Administration and Review of Student Assessments Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy establishes the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine's (VCU SOM) process for the administration and review of assessments, in accordance with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education's (LCME) requirements. Assessment within the MD program at the SOM will occur in the context of programmatic curricular alignment such that the assessments are aligned with institutional and course/clerkship level learning objectives and learning activities. Assessments and reviews administered at VCU SOM will follow the procedures in this document to provide a secure and reliable examination environment, consistent with what is required by the National Board of Medical Examiners.

Stakeholders

The faculty, staff, and students of the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

Definitions

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The group with authority to accredit medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the United States and Canada.

OME: Office of Medical Education.

ADA: The Americans with Disabilities Act, which prevents discrimination against people with disabilities.

Accommodation: An approved modification from the typical curriculum, assessment, policies, or procedures that allows an individual with a documented need equal access to participate in the medical education program. The Division of Academic Success (DAS) has final authority for reviewing and approving any requests for accommodations.

NBME: National Board of Medical Examiners.

MCQ: Multiple-choice questions, written in the single best answer format used by the NBME

Exam: A comprehensive assessment that is designed to evaluate overall knowledge and comprehension of a particular subject or set of subjects and contributes over 15% of the final grade.

Quiz: A low stakes assessment that contributes less than 15% of the final grade.

Assessment: A reference to an institutionally developed and administered exam or quiz.

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LMS: Learning Management System.

CD: Course/Clerkship Director.

Responsibilities

Students: Students are responsible for adhering to all assessment procedures as outlined in this document. Students are required to comply with all instructions from any proctors or support staff involved in the administration of an assessment.

Proctors/Assessment Support Staff: Proctors and all other assessment support staff are responsible for knowing the approved assessment procedures for the institution, including the contents, rules, and procedures set forth in the NBME's Web-Based Examinations Chief Proctor's Manual. Proctors and Assessment Support Staff are responsible for holding students accountable to the assessment procedures as outlined in this document, and reporting any testing irregularities in a timely fashion as outlined within this policy.

DAS: The Division of Academic Success is responsible for reviewing any request for accommodation, and holds the final authority for approving reasonable accommodations that allow students equal access to participate in the medical education program.

Procedures

Administration of Assessments

Institutionally Developed Assessments

- Students and SOM employees tasked with supporting the delivery of assessments are accountable for adhering to the following processes on the day of the assessment:
  - SOM Proctors will:
    - Arrive forty-five (45) minutes prior to the start of the exam to ensure rooms are open, all study materials have been removed, and the room is prepared for the start of the assessment
    - Ensure the room does not have prohibited items
    - Ensure each testing station has appropriate items required for testing, which may include, but is not limited to:
      - Paper
      - Pencils
      - Ear plugs
    - Advise learners regarding the use of unauthorized items or devices
    - Assist with any potential log-in issues in the testing platform(s)
    - Read the proctor's pre-assessment instructions at the designated start time of the assessment, which includes:

- A full list of unauthorized items
- Process for exam upload
- A brief description of the assistance proctors can and cannot provide during the assessment
    - Post the password for the assessment
  - Students will:
    - Proceed to their assigned testing room
      - Students with accommodations will take the assessment at the testing center as outlined in their communication with the Division of Academic Success and in congruence with Testing Center Procedures
        - Students with accommodations who are unable to take the assessment as scheduled must contact the OME prior to the scheduled start time of the assessment, and submit an absence request form
    - Log into the testing platform, and download the assessment
      - Students who experience issues logging in, downloading, or beginning an assessment must notify a proctor
      - Students will be presented with an honor code statement upon logging in
        - Students must acknowledge the honor code statement prior to beginning any assessment
    - Complete the assessment and submit the answers when the assessment is complete
      - Prior to exiting the testing room, students must ensure a green completion screen is displayed and shown it to the proctor before leaving the room
- Students must be available between eight (8) am and five (5) pm on assessment days, regardless of the scheduled assessment time

NBME Examinations

- Administration of NBME subject exams that contribute toward a student's grade must follow the guidelines established by the NBME
- Administration of NBME exams that do not contribute toward a student's grade are recommended to follow the guidelines established by the NBME
- Administration of NBME exams for students with approved accommodations will follow the accommodations procedure provided by the Division of Academic Success
- In the event of testing irregularities:
  - Any technical difficulties will be addressed through instructions in the NBME Chief Proctor's manual
  - If an exam cannot be immediately restarted, the Chief Proctor for the exam will contact the NMBE and attempt to restart the exam within thirty (30) minutes

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- If a restart is unsuccessful, the Assistant Dean for Clinical Medical Education, in conjunction with other appropriate parties, will determine if the exam should be exited using keystrokes prescribed in the NBME Chief Proctor's Manual in order to keep the first exam from being scored
- If the exam is unable to be administered at the scheduled start time, students will return to the assigned testing room at one (1) pm to begin the exam
- The Chief Proctor will notify the OME of testing irregularities as soon as possible after the irregularity occurs, and no later than immediately following the conclusion of the administered exam
  - In the event that a major technical difficulty is experienced and resolution does not occur by the final day of the clerkship, the exam will be administered as determined by the OME
  - If the technical difficulty occurs at a time that is followed by break period of more than one (1) week, every attempt will be made to allow students the opportunity to take the exam on the Monday of the break period or upon their return from the scheduled break
- All testing rooms will be reserved until six (6) pm on testing days to ensure all learners are accommodated
- Students must be available between eight (8) am and five (5) pm on assessment days, regardless of the scheduled assessment time

General Requirements for All Assessments

- Students participating in any assessment at the SOM must abide by the following:
  - Codes of Conduct
    - Students must adhere to the VCU School of Medicine Code of Professional Conduct and the Code of Student Conduct during all assessment administrations
  - Schedules/Late Arrivals
    - Students must be in their assigned testing room no later than the time indicated in the LMS
      - Students who arrive late should enter the room quietly and select a seat quickly in order to limit the potential disruption to other students
        - Students who arrive late will not be allowed extra time to complete the assessment, and will forfeit any time missed between the official start time of the assessment and their start time
          - Example: If a student arrives thirty (30) minutes late for an assessment that is scheduled for four (4) hours in length, the student will be allowed only three and a half (3.5) hours to complete the assessment
        - The proctor will ensure all students who begin their assessment late have submitted their assessment by the designated end time
  - Absences
    - Students who have an unexcused absence for the assessment will receive a grade of zero (0) on the assessment

- Students who receive an excused absence for the assessment will be provided an opportunity to complete a make-up assessment
  - All make-up assessments must be taken as scheduled by the OME
- Testing Irregularities
  - Any testing irregularities in institutionally developed assessments must be brought to the attention of the Deans in the OME immediately following the completion of the assessment
  - Any testing irregularity on a NBME exam must be reported to the NBME as outlined in their policy: http://www.nbme.org/students/Subject-Exams/security.html
- Communication
  - During an assessment, students are not allowed to communicate with anyone in the testing center other than the proctors
  - Students are not permitted to ask proctors or other personnel any questions regarding assessment content or format
    - Students may bring concerns that may need to be addressed to the attention of the proctor who will record the concern and advance to the OME for follow up
- Technical Difficulties
  - Students must notify proctors if there are any technical issues immediately at the time of disruption
- Testing Items
  - Students will be provided with one (1) blank sheet of paper
    - If a student needs a new sheet of paper, they may notify a proctor by raising their hand
    - Students must turn in their used sheet of paper prior to being issued a new sheet of paper
    - Students are not allowed to make notes on the sheet of paper prior to the start of the assessment
- Breaks
  - Students must sign in and out with a proctor prior to leaving the testing room for a break
  - Students are not allowed to leave the testing room with any notes
  - Students are not allowed to access any unauthorized items during breaks
  - Only one student is allowed in each restroom at any given time during breaks
  - For NBME exams, students must not leave the secure testing area at any time during the assessment unless they are accompanied by a proctor
- Dress
  - All outerwear and headwear, with the exception of items worn for religious reasons, must be removed prior to entry into the testing room
- Personal Items
  - All unauthorized personal items must be placed in the proctor-designated areas
    - Unauthorized personal items include, but are not limited to:
      - Hats
      - Hoodies
      - Purses
      - Blankets
      - Briefcases

- o Notebooks and/or notes
- o Pagers
- o Watches
- o Cell phones
- o Recording devices
- o Photographic equipment
    - Please note: Foam earplugs are allowed, and the OME will supply disposable earplugs for students who may need them
- o Food and Drinks
    - In assessments scheduled for four (4) hours or less, food and drinks are prohibited in the testing room
        - Exceptions to this requirement will only be allowed in instances where there is an approved accommodation on file for the student
    - Students may leave any food and drink items on a designated table outside of the testing area

Secure Reviews

Secure Review Process

- Secure reviews are designated, proctored sessions that allow students an opportunity for a controlled review of previously completed, institutionally developed assessment items
    - o Secure reviews are optional, and students will receive no grade impact for their attendance
        - Students who wish to attend a secure review, but were unable to do so must obtain an excused absence in order to schedule a make-up secure review session
            - Make up secure review sessions must be scheduled with the OME within two (2) calendar weeks of the initial secure review date.
                - o No exam reviews will be allowed after two (2) weeks past the initial exam date
- Students who opt to participate in a secure review session must:
    - o Be in the assigned location no later than the posted start time for the secure review
        - The start time will be posted in advance in the LMS

Clarification Form Process

- Proctors in the secure review will provide students with clarification forms when requested
    - o The purpose of a clarification form is to identify learners' critical thinking/processing of questions and answer choices and to help provide clarifications to learners' misperceptions
        - The clarification form is not an appeal or challenge to individual assessment questions
    - o Clarification forms may only be submitted to the proctor during the secure review session
        - No clarification forms will be accepted outside of the secure review for any reason
    - o Students may not use references, other than class notes, to substantiate a clarification form

- o Clarification forms that are illegible may not be considered by the CD
- o Any forms submitted by students will be advanced to the CD who will provide additional clarification regarding the specific assessment item

Individual Item Analysis

- Challenges or appeals to individual questions will not be accepted
- All CD's, in collaboration with the Assistant/Associate Dean for Pre-Clinical Medical Education, will review the item analysis for each MCQ assessment administered in the pre-clinical curriculum
  - o After review is completed, the Assistant/Associate Dean for Pre-Clinical Medical Education will have final authority over any changes, such as dropping questions or accepting multiple answers
    - ▪ Determinations for these actions will be based on individual item performance and will be applied to the entirety of the class
  - o This review applies only to institutionally developed assessments, and does not include NBME assessments
    - ▪ There is no review or item analysis performed by the VCU SOM for NBME assessment items

Related Policies

Student Attendance Policy

Review Cycle and Revision History

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

Current Revision Approved: 08.10.2023

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:
- LCME Standard 9, Element 4