

American Board of Orthodontics: Update on the new scenario-based clinical examination

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The American Board of Orthodontics has updated its clinical examination process to remove barriers to the case-based examination, strengthen the specialty, and further distinguish board-certified orthodontists from other dental practitioners providing orthodontic care. The ABO adopted a scenario-based clinical examination and discontinued case requirements. The first new exam was administered in February 2019. It consisted of 6 scenarios with 4-7 questions for each scenario. The scenarios represent a variety of problems and patients, and the questions relate to data gathering and diagnosis, treatment objectives and planning, treatment implementation and management, and critical analysis and outcomes assessment. Feedback from the February 2019 exam was positive, and 4 more have been scheduled. For more information about the ABO certification process, go to AmericanBoardOrtho.com. (Am J Orthod Dentofacial Orthop 2019;155:765-6)

The mission of the American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) is to elevate quality orthodontic care for the public by promoting excellence through certification, education, and professional collaboration. The ABO has a responsibility to the specialty and the public to certify orthodontists in a fair, reliable, and valid manner. As reported in an article in the March 2018 issue of the *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics* entitled "American Board of Orthodontics: Time for Change," the ABO unveiled a groundbreaking change in the clinical examination process to remove barriers to the case-based examination, strengthen the specialty, and further distinguish board-certified orthodontists from other dental practitioners providing orthodontic care.¹ This change was to adopt the scenario-based clinical examination and discontinue the patient case requirements. After more than 2 years of research and extensive input from the

orthodontic community, the ABO successfully administered the first scenario-based oral clinical examination in St Louis in February 2019.

The development of this new scenario-based clinical examination included collaborating with psychometricians and more than 35 experts in the specialty, submitting and reviewing hundreds of cases and developing more than 1,000 questions for different scenarios. To help the examinees prepare for the scenario-based examination, information was posted on the ABO Web site, including a study guide, sample cases with questions and answers, and frequently asked questions.²⁻⁵ In addition, to accommodate the new scenario-based examination, the ABO expanded the examination center by adding 900 square feet of space with two additional examination rooms and upgraded examination software.

The change to the scenario-based examination was overwhelmingly supported by the orthodontic community, and the February 2019 examination slots were filled within 24 hours of opening registration. The majority of examinees for this first scenario-based examination (72%) were orthodontic practitioners out of residency for 5 or more years. This is a significant increase from the previous 10 years of case-based clinical examinations.

The examination consisted of 6 scenarios, 1 in each examination room with 2-3 examiners. There were 4-7 questions for each scenario, with a total of 27 questions. The time for each scenario examination

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was 18 minutes, with 2 minutes of transition time to the next examination room. The questions were broken down into 4 domains, including Data Gathering and Diagnosis, Treatment Objectives and Planning, Treatment Implementation and Management, and Critical Analysis and Outcomes Assessment.

The cases used for the examination included scenarios from all age groups—pediatric, adolescent, and adult—with dental and skeletal Class I, Class II, and Class III malocclusions. A range of conditions including different vertical facial types (high, average, and low mandibular plane angles), dental anomalies (number, size, shape, eruptive and structural patterns), multidisciplinary conditions (pathology, temporomandibular disorder, airway, periodontal, surgical, etc), asymmetry (dental and skeletal), transverse dimension problems, and craniofacial growth and development were all part of different scenarios for the examination. All 3 treatment stages were covered (active and pre- and posttreatment) as well as different treatment protocols (interceptive, early, and comprehensive treatment). In addition, the tools previously created by the ABO to assess case outcomes were used within the examination process, including the cast-radiograph evaluation (CRE), case management form (CMF), and cephalometric superimposition technique and interpretation. In summary, the examination included a comprehensive range of cases to test all aspects of diagnosis and treatment, outcome assessment, and critical thinking ability, using an evidence-based approach.

Following the February examination, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive from the examinees. Although more challenging than many expected, the examination tested each orthodontist's clinical proficiency successfully. Overall, the examinees shared that they were pleased at how well organized and professionally handled the examination details were administered.

The ABO continues to prepare for the next examinations. In addition to the information posted on the Web site, more resources will be available to assist examinees. One example is the Prep Course, provided by The College of Diplomates of the American Board of Orthodontics at the 2019 American Association of Orthodontists annual session in Los Angeles. The College has additional courses planned for 2019 and 2020.⁶

The next ABO clinical examination is scheduled for November 2019 and is already completely full with 191 examinees. The ABO is offering 3 clinical examination periods in February, July, and November 2020. Registration for these examinations opened in May 2019.

For more information about the scenario-based examination and ABO certification process, please visit the ABO Web site at AmericanBoardOrtho.com. You may also contact the ABO with any questions at Info@AmericanBoardOrtho.com or 314-432-6130.

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