



Over the last several months, NBEO has researched alternative exam delivery options including remote proctoring, testing at university centers, and paper format testing. Based on the current research regarding these options, and in alignment with information from the licensure testing community, we do not find them to be advantageous compared to our current plan with Pearson VUE to expand the available sites and testing window. Delivering examinations in a fair, standardized manner is critical to our ability to ensure examination results that are valid and reliable. At this time, these alternative options are not viable to alleviate the needs of ABS, PAM, and TMOD.

Given our mission and commitment to public protection, exam security is of foremost concern. Several of the alternative options pose unacceptable exam security risks. Remote proctors often work from their own homes and use their own equipment to proctor exams. This presents an unacceptable security risk for high stakes licensure examinations. There are also many security concerns associated with storing, mailing, and administering paper versions of exams at various locations throughout the country. While NBEO historically delivered paper/pencil examinations, the amount of time necessary to properly prepare and administer the examination in this format is infeasible to quickly alleviate the needs of ABS, PAM, and TMOD.

Recommendations from the CDC and governmental mandates at the local, state, and federal level present significant challenges for implementation of alternative test delivery methods. Many suitable facilities that might be used for an exam administration are currently closed. Alternatively, there are wide-ranging restrictions on mass gatherings throughout various jurisdictions. Planning a large-scale administration of exams using alternative test delivery methods is not feasible at this time.

Any option that NBEO implements to remove barriers to testing must be available and accessible to all candidates in order to maintain fairness. Concerns about fairness and bias are associated with any test administration method that significantly reduces standardization. As an example, remote proctoring requires candidates to have access to high-speed internet, a computer that meets the technology requirements, and a quiet, private, "clean" room. Not all candidates have access to these. Some schools and colleges of optometry may have testing centers that are open or plan to open in the near future and these facilities will vary by site. Candidates with disabilities requiring test accommodations should be treated fairly and equitably. NBEO must ensure that an uncompromising process exists for these candidates.

NBEO has an established scoring process whereby files are transferred from NBEO to PearsonVUE on a prescribed schedule, under secure conditions. These files include specific

content formatted in a particular way to be compatible with our established scoring system. For any alternative exam delivery option, we must consider the ability to securely transfer the data in the correct format to enable us to accurately score the exams and complete our security and quality assurance processes. While it is possible to reformat data and establish new security protocols, it is infeasible to do so in a timely manner.

NBEO is committed to finding solutions to assist candidates affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal is to make it possible for candidates to test as soon as possible while maintaining the security and integrity of our examinations. We have engaged in an ongoing process of researching and evaluating options as testing technology evolves. Additionally, we will continue to communicate within the testing community and participate in discussions surrounding changes occurring in the industry.

The unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have been difficult for our entire community. We recognize that much remains unknown about the coming weeks and months. We sincerely appreciate the patience and understanding of candidates through this difficult time as we continue to clear pathways for candidates to test in a fair, secure, standardized manner.