



American Board  
of Ophthalmology®

ADVANCING EXCELLENCE IN EYE CARE

# The Candidate's Guide to the **Oral Exam**

## Meet Your Presenters



**Sarah Nehls, MD**  
**Board Director**



**Don Kikkawa, MD**  
**Board Director**



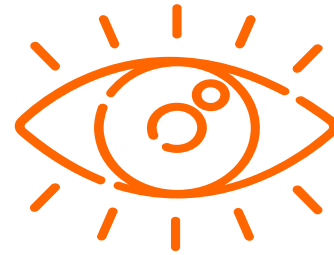
**George Bartley, MD**  
**CEO**

# Test Purpose

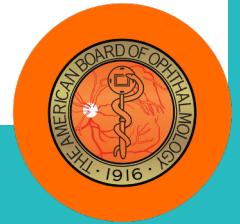


## The Test Purpose Statement

The Oral Examination is designed to evaluate how candidates apply and communicate clinical knowledge, judgment, and decision making **in the care of patients** in a professional and ethical manner.



# Peer-Developed Content



## Exam Development Volunteers



86

Practicing ophthalmologists representing different regions, ethnicities, subject areas, and practice types volunteered to write and review this exam.

# Clinical Subject Areas

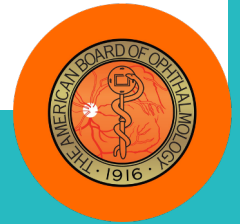


## Content Allocation

Posterior Segment of the Eye	16.7%
External Eye and Adnexa	16.7%
Anterior Segment of the Eye	16.7%
Optics, Visual Physiology, and Correction of Refractive Errors	16.7%
Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus	16.7%
Neuro-Ophthalmology and Orbit	16.7%



# Number/Timing of Cases



## Exam Breakdown

- 42 cases per exam
  - 14 cases x 3 appointments
  - 7 cases per subject area
- Each appointment is 50 minutes long
- Examiners manage the clock, not candidates

# Examiner Qualifications



# Examiner Qualifications



Board certified in  
good standing



Adheres to strict  
guidelines on scoring



Willing to volunteer  
significant time and  
expertise



Commits to principles  
of fairness and  
professional behavior



Completes  
extensive training  
on examining



Attends unconscious  
bias training

# The Role of Examiners



## Examiner Responsibilities

- Delivery and display of case material
- Clock management and pacing
- Evaluation of candidate performance



# Case Format



# Sample PMP:

**65-year-old man comes for a second opinion one month after cataract extraction in his right eye because of dissatisfaction with his uncorrected visual acuity.**

← Stem

Uncorrected VA OD = 20/100

Preop Manifest refraction OD:  $-2.25 + 0.50 \times 180 = 20/80$

Postop Manifest refraction OD:  $+3.00$  sphere = 20/20



# The Candidate-Examiner Conversation



## Handling Case Discussions

- “Show your work”
- Anticipate interruptions
- Transitions will be abrupt
- Give each case your best attempt



# The Performance Criteria



## Three-Part Format



**Data Acquisition**



**Diagnosis**



**Management**



## Sample PMP 1

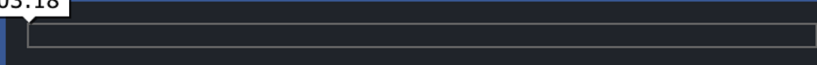
from American Board of Ophthalmology



# Sample PMP #1



03:18



vimeo

# More About Evaluation



## Weighting, Scoring, & Standards

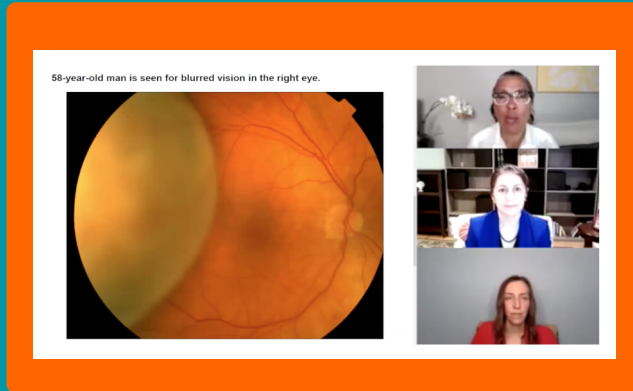
- Each case contributes equally to your score. There are no trick questions or automatic failures!
- Scoring is “compensatory,” meaning strong performance in one area can compensate for poor performance in another.
- Passing or failing the exam is based on whether your performance meets the standard -- not how anyone else performs.
- Results are pass/fail only.

# Exam Day Experience





# Online Testing Environment



- In 2020, the ABO transitioned to a virtual exam in response to the pandemic.
- Test environment is designed to replicate the in-person oral exam experience
- Can be done at your home office provided your test environment and equipment complies with the basic requirements specified in the manual.

# Exam Technology



## Equipment & Technology Prep

- Zoom platform supports the exam; basic computer, camera, and audio required
- Candidate tech support available before and during exam
- Examiners get training on how to screenshare and transition cases
- No special tech expertise needed

# Exam Day Flow



# Exam Day Overview

1. Zoom Waiting Room
2. Security Checkpoint
3. Candidate Orientation
4. Appointment #1 - First 14 cases
5. 10-Minute Break
6. Appointment #2 - Next 14 cases
7. 10-Minute Break
8. Appointment #3 - Final 14 cases
9. Disconnect



# Exam Personnel



## Exam Personnel

- **Hosts:** Greet you upon arrival; help you navigate from room to room as well as breaks
- **Troubleshooters:** On call, just ask your Examiner when tech help is needed
- **Panel Leaders:** Perform QC on the exam delivery, provide candidate orientation
- **Mentor Examiners:** Train and supervise new examiners

# Troubleshooting





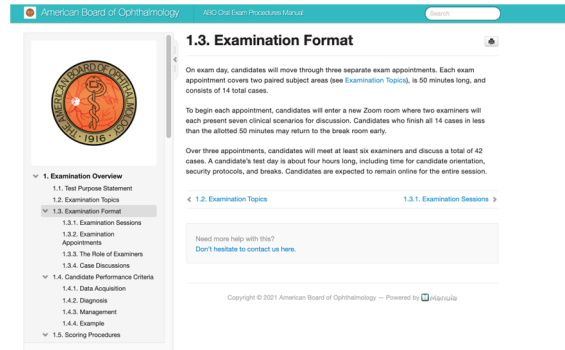
## What If...

<p>I need an unscheduled break.</p>	<p>You can take additional break time, but the clock does not stop. Frequent breaks that disrupt the exam may be flagged as an exam security violation.</p>
<p>I accidentally exit the test. My internet/equipment fails.</p>	<p>Restart your computer or connection as quickly as possible. Use the same Zoom link to re-join. Call the ABO to let us know what happened and that you're working to get back online. If the issue is with your audio or video, a troubleshooter can help. If your sound drops, use the chat to ask your examiner to call for help.</p>
<p>My examiner's equipment fails.</p>	<p>The other examiner in your room will pick up where the previous examiner left off. A troubleshooter will work behind the scenes to address the issue with your examiner -- meanwhile, you'll proceed with the exam with other exam personnel who may be asked to temporarily step in.</p>

# Resources & Reminders



# Candidate Manual



The screenshot shows a web page from the American Board of Ophthalmology. The header includes the organization's name and a search bar. The main content area is titled "1.3. Examination Format" and contains several paragraphs of text. A left-hand navigation menu lists various sections, with "1.3. Examination Format" currently selected. At the bottom of the page, there is a copyright notice for 2021 and a logo for Manula.

American Board of Ophthalmology ABO-VOE Exam Procedures Manual

## 1.3. Examination Format


On exam day, candidates will move through three separate exam appointments. Each exam appointment covers two paired subject areas (see [Examination Topics](#)), is 50 minutes long, and consists of 14 total cases.

To begin each appointment, candidates will enter a new Zoom room where two examiners will each present seven clinical scenarios for discussion. Candidates who finish all 14 cases in less than the allotted 50 minutes may return to the break room early.

Over three appointments, candidates will meet at least six examiners and discuss a total of 42 cases. A candidate's test day is about four hours long, including time for candidate orientation, security protocols, and breaks. Candidates are expected to remain online for the entire session.

< 1.2. Examination Topics 1.3.1. Examination Sessions >

Need more help with this? Don't hesitate to contact us [here](#).

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<https://www.manula.com/manuals/american-board-of-opthal/abo-voe20-candidate-procedures-manual/1/en/topic/examination-format>

# Test Blueprint

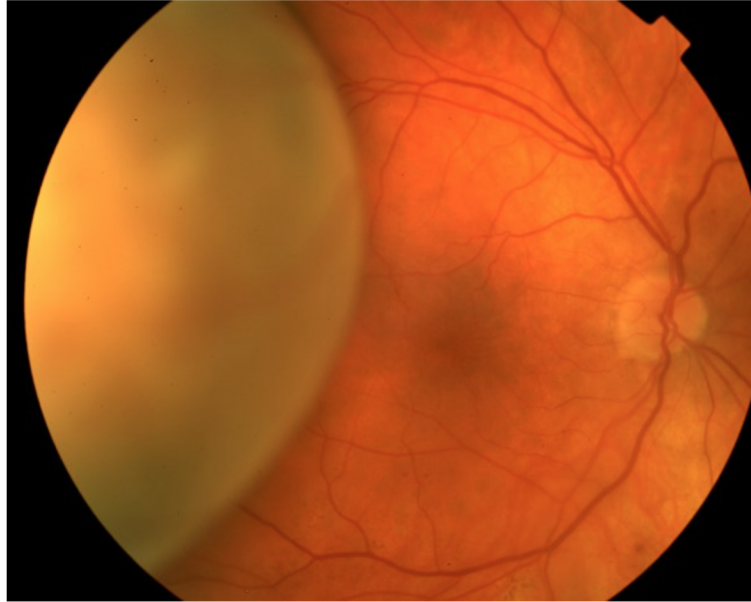
ABO Oral Examination Content – updated December 2020	
Examination Topic Areas	Percent of Exam*
<b>1) Posterior Segment of the Eye</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
Retinal and Choroidal Vascular Disorders	
Neoplasms, Hamartomas and Masquerade Syndromes	
Dystrophies and Degenerations	
Trauma, Toxins, and Inflammatory Disorders	
Disorders of the Vitreo-Retinal Interface and Retinal Detachment	
<b>2) External Eye and Adnexa</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
Inflammatory Conditions	
Neoplasms (Benign and Malignant)	
Eyelid Malpositions	
Degenerative Conditions (including Depositions)	
Trauma	
<b>3) Anterior Segment of the Eye</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
Cataract	
Iris/Ciliary Body Anomalies, Masses and Neovascularization	
Inflammation and Infection	
Glaucoma	
Trauma	
<b>4) Optics, Visual Physiology and Correction of Refractive Errors</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
Refraction, Dispensing, Low Vision, and Pediatrics:	
• Technique of Refraction	
• Optical Dispensing	
• Low Vision Testing and Prescribing	
• Refractive Error of the Pediatric Age Group	
Refractive Error: Ophthalmic Surgery	
Refractive Error: Non-Surgical	
• Systemic Medical Abnormalities	
• Anterior/Posterior Segment Abnormalities	
<b>5) Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
Strabismus	
Systemic Conditions	
Other	
<b>6) Neuro-Ophthalmology and Orbit</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
Optic Neuropathy	
Chiasm/ Retrochiasm Disorders	
Ocular Motility	
Pupillary Abnormalities	
Orbital Diseases	

<https://abop.org/become-certified/oral-exam/oral-test-blueprint/>

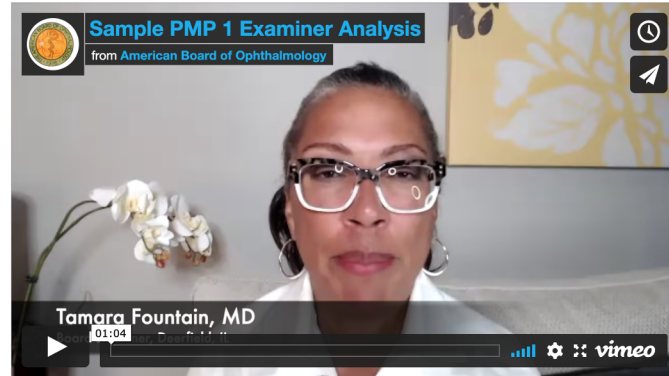
# Sample Cases

<https://abop.org/become-certified/oral-exam/preparing-for-the-oral/#samples>

58-year-old man is seen for blurred vision in the right eye.



# Sample Videos



<https://abop.org/become-certified/oral-exam/preparing-for-the-oral/#videos>

# Tech Appointments

[https://go.oncehub.com/CandidateEquipmentSupport?name=ADD\\_DYNAMIC\\_FIELD&email=ADD\\_DYNAMIC\\_FIELD&skip=1](https://go.oncehub.com/CandidateEquipmentSupport?name=ADD_DYNAMIC_FIELD&email=ADD_DYNAMIC_FIELD&skip=1)

# Text Alerts

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6434405/Candidate-Text-Opt-in-October-2021>



# Candidate Concierge

Find their contact information at <https://abop.org/portal>

# Editorials

*New editorial accessible online*

<https://www.aaojournal.org/action/showPdf?pii=S0161-6420%2820%2930464-4>

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AMERICAN ACADEMY  
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Editorial

## The American Board of Ophthalmology Virtual Oral Examination: Crisis Catalyzing Innovation

George B. Bartley, MD - Rochester, Minnesota  
Sarah D. Schnabel, PhD - Doylestown, Pennsylvania  
Beth Ann Comber, BA - Doylestown, Pennsylvania  
Steven J. Gedde, MD - Miami, Florida

In March 2020, for the first time in its 104-year history and as a result of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) canceled its oral examination (OE) on the cusp of its administration. To offer a pathway to certification for the more than 600 candidates who had prepared for the examination, the ABO opted to rapidly transition the assessment to an online format, even though conducting a “virtual” oral examination (VOE) had not been done successfully by any member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties.<sup>1</sup> We describe the ABO’s experience administering 11 VOEs to approximately 1000 candidates during the past year and offer observations about future directions.

The ABO certification requires passing both its written qualifying examination (WQE) and the OE. The WQE assesses medical knowledge using multiple choice questions

to online) and the content could introduce what psychometricians term “construct-irrelevant variance,” potentially eroding the examination’s integrity.

After evaluating several video conferencing platforms, the ABO determined that Zoom (Zoom Video Communications Inc.) would work most effectively for its purposes. The OE relies heavily on clinical photographs and diagnostic images. Embedding the images within portable document format files allowed the examiner to toggle quickly between screens when requested to do so by the candidate.

Transitioning to a VOE administration afforded the ABO the opportunity to make 2 modifications that had been under consideration for some time. The first was to have a candidate assessed simultaneously and independently by 2 examiners, rather than the one-to-one interaction that had been conducted

**Q&A**