

Handbook

For Trustees of the

National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners, Inc.

CONFIDENTIAL

Second Edition, March 2016

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Board Guidelines

V. Organization and Mission

a. Mission

The mission of the NBPME is to develop and administer examinations of such high quality that the various legal agencies governing the practice of podiatric medicine may choose to license those who have successfully completed such examinations for practice in their jurisdictions without further examination. Further, the NBPME may at its discretion develop examinations of the same caliber to meet the various needs of groups within the profession.

b. Incorporated as a Non-Profit

The NBPME is registered as a non-profit corporation domiciled in New Jersey. This means that its activities are governed by the New Jersey Nonprofit Law. Corporation business activities must comply with this law. Many state corporation laws have strong similarities and common roots, so location normally does not matter.

It is typical in non-profit corporation law that a corporation's assets may not be sold; they must be transferred to another qualified non-profit if the corporation ceases operations.

NBPME is a nonprofit corporation, but it is not exempt from all taxes. While it is not subject to state or federal corporate income tax, it must pay sales and other taxes.

c. Bylaws Govern Functioning

The NBPME bylaws are adopted by the board and prescribe organization, board composition, committee structure, and other fundamental details of conducting business.

i. Officers

The bylaws specify that the NBPME shall have a president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer. Each officer is elected for a one year term and may not serve more than two terms. Traditionally, as the president's term expires, the vice-president is elected to that office, the secretary-treasurer is elected vice-president, and a new secretary-treasurer is elected.

ii. Committees

There are four standing committees established by the bylaws: budget and finance, testing, bylaws, and nominations. The secretary-treasurer serves as chair of the budget and finance committee, and all other members of committees are

appointed by the president, subject to approval of the board. The president is an ex-officio member of all committees, but may only vote in the event of a tie.

There may be other committees appointed for special purposes. For example, the NBPME currently also has a committee to oversee the development and administration of the Clinical Skills Patient Encounter (CSPE) examination.

iii. Trustees and Terms of Appointments

The NBPME has a self-perpetuating board. This means the board recruits and selects its own trustees. Board trustees are elected by the board based on a slate of two names for each position submitted by the nominations committee. Trustees are elected for an initial three year term and are eligible to serve no more than three consecutive terms.

The makeup of the board, as specified in the bylaws, is intended to reflect the larger professional community the board interacts with and serves. Thus, there are:

- Two Trustees nominated by the Federation of Podiatric Medical Boards, FPMB.
- An educator nominated by the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (AACPM). Nominations may also be received from the individual colleges.
- A person with professional experience in statistics and test development, known as the psychometrician member. This person may not have any affiliation with any podiatric college, organization, or specialty board.
- A person from and representing the consuming public. Neither this person nor any immediate family member may be involved in podiatric health care.
- Three persons who have had experience as a member of their state licensing board.
- A trustee nominated by the Council of Teaching Hospitals, COTH.
- A person with experience as a member of the Council on Podiatric Medical Education, CPME.
- A person who has had significant involvement in the development and administration of certification examinations for any specialty board that is approved by the CPME.

- A person currently serving as a director of a residency program that is approved by the CPME.
- A podiatric physician currently in practice.

In addition, the bylaws specify three non-voting liaison representatives who are expected to report back to their respective organizations on the activities of the NBPME. They are:

- A trustee appointed by the board of trustees of the American Podiatric Medical Association, APMA.
- A member of the American Podiatric Medical Students Association, APMSA.
- A dean selected from nominations submitted by the Council of Deans of the AACPM.

In the case of any organization that has more than one member on the board, such as the FPMB, or members of state licensing boards, the bylaws specify that they should have staggered starting dates for their terms.

iv. Meetings

The NBPME has two regular meetings each year, as specified in the bylaws. The first meeting is held in the winter each year, and the annual meeting is held in the summer. These meetings generally, though not always, are held in conjunction with the APMA House of Delegates and scientific meetings. Special meetings, usually by telephone conference call, are convened as needed.

d. Staff

The bylaws allow the NBPME to employ staff, such as an executive director or other administrative officers. These persons are not voting members of the board. The NBPME presently employs two staff: an executive director elected by the board, and an administrative assistant. The current administrative assistant has served more than 20 years and is an important resource in daily operations and for historical perspective. The executive director was appointed in 2010. Both employees work from offices in their homes.

Although Prometric, the testing services contractor for the written tests, is responsible for the majority of interactions with test candidates, the administrative assistant devotes a considerable amount of time to follow-up on candidate inquiries submitted directly to NBPME, primarily through its web site.

Other major responsibilities of the administrative assistant include coordinating details of the many test development workshops held throughout the year, preparing all written communications, making arrangements for in-person board meetings and board and committee conference call meetings, handling all contracts with state licensing boards for the Part III examination, and maintaining all corporate and financial records.

Support of test development workshops begins with issuing invitations for each session, assisting with hotel and travel arrangements, providing various administrative forms for participant packets, issuing and tracking travel reimbursements and honoraria payments, and preparing continuing education certificates. There are typically six to eight workshops during the year, plus numerous web-based conference calls.

The executive director also has many different responsibilities to support ongoing operations. Perhaps the most significant is contract administration with the testing contractor. The NBPME is in a minority of test sponsors because it does not have employees who handle the individual applications and other processing that is inherent with the purpose of the organization. All such tasks are handled by the testing contractors and are an important part of the test services contract.

There are issues that occasionally arise with individual candidates that require the attention of the executive director. For example, there may be unusual circumstances that arise on the day of a test and require an immediate decision about accommodations or rescheduling. In other instances, the ED may be called upon to assist the chair of the test committee in preparing a response to a candidate complaint or inquiry.

Another important responsibility of the ED is to arrange and monitor the conduct of each test development workshop. The ED and the administrative assistant maintain a list of expert panel members to invite to attend the workshops. There are approximately 200 practitioners on the list, and recruitment is a continual effort. The ED compiles a list of invitees for each meeting with the objectives of gaining broad representation among geographic, demographic, and professional practice perspectives, and amount of time in practice. For example, the Part III examination in clinical decision making is aimed at persons who have completed one year of post graduate training. Therefore, panel members for Part III workshops are typically those who have been in practice for ten years or less, or residency directors who have daily contact with recent graduates. Finally, the ED attends each workshop to observe the interactions among the panel members.

Board members also have an important responsibility when it comes to test development workshops. Each board member who is a DPM is expected to attend and participate in at least one workshop each year.

Both the ED and the administrative assistant interact day-to-day with staff from other organizations that have business with the NBPME. These include AACPM and the deans, the APMA and its affiliated groups such as APMSA and CPME.

Budget preparation and monitoring ongoing expenses are also within the purview of the ED. Other than routine, recurring expenses, such as for phone, office supplies and the like, all invoices must be approved by the ED. Disbursements of more than \$2,000 in a single check must be counter-signed by the board treasurer. The budget year for NBPME runs from July 1 to the following June 30. This is primarily because the board must file a Form 990 with the IRS based on the same fiscal year. Budgets are reviewed by the budget and finance committee before being submitted to the board for approval.

e. Contractor Role

i. Program Administration

There are only seven written testing events throughout the year plus two sessions for the CSPE, but the success of the program depends heavily on the activities carried out every week. The administrative assistant and the ED have near daily contact with Prometric staff to deal with candidate issues, plan workshops, publish the candidate information bulletins, and other tasks. Prometric staff actually complete many of these requirements and are depended upon to initiate work so all are accomplished on time. Likewise, the CSPE examination is administered by the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners. Many candidate registration and score reporting activities are handled jointly by NBOME and Prometric.

ii. Candidate Processing and Scheduling

Approximately 2,000 candidates take a Prometric-administered APMLE test each year. Some are repeat candidates. Every candidate in the system carries a unique identifier that is assigned at their first test and is retained for the duration of the program. First-time candidates must establish their eligibility to take each of the three parts. The board has adopted a policy that, once a candidate is eligible to take a part, they remain eligible for future administrations until they pass. Each part must be passed in sequence before taking the subsequent part. Eligibility is certified by the deans of the schools for Parts I and II, and by the state licensing boards for Part III.

Once determined eligible, candidates are permitted to schedule their exam at any of the hundreds of Prometric test centers in the United States. Most candidates for Part I schedule at a center near their school. By the time they are scheduling

for Part II, they may be scattered at clerkships throughout the country. Candidate locations also vary widely for Part III.

The concentration near the schools for Part I offers a particular challenge to Prometric. All tests are offered in either morning or afternoon sessions on a single day. Each class year has approximately 570 to 650 students divided among the nine schools. For those schools in major metropolitan areas such as New York, Miami, Chicago, or Los Angeles, this is not a concern. However, there are limited seats for the 40 to 50 students in Des Moines, Iowa, and for the 100+ students at Kent State. Prometric is expected to offer a seat within 50 miles of each school. All candidates are always accommodated, sometimes by resorting to mobile testing centers.

The NBPME has recognized that the current generation of students has electronic interconnection capabilities and preferences far beyond their predecessors. The www.apmle.org web site and its links to www.prometric.com has been revamped to provide an application and scheduling process that reflects the expectations to today's candidates.

Candidate processing for the CSPE begins with applications submitted to Prometric. After eligibility has been confirmed, the files are passed to NBOME and their systems handle scheduling for both the August to October administration and the February retake session.

iii. Test Development and Psychometric Consulting

The entire credibility of the APMLE examinations depends on the quality, design and execution of the test program. This means that the test series must first have demonstrable validity that each form is testing those skills and knowledge that are essential for safe practice. Further, each test must have documented statistical results that assure the measures are applied consistently to all candidates. Thus, the contract and expectations with Prometric go well beyond successful test administrations to gird all the underlying features in a continuing program.

Similar considerations go into the development and administration of the CSPE examination. The test design is consistent with the findings of the current practice analysis survey and meets all other applicable standards for administration and scoring. Candidates take the CSPE in the fall of their fourth year. Eligibility follows the same rules that apply to the Part II written test.

CSPE exam forms include stations that test an examinee's ability to:

- *perform a complete history & physical*
- *perform a problem-focused history & physical*

- *demonstrate a biomechanical exam*
- *communicate and gather information*
- *demonstrate interpersonal skills*
- *share information with patients and colleagues*
- *demonstrate behavioral counseling/patient education*
- *demonstrate clinical decision making*
- *appropriately document information*
- *synthesize a differential diagnosis*
- *address a difficult situation (i.e., disclose errors, deliver bad news, etc.)*
- *design an appropriate management plan*

VI. Responsibilities of Board Members

Board members of a nonprofit corporation are specifically referred to in New Jersey law as trustees instead of as directors, which is the typical designation in for-profit businesses. The distinction highlights the obligation of board members to act for the benefit of others. The specific responsibilities are embodied in legal concepts termed duties. Under the law, board trustees owe certain fiduciary duties to the organization. These include the duty or responsibility to use good judgment and care with respect to the assets of others that are entrusted to the board. The NBPME bylaws expand on the relationship between the corporation and its board trustees and the duties owed by those trustees.

Most states provide that board trustees owe a duty of obedience to the corporation, which requires a trustee to ensure that the corporation carries out its mission as defined in its governing documents and complies with all applicable laws.

A trustee who also serves as an officer or as a member of a committee, such as the executive committee or finance committee, is generally held to an even higher standard of care, and to owe greater fiduciary duties, because he or she has access to more confidential and other information, and participates more in the affairs of the corporation. Every NBPME trustee serves on at least one committee, so this expectation applies to the entire board.

A trustee or officer can be liable to the corporation for any loss the corporation suffers as a result of the director's breach of his or her fiduciary duties of care or loyalty.

a. Duty of Care

Trustees and members of any committee designated by the board shall discharge their duties in good faith and with that degree of diligence, care and skill which ordinary, prudent persons would exercise under similar circumstances in like positions.

This is obviously a very general and broad duty. Courts and treatises have interpreted this duty as also requiring the trustee to be informed regarding the affairs of the organization and to carry out his or her duties in a manner that the trustee reasonably believes to be in

the best interest of the corporation. In addition, although a trustee may rely upon information provided by the corporation's staff, he or she should exercise independent judgment with respect to any issues under consideration. To fulfill the duty of care, the board trustee should regularly attend and participate in board meetings.

b. Duty of Loyalty and Confidentiality

Another duty trustees owe is a duty of loyalty. This duty requires board trustees to exercise their duties in a manner that furthers the interest of the organization rather than his or her personal interest or the interest of another person or organization. Put another way, the trustee must act in the best interests of the corporation. Encompassed within the duty of loyalty are: an obligation on the trustee's part to disclose to the board any relevant conflicts of interest he or she has (and, in conjunction with that obligation, to recuse himself or herself from deliberations and abstain from voting on the matter in question); an obligation to refer to the organization any business opportunities that are appropriate for the corporation prior to using them for his or her personal benefit; and a duty of confidentiality, namely, a duty not to disclose to others confidential matters of the organization, such as the corporation's strategic plan, growth plans, finances, and any litigation involving the organization.

The duty of loyalty has generally been interpreted to prevent a trustee or officer from engaging in activities that are in conflict with his or her allegiance to the corporation.

c. Meetings and Service

Board trustees are expected to be diligent in their service as a member. This includes preparing for meetings by reviewing materials in advance, participating in and contributing to the discussions, and generally fulfilling the duty of care described above.

d. Insurance and Indemnification

Article V of the bylaws recognizes that board trustees may face legal action brought by others, however groundless. The bylaws specifically provide that board trustees shall not be liable to any person or entity as a result of actions taken in their capacity as board trustees, and shall have no personal liability with respect to any contracts executed by the board. In addition to the policy statement, the board maintains both general liability insurance and directors and officers coverage to protect the individual trustees, as well as the board as a whole.

VII. Board Operations

a. Committee-Driven

Much of the work of the board is carried out by the various committees, especially between meetings. Committees may generally take action on their own if the decision is consistent with board policy and involves funds included in the approved budget. In any case, the

workings of each committee are reported to the full board, either as recommendations for action by the board, or for ratification of committee actions. All committee meeting minutes for the preceding period are included in board agenda packets.

b. Test Committee

The test committee is central to the operations and purpose of the NBPME. It is responsible for recommending overall test policy and direction to the board. Since early 2000, this has been accomplished by the design of and responses to a formal request for proposals (RFP) to testing service contractors. After 2003, concern about the security and integrity of the examination series strongly influenced the contract and program for the next ten years. During those years, candidates essentially were presented with a brand new test form at each major administration. A new RFP was issued in 2013 and the contract was again awarded to Prometric. Going forward, the committee envisions continued emphasis on security but with some improvements to test design and delivery to take advantage of the expanded item bank that has been developed.

In addition to the larger issues of test design, the committee is responsible for developing and recommending policies on eligibility, and for evaluating individual cases that arise. As the eligibility rules are modified to meet new circumstances, they are posted in the official candidate bulletin. This is important because the bulletin and the accompanying application form are considered to be the contract between the board and each candidate. Both parties are responsible for compliance with the stated terms.

c. Finance and Budget

The committee on finance and budget has two primary obligations. The committee must review and recommend to the board a budget for each year (July to the following June). The committee also oversees the investment program of the long term trust funds. These are managed by Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. There are occasional instances when funds must be transferred from one account to another. The committee considers these requests and either approves them as consistent with the adopted investment policy, or recommends action by the full board.

d. Bylaws

This committee is charged with reviewing the bylaws and making any recommended changes to the board. Recently, the committee's charge has been broadened to include other governance matters, such as the review and publication of this handbook.

e. Nominations

The committee is charged with the responsibility to solicit and review candidates for election to the board whenever a vacancy occurs. The committee also is expected to present a slate of officers prior to the scheduled election at each annual meeting.

f. CSPE

The committee meets one or two times each year. In addition to approving test design, they consider registration issues, candidate information bulletin updates, and other policy matters.

VIII. The APMLE Tests

a. Test Programs

i. Licensing Purpose

As stated in the mission of the NBPME, the test is intended to fulfill a need for agencies that make licensing decisions. The details of each state practice act may vary, but the basic direction is to only provide a license to those applicants who have demonstrated through education and other means that they possess the minimal competence essential for safe practice.

This is a different purpose than a certification examination that is usually intended to demonstrate advanced knowledge and ability in a particular field. A licensing examination should have at its base an emphasis on public safety.

ii. Three Parts – Four Components

The APMLE series tests competence in three broad areas, with several domains in each. The detailed test plans can be seen in the specifications contained in the candidate information bulletins. Part I is a test of knowledge of the basic sciences, such as anatomy, biochemistry and physiology that are needed to make informed judgments and professional decisions as one advances in professional development and practice. Part II measures whether the candidate's competence in medicine, biomechanics, diagnostic imaging and surgery, among other topics, is adequate to allow entry into supervised practice. The CSPE component of Part II assesses proficiency in other podiatric clinical tasks needed to enter residency. Candidates will be expected to perform a focused physical examination including podiatric and general medicine physical exam maneuvers appropriate for each patient presentation. Podiatric and general medical knowledge, verbal and documentation skills, and interpersonal skills will be assessed in each exam form. Finally, Part III is intended to establish whether a person has the additional clinical

decision-making skills essential for safe unsupervised practice. The three parts evaluate important knowledge and skills in a complementary fashion.

b. Test Development

i. From Raw Item to Score

There are many steps, repeated reviews, and careful analyses in the path from when an item is originally drafted until it could end up as counting toward the score for each candidate who sees it.

Before any test question is written, there must be a decision about what topics should be tested, and in what proportion. This, and all other aspects of test administration and scoring, is established in a process that is in full compliance with the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, published jointly by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. Chapter 14 of this publication, *Testing in Employment and Credentialing*, is the recognized national authority for appropriate procedures and evidence of quality in a testing program.

According to these standards, a test publisher such as NBPME must first establish the relevance of the test design to the subject being evaluated. This is done by a formal survey of many hundreds of incumbent practitioners known as a practice analysis. These very lengthy, detailed questionnaires ask what tasks people do in the course of their work, how often they do each, how important the task is to successful practice, and related questions. From the formal survey, and using one or more panels of practitioners, a set of test specifications is developed. The report that documents this process describes it all in considerable detail.

Proposed test items that fit specific categories in the test specifications are requested from the faculty at the nine podiatry colleges for Parts I and II. The case scenarios for the patient encounter examination are developed jointly by clinical faculty at the schools and by practitioners recruited by NBPME working in sessions facilitated by NBOME. Practitioners write proposed items for Part III.

All proposed test items are reviewed to determine whether they are suitable to be included in a live examination. The review is done in a workshop with a professional facilitator, and includes both faculty experts and practitioners for Parts I and II items. All reviewers are given instruction on the characteristics of a good test item in advance of the review. In addition to approving, editing, or disapproving any items presented, the participants are asked to agree on the classification of the item according to the categories in the test specifications.

References from acceptable texts or other recognized publications are required for each item.

Part I and II tests are now administered using the LOFT (Linear-On the-Fly Test) format. This means that candidates may see items drawn from the entire current active bank. Before converting to LOFT in 2015, the entire item bank was reviewed to determine that all items were still current. Any out of date items were dropped. At least annually for Parts I and II, a workshop is convened for the purpose of reviewing new items that have been submitted in the past year to consider their appropriateness and content. These regular reviews ensure that every examination reflects current practice in the profession.

Each examination includes a combination of operational items that are counted for scoring, and pretest items that are being evaluated for future use. A careful statistical evaluation is computed for each item in the test. Testing specialists review the item analyses to identify any anomalies. For example, if a particular question was answered correctly by a larger proportion of candidates who did not perform well overall than by the top performers, there is reason to expect that it is not functioning to discriminate between the qualified and unqualified candidates—and that is the whole purpose of the test. Any suspect items are pulled and reviewed separately by a different group of practitioners before a decision is made whether to count the item in scoring.

If a particular test is the first constructed under a new set of test specifications derived from a recent practice study, an additional workshop will be convened to review the form and to establish an appropriate passing point. This is called a standard setting study. It, too, follows rigorous procedures and is thoroughly documented. Subsequent editions that follow the same specifications will be equated to the anchor form to provide a basis for comparing the results of one test form with another.

In the past, certain state boards established their own passing score for Part III. The policy of the NBPME is that, if a state licensing board chooses to impose a different standard, it must assume the responsibility to defend that choice.

Only after these structured multiple reviews are scores computed and reported to the candidates and the schools for Parts I and II, and to the candidates and the state boards for Part III. There are more than 100 operational items on each form, but the score that is reported is neither a count of the actual number correct nor a percentage of correct items to all items. Rather, it is a number that is expressed on a scale where 75 represents the minimum passing score, and no score exceeds 100.

Because test forms may vary in difficulty, and because the purpose is to establish whether each candidate has demonstrated the required competency, a scaled score is used to provide a basis for relating performance. At the same time, once a candidate has met or exceeded the scaled score of 75, there is little purpose served to report an actual score. Thus, passing candidates are given a report that says simply “Pass.” Failing candidates receive additional diagnostic information to help them focus their efforts for subsequent attempts.

The overall credibility of the test program is supported by the care, methodology and documentation of the entire process.

ii. Security

After an investment of many tens of thousands of dollars in an eight year education program, candidates must successfully complete all three tests in the APMLE series to obtain a license to practice. This is the essence of a high stakes examination and is the reason that both the NBPME and Prometric invest considerable effort in maintaining the security—and with it, the integrity—of the tests.

Effective security and protecting the confidentiality of the item bank is complicated by the fact that, unlike many other professions, the class sizes and the number of educational institutions involved are both relatively small. The combination of all these factors demands that NBPME takes all necessary measures to minimize the possibility of any compromise.

There are a variety of features built into the test design specifically to protect the integrity of the program. In addition, Prometric employs strict admission procedures and includes many physical security innovations at each test site. Board trustees are welcome to arrange a visit to a test facility to see these measures firsthand.

APPENDICES

- I. Bylaws – See apmle.org
- II. Candidate Information Bulletin – See apmle.org
- III. RFP Excerpts

Appendix III

Pertinent Excerpts

from the

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

TEST DEVELOPMENT, ADMINISTRATION and RELATED ACTIVITIES

associated with

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF PODIATRIC MEDICAL EXAMINERS

AMERICAN PODIATRIC MEDICAL LICENSING EXAMINATIONS (APMLE®)

PARTS I, II, AND III EXAMINATIONS

ISSUED: January 2, 2013

PROPOSAL DUE DATE: February 22, 2013

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners

The National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners (NBPME) is a nonprofit corporation established in 1956. Its bylaws provide for a governing board of 13 members that includes representatives from the Federation of Podiatric Medical Boards, state licensing boards, and the public. Additionally, the board includes a podiatric medical educator, a psychometrician, an individual with experience on the Council on Podiatric Medical Education, an individual with experience on one of the specialty boards, a director of a podiatric residency program, and a podiatric physician currently in practice. The American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (college deans), American Podiatric Medical Association, and the American Podiatric Medical Students Association each have an individual serving as a liaison with the NBPME. The NBPME employs an executive director and an administrative assistant. All candidate processing is handled by the test contractor.

B. The Present Examination Program

The National Board examinations consist of three written qualifying tests that are designed to sample the knowledge of podiatric licensure candidates in the basic sciences (Part I), clinical sciences (Part II), and clinical decision making competencies (Part III). Each part must be passed consecutively and separately. Each part is currently administered twice a year. The series is published under the registered trademark of the American Podiatric Medical Licensing Examination (APMLE).

All states require passage of Parts I and II prior to licensure. Licensing agencies may, at their discretion, grant individuals who pass Parts I and II a license to practice podiatric medicine without a further written examination; however, 45 states/jurisdictions require candidates to pass Part III prior to licensure. The other states/jurisdictions may require candidates to pass a state-based examination prior to licensure.

Part I is generally taken after the completion of an individual's second year at a college of podiatric medicine. The exam samples a student's knowledge in the basic science areas of general anatomy; lower extremity anatomy; biochemistry; physiology; medical microbiology and immunology; pathology; and pharmacology.

Part II is generally taken near the completion of a student's final year of study. It measures a student's knowledge in the clinical areas of general medicine; dermatology; radiology; orthopedics and biomechanics; surgery, anesthesia, and hospital protocol; and community health and jurisprudence.

The Part I and Part II examinations are designed to assess whether an individual possesses the knowledge required to practice as a minimally competent entry-level podiatrist under supervision in a residency program.

The third examination (Part III) is administered on behalf of state licensing agencies to candidates who have applied for or who are applying for a license and who have met, or will meet, the state's criteria for licensure as an independent, unsupervised podiatrist. The exam is based on the expected competency upon completion of one year of residency training. The Part III examination has eight topic areas including: medicine, orthopedics and biomechanics, medicine, surgery, anesthesia, and medical imaging.

All three parts of the APMLE are administered via computer. The Part I examination has the highest concentrations of candidates in the vicinity of the cities of the nine podiatry schools. Candidates for Part II are generally dispersed nationally at various internship programs.

The number of individuals scheduled and tested during the past three years for each of the examination parts is shown in **Appendix A**. The data are suggestive of the number of examinations to be administered during the term of the contract, but are not intended to be a guarantee of the volume in subsequent years.

Candidates currently pay \$900.00 for each part of the examination. This fee supports all activities of the board.

The NBPME owns the examinations, item banks, candidate score data, and all examination-related analyses and reports. The examinations are based on the results of formal practice analyses completed on five year cycles. The most recent practice analysis for Part III was conducted in 2009; a practice analysis was done for Parts I and II in 2011.

Additional information regarding the NBPME and its examinations is available on the NBPME's web site at www.apmle.org. Please refer to that web site to see the two candidate information bulletins, one for Parts I and II, and one for Part III.

C. Purpose of this Request for Proposals

The NBPME's overall goal relative to the outcome of this bid process is to maintain, and where possible improve, the quality of the APMLE series. The organization selected must provide a single point of contact and a complete range of services that meets or exceeds the requirements of the NBPME. The NBPME expects and encourages its contractors to demonstrate creative strategic thinking, be an active partner in its strategic planning, anticipate potential problems and opportunities, and suggest possible solutions and strategies.

In general, the contractor must:

- i. Develop a three-part examination that represents state-of-the-art technology in item formatting;
- ii. Develop test specifications as well as relevant, entry-level, practice-related, non-discriminating, defensible and psychometrically-sound items that are targeted to specified difficulty levels;
- iii. Conduct statistically sound practice analyses to maintain the five-year intervals between updates, and arrange for the results to be copyrighted in NBPME's name;
- iv. Conduct the necessary standard setting meetings in order to ensure that the cut score is representative of the level of competency expected at a given point in a podiatrist's education and experience;
- v. Ensure a fair, consistent, and non-discriminating administration to all individuals, regardless of test sites, and provide special accommodations, as necessary and at no additional cost to candidates, in compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*;
- vi. Maintain security of the examinations, individual items, and other pertinent examination information (e.g., test results) at all times;
- vii. Process candidates, resolve candidate issues with scheduling, and provide score reports, including information (breakdown of strengths and weaknesses) for failing candidates, in an efficient and accurate manner to candidates, states, and the NBPME;
- viii. Provide statistical reports that meet the NBPME's requirements;
- ix. Provide reports regarding the exam administrations, including any feedback from examinees regarding their testing experience;
- x. Provide individual candidate results as well as summaries of candidate performance, by school for Parts I and II, nationally, and within the state to those states with candidates for the Part III exam;
- xi. Develop application materials, including, but not limited to, candidate bulletins and application forms as well as procedures for the efficient scheduling of candidates for each of the parts;

- xii. Develop a web-based sample test (items are available for this use) that is representative of Parts I and II, easily accessible to all candidates, and provided at no cost to the candidates;
- xiii. Provide the NBPME with all other information, statistics, and reports as required under the terms of this contract; and,
- xiv. Attend the Board's two meetings each year and be available for conference calls or additional meetings that may be necessary to discuss examination issues.

III. WORK STATEMENT

A. Practice Analysis

The current examinations are based on studies completed in 2009, for Part III, and in 2011 for Parts I and II. A new practice analysis for Part III, and another for Parts I and II will need to be completed in 2014 and 2016, respectively, to maintain a five-year update schedule. These must meet generally acceptable psychometric standards such as those set forth in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Following completion of each survey, the contractor shall be responsible for updating the appropriate test blueprints and for establishing a cut score based upon the revised specifications. Describe how this would be accomplished.

B. Test Development

All item development must conform to the current edition of *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. The format of the tests is described in the candidate bulletins and may be viewed at the NBPME web site.

The contents and statistics of the present NBPME items banks will be provided to the contractor in ASCII format on tape or another standard electronic method. The contractor will need to assess the items in the bank and determine the need for developing new items. It is estimated that the banks include the following number of items: Part I = 5,200 items, Part II = 2,100 items, and Part III = 800 items.

In Part III, all items used to compute a candidate's pass/fail status must be pre-tested to enable the collection of accurate item calibration data. Each bidder should discuss acceptable item statistics and what steps will be taken to ensure that necessary data are available for every item prior to its being scored on an examination (see Appendix A for candidate numbers).

Pre-testing is not presently done with the Parts I and II examinations. Three new forms of each are published each year. Bidders should discuss the feasibility of re-using items after a period of time, other options that might be utilized in order to protect the bank from being harvested, and the pros and cons of not using pre-tested items.

All items used on the NBPME examinations must be relevant to the practice of podiatry. Although Parts I and II are given during the students' educational training, the items must still be at a level of application beyond that of simple recall or recognition. This is particularly true with Part II. Part III must be clinically-based (practice-oriented). The goal of Part III should be to measure a candidate's clinical knowledge and problem-solving ability.

Describe the capability to produce and deliver items in other than four-choice, one-answer formats. Include all alternatives that may be appropriate to an examination in podiatric medicine.

Bidders should provide a detailed discussion of their plans for obtaining new items and maintaining an up-to-date, sufficiently large item bank. Faculty at the podiatric colleges submit items for Parts I and II, which are then reviewed jointly by faculty and practitioners. The contractor will be responsible for developing training manuals and exercises for item development/review. These manuals should be made available to the faculty who are preparing items for the examinations.

A large portion of the items in the banks have been retired from active use and will have to be reviewed for current applicability to practice. In addition, while all items have references, each one should have an acceptable current reference in its documentation. Describe how this review would be accomplished and provide an estimated timeline.

In the case of the Part III examination, practitioners should be convened to develop items. Bidders should discuss the manner in which committees will be utilized for item development/review. Committee members will be selected by the NBPME, with input from the contractor. Item review activities must ensure that all items selected for an examination are accurate, valid and relevant to the examinee's level of training and that the items are classified correctly according to the test specifications. A sufficient number of committee members must be used to ensure that all areas are covered adequately.

Bidders are to propose the format and frequency of these meetings. All items must be reviewed by relevant committees prior to becoming "active" in an item bank. Bidders should specify whether a full-scale review of all items in the bank should be done periodically and, if so, how often. Currently, the NBPME is responsible for all committee members' expenses, including any honoraria, associated with exam-related meetings. It is anticipated that this procedure will continue.

The contractor will be responsible for reviewing and editing all items for appropriate reading level, content, documentation for accuracy and currency, as well as the elimination, as nearly as possible, of item bias. Describe the steps that will be taken to perform these tasks.

Item bank maintenance is crucial to the efficient operation of a valid and reliable examination. All bidders should include a comprehensive plan for item bank maintenance and updating, including such aspects as psychometric and editorial review, routine item recalibration, item usage reports, item bank tallies, item performance reports, etc.

The contractor will perform the appropriate regular psychometric analyses needed for item bank maintenance. Bidders should discuss the types of item statistics that will be collected and how the data will be utilized. They should also include a discussion of overall examination statistics that will be maintained. Indicate the action that will be taken should an item, either pre-test or scored, be considered a “problem.”

A full-scale review of all items should occur following the revision of the test specifications. This review will check the appropriateness of all items in terms of content coding, level of training for which item is intended to be used, job-relatedness, appropriateness for entry level, and verification of the correct answer. Provide information about how the bidder would validate the test plan coding for all items and for reclassifying items following the test plan changes as soon as possible.

C. Test Construction

The contractor will generate valid and reliable computer-administered examinations that conform to the test specifications. Currently the examinations are delivered by computer in a linear fashion. NBPME is considering providing alternative techniques of examination delivery that enhance security and that maintain or improve the reliability of each form. Possibilities range from scrambling the entire order of presentation for each candidate through to adaptive testing. Provide separate work proposals and cost estimates for (1) continuing the present approach, and (2) implementing CAT or other bank-based testing. Describe how an alternative mode would be evaluated and accomplished and include an expected timeline.

D. Cut Score

The proposal should discuss in detail the manner in which a cut score will be determined for each of the three parts. Describe the methodology to be used to determine a cut score that would accurately reflect the minimal competency to be demonstrated on each part of the examination. Discuss how the NBPME can be assured of equivalent examination difficulty for all administrations. It will be the responsibility of the contractor to advise the NBPME as to the number of cut score meetings required during the duration of the contract. All subject matter

expert expenses, including any honoraria, associated with cut score meetings will be paid by the NBPME.

A final report describing the process used and individuals involved to develop a cut score shall be submitted by the contractor to the NBPME for review and approval. The final report shall be copyrighted in the NBPME's name.

The NBPME will recommend the cut score for Part III to licensing agencies for their acceptance. It is, however, each state's right to accept or reject the proposed cut score. While the contractor will need to work with those states to provide results that comply with the requirements of the state, neither the NBPME nor the contractor shall be responsible for defending a state's use of a cut score other than the one recommended by the NBPME. NBPME will attempt to obtain acceptance of the recommended cut score by all states that utilize the Part III.

E. Application Processing

The contractor will be responsible for developing comprehensive candidate information brochures (bulletins) for each part of the examination process. Bidders should indicate whether or not it would be preferable to have one brochure that covers both Parts I and II, or to have separate brochures. A separate brochure shall be prepared for Part III candidates. Each brochure should include complete information on all aspects of the test. Examples of current candidate information bulletins may be viewed at www.apmle.org.

Timely, professional service to the candidates is essential. Candidates for Parts I and II either apply directly to the contractor or may apply through the schools. Candidates for Part III will need to apply to the appropriate licensing agency for determination of eligibility and to the contractor for the examination. In most instances, a candidate desiring to sit for Part III cannot be tested without the contractor receiving information from the board that the candidate is eligible. Currently, there are 35 states that permit candidates to register directly through the contractor.

Candidates should be able to register for the examination either by Internet or telephone. A toll-free number should be established for candidates to register, schedule an examination, and ask questions regarding the examination. Call center capabilities, training and procedures should be described. Bidders should indicate the form (personal check, money order, credit card, etc.) in which payment could be made.

Bidders should discuss the procedures that will be followed when applications are incomplete, fees are incorrect, applications arrive after the deadline, or other problems emerge relating to the application process.

After any candidate has received authorization to take the examination, he/she must be scheduled at or close to the requested location. Bidders should specify any restrictions in terms of the last possible date for applying for an examination in order to be tested. If windows are to be used, provide a description of the intended application process including any “deadline” dates.

The contractor will process applications and fees, which will be deposited directly into the NBPME’s account, establish a computerized link (typically email) with state licensing boards to transmit and receive information regarding candidate eligibility for Part III, and send candidates admission documents, and, where applicable, information about how to schedule an examination. Transmissions regarding Part III candidates who have applied for the examination should be submitted to licensing agencies at least weekly in order for boards to indicate whether or not a candidate is eligible. The transmissions may need to be made several times a week during the four weeks immediately prior to the administration.

The contractor shall have available a system to track candidates. The manner in which candidates will be tracked should be discussed in the proposal.

Part III candidates must be made eligible by only one state at a time. It is anticipated that the Part III examination will continue to be administered on one day only during each testing period.

Candidate historical records, including the application information as well as examination dates, examination sites, items taken, scores, etc., must be maintained for the duration of the contract. The historical records are to be made available to the NBPME upon successful completion of each part by an individual. Procedures for an audit and quality assurance for information integrity should be discussed.

The contractor shall take all steps necessary to protect the confidentiality of all candidate information and such information can be used only for purposes covered by the contract and/or approved by the NBPME’s Executive Director.

F. Test Administration

The contractor shall provide at least one test center in each of the nine cities in which a podiatry college exists. The sites should have sufficient capacity to handle the anticipated volume of Part I and II candidates. All candidates for all examinations are tested on the same date. For the Part III candidates, there should be, at a minimum, one computer testing site in every state. Note, many Part II candidates will be serving externships in locations other than their school at the time of the test. Describe the test center network and capacities.

Computer test centers must be able to record candidate photographs (unless specifically prohibited by a candidate's religion) and/or fingerprints, and electronically attach such to the candidate's test record (unless specifically prohibited by a state) as a security measure. Candidates must present official, signed photographic identification (driver's license, passport, state identification, military identification, etc.) as well as one other piece of identification that includes a signature in order to take the examination. The name on the identification documents and on the admission card must match in order for the candidate to be seated. Candidates will be required to sign in and out of the examination room.

The contractor will ensure that the personnel operating all test centers are sufficient in number and qualification through appropriate training to provide an efficient and secure operation of the test center. Candidate confidentiality must be maintained as well as the security of the examinations. NBPME board members and licensing agency representatives retain the right to visit and inspect computer test centers at any time they are open for testing.

The contractor should delineate its policies regarding charges for cancellations, no-shows, and transfer requests to subsequent test dates.

At the conclusion of the examination, candidates should be provided an opportunity to offer feedback regarding the testing experience as well as any concerns about specific items. The NBPME should receive a summary of candidate comments following each administration.

G. Special Testing Accommodations

All test sites must conform to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The contractor will be responsible for developing a document that outlines the policies, procedures, time lines, required documentation, etc. that should be used by candidates prior to submitting a request for an accommodation.

Requests for accommodation under the ADA will be reviewed and approved (or denied) by the contractor for Parts I and II. Any disputes will be discussed with the NBPME Executive Director for resolution. ADA requests for Part III will be reviewed and approved (or denied) by the relevant licensing agency, except in those states that have relinquished this responsibility to the contractor. Reasonable accommodations are to be granted by the contractor after approval has been given by the licensing agency unless the requested accommodations would create an unreasonable financial burden or cause the examination to be fundamentally altered. Should either of these cases be viewed as a possibility by the contractor, alternative accommodations should be recommended that would be acceptable to all concerned parties. The contractor may also need to contract with impartial experts to resolve any disputes related to the validity of a disability claim and/or necessary accommodation.

H. Score Reporting

The NBPME believes that candidate records should be transferred from the test centers to the contractor's office to be analyzed for accuracy and anomalies prior to being submitted to candidates or licensing agencies. Accordingly, results should not be made available to candidates at the conclusion of their examinations.

The contractor must design a candidate results reporting system, including performance feedback to failing candidates. Results for Parts I and II are to be submitted to candidates by the contractor. Results for Part III are to be submitted to the candidate's licensing agency for distribution to the candidate, unless requested otherwise by a state.

Scores for Parts I and II must also be provided to the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (AACPM) for use in the residency match program (CASPR). A secure electronic transfer is the preferred method. CASPR will provide the format.

The contractor will be required to fulfill individual score requests for Part I and II scores. These official score reports may be requested for tests taken many years ago. Approximately 1,200 such requests for transcript service are processed annually. These scores exist in electronic form for candidates from 1997. Earlier scores are on microfiche of varying quality (some barely readable). There are occasional requests for scores as far back as the 1970's when a practitioner moves to another state. The contractor will need to consider a project to convert the microfiche files to a more easily retrievable medium.

The Federation of Podiatric Medical Boards (FPMB) is responsible for providing verification of results to states and others for Part III scores, as authorized by the candidate, following the distribution of the initial score report. The contractor must provide the FPMB with a copy of all results on magnetic disk, zip file, or CD rom. Candidate score records shall be maintained by the contractor in a secure manner for the duration of the contract. NBPME shall receive a copy of all candidate records, in a format acceptable to the NBPME, at the conclusion of the contract. The proposal should include a schedule for retaining candidate answers.

Score reports should include the following information: candidate identification number, candidate name, test date, required passing score (converted), and a notation of pass/fail status. Passing candidates would receive no numeric score; failing candidates would be given an overall converted score along with feedback to assist them in preparing for a reexamination. Discuss in the proposal the type of information that might be presented on a score report to failing candidates, and how best to ensure the reports cannot be altered by candidates.

Results of all candidates tested shall be submitted to the NBPME. The proposal should indicate the suggested time frame for submitting score report data to the NBPME.

The NBPME is developing a Clinical Skills Patient Encounter (CSPE) component to add to

the Part II examination. The work is being done by CSEC (NBME/ECFMG) and is expected to go live in February 2014. Coordinating eligibility and how scores for the two components will be combined and reported is yet to be resolved.

Reports to states (Part III) should include information relating to the intended cut score and the percentage of candidates from that state, as well as nationally, who passed the examination. Individual score reports for candidates are included and can, if so desired by the state, be used to inform candidates of their success or failure. No numeric scores are included on the individual passing results, but they are included on the failing results. The cut score is included on both reports and failing candidates receive information regarding how well they performed on each of the four topics tested.

Reports prepared for the individual schools (Parts I and II) should include the percent of first-time candidates educated at a particular school who passed the examination as well as any diagnostic information regarding areas of weakness displayed by candidates from that school. The school report should also indicate national summary data. No school should see specific performance data for other schools.

Copies of these reports as well as any others, such as pass/fail statistics on repeat candidates or the percentage of candidates who pass an examination after one, two, three, etc. attempts, that may be beneficial to the NBPME, shall be made available to the NBPME prior to each of their two annual meetings.

Analyses of candidate responses and/or score drifts shall be made available to the NBPME should individual or group misconduct be suspected. The contractor shall be responsible for suggesting reports that might be of assistance to the NBPME given the type of examination delivered.

I. Presentations to the NBPME Board

The contractor shall meet with the Board at least twice a year (typically in March or April and July or August) to discuss all aspects of the examination program including data on the number of candidates taking the examination, pass/fail data, security issues, ongoing or proposed research, status of the item bank and item pools, updated information on any problems encountered with the examination program, and other pertinent data. Travel expenses for the contractor's staff are the responsibility of the contractor. The NBPME meetings are held at various locations in the United States.

J. Security

The contractor must, at all times, ensure the security of the examinations, item bank

and item pools. Written security protocols for handling items, item writing/review sessions, transfer of item pools from the contractor to the computer test sites and while at the test site must be prepared and approved by the NBPME. The contractor should have a security system with the capability of producing an audit trail to investigate potential security problems. The contractor will be responsible for the costs of replacing lost or compromised items under the control of the contractor or any subcontractor.

The integrity of the item bank is of the utmost importance and is a major concern of the NBPME. The proposal must include recommendations on how to minimize item exposure, including ways to inhibit the ability of candidates to memorize or share items.

At each administration, the candidates must agree to a statement of confidentiality, as developed by the contractor and approved by the NBPME. This statement must stipulate, at the very least, that the candidate is prohibited from disclosing the examination content to others and the ramifications of doing so.

The contractor will use appropriate techniques to investigate any suspicious scores that may indicate cheating or other violation of security during an examination administration. The NBPME Executive Director shall be notified immediately of any suspected or actual violations of security, or of any other misconduct the contractor suspects or knows occurred during an administration. If necessary, the NBPME may require an independent investigation of any security breach. The cost for such an investigation will be equally funded by the NBPME and the contractor.