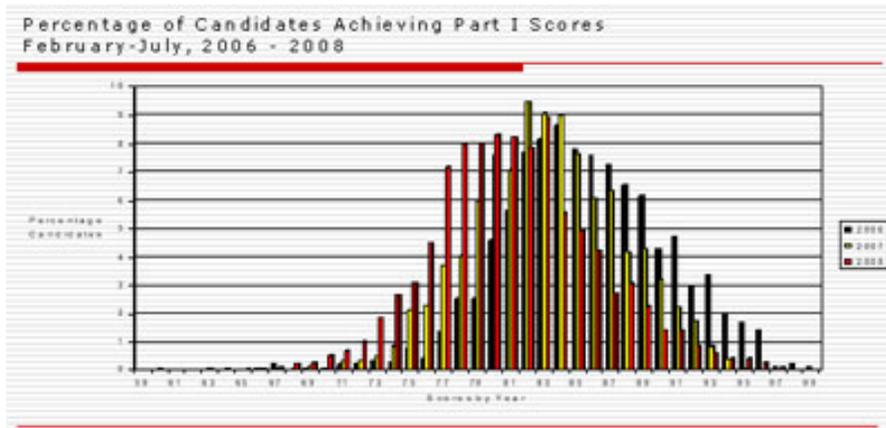
- **Part I scores are valid for inclusion in the licensure process. The validity of Part I scores is based on studies conducted every five years. These studies include a practice analysis. As such, the use of Part I scores for any purpose other than licensure must be validated by the user.**
- **The Part I standard score is neither a percentage of correct items nor a percentile. A "75" is assigned to a particular range of raw scores on a Part I examination based on the judgments of experts in the basic and dental sciences. The remaining standard scores are then assigned to small ranges of raw scores based on a mathematical formula. Best practice requires that standards be reset or confirmed on a regular basis. This is certainly the case when an examination is restructured.**
- **The standard scores awarded on the conjunctive and comprehensive Part I examinations may be used to compare performance across candidates.**
- **The raw score information provided to candidates and dental schools on the comprehensive examination can not be used to compare the performance of candidates or to determine the candidate's standard score. The raw scores are provided so that candidates can identify their strengths and weaknesses.**
- **The Joint Commission is confident that the pass/fail point along the measurement scale is highly reliable. That is to say, measurement error is the lowest for those raw scores associated with the standard score of 75. However, there are slight and relatively uniform increases in measurement error as scores depart from 75.**
- **Candidate performance as shown by the scores awarded on Part I were comparable prior to 2007 because the scores on the conjunctive Part I were equated. With the introduction of the comprehensive Part I in 2007 it was not appropriate to compare the scores of candidates taking the conjunctive Part I with the scores of the candidates taking the comprehensive Part I. The two Part I formats require different knowledge and problem solving skills.**

- In accordance with best practice for licensure examinations, the standard, or minimum passing score, and the remaining score scale were reset at the beginning of 2008. Thus, comparing scores across certain years is not appropriate because they have different meanings in terms of the knowledge and problem solving skills of candidates. Because of the standard setting procedures used however, the minimum passing score has the same meaning across all years.

In order to provide information on candidate performance, the table below shows average performance of candidates in the reference group for the first seven months of the years 2006, 2007, 2008. The reference group is defined as the group of candidates who are enrolled in an accredited program and taking Part I for the first time. It is anticipated that this information will allow the users of the scores to make informed judgments. Thus, it is important that advanced education programs and others who may use examination results carefully review this information. It is important to note that these are incomplete and therefore limited samples.

<b>Part I Performance</b>			
	<b>2006*</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>N</b>	1,606	2,440	2,553
<b>Mean</b>	85.5	83.1	81.2
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	4.9	4.6	4.9
<b>Fail Rate</b>	1.49	2.62	7.48
* <b>Conjunctive Part I: Failure rate based on the average score. Failure rates including partial failures approached 7.0 percent.</b>			

The figure below shows the percentage of candidates achieving each score for each year. The figure shows in pictorial form that for these three limited samples, the distribution shifts toward lower scores in 2007 and 2008. That is to say fewer high scores were awarded in 2007 and 2008. Several factors may have impacted the scores including, the increased difficulty of the restructured Part I, students'/candidates' unfamiliarity with the restructured Part I, the cognitive demands of the testlet-based items, and differences resulting from the setting of a revised standard.



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**Secretary, Joint Commission On National Dental Examinations**

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