

American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians

Certification Requirements and Procedures Handbook



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I. Eligibility Requirements for Certification Examinations

A. Initial Certification

- Graduate of a COCA-accredited college of osteopathic medicine
- Current full, unrestricted license- it is understood that residents may be practicing with a temporary license or under a hospital license when applying, but license verification must be supplied to allow for awarding of certification. (A certification candidate holding a restricted license must provide documentation addressing those restrictions, including any court orders, to the AOBFP with the application submission)
- Within the past six years, completion of a three-year AOA-approved family medicine residency program OR currently in a three-year AOA- or ACGME-approved family medicine residency program.

IN ORDER FOR YOUR APPLICATION TO BE REVIEWED FOR APPROVAL, THE FOLLOWING ITEMS AND FEE PAYMENT MUST BE SUBMITTED TOGETHER BY THE APPROPRIATE DEADLINES.

- Completed application
- AOA letter of internship approval if an allopathic program has been completed
- Copy of medical license with expiration date.
 - **NOTE:** If candidate does not currently hold a license and is practicing under a hospital license, before the candidate will be recommended to the AOA for certification a copy of a state issued medical license must be submitted to the AOBFP. A candidate petitioning with a restricted license must submit a copy of the court order with the other application documents.
- ‘Verification of Residency Training’ form, listing site, start and completion dates or copy of residency certificate if program is complete.
- Signed and dated ‘Statement of Understanding for Issuance of Certification’

Residents – Osteopathic Training Programs

Applicants qualifying under the residency pathway either in a current osteopathic training program; or, having started in an osteopathic program that is now ACGME accredited; or, having completed an osteopathic program may sit for examination. However, scores other than a pass/fail designation as well as recommendation for certification by the American Osteopathic Association will be withheld until verification of ‘training complete’ status is provided. Files for residents with incomplete or unapproved paperwork will be deferred to a later meeting. The AOA Department of Certification's processing of candidate recommendations for certification takes about 4-6 weeks. The successful completion of the examination and the awarding of certification must be accomplished within six years from the date of completion of the training program.

Residents - Allopathic Training Programs

DO residents who are currently in an ACGME-approved training program may sit for examination prior to the completion of their training if that training is completed by August 1 of the exam year for the Spring

exam or by December 31 for the Fall exam. However, scores other than a pass/fail designation as well as recommendation for certification by the American Osteopathic Association will be withheld until the training is recorded at the AOA as 'complete and approved'. The successful completion of the examination and the awarding of certification must be accomplished within six years from the date of completion of the training program.

ABMS Certified Family Physicians

Resolution No. 56, passed by the AOA Board of Trustees, allows for examination eligibility for those holding ABMS primary certification in good standing. This resolution originally passed in July 2004 and has since been modified to remove the five-year post-residency requirement and to include ABMS-certified osteopathic physicians who participated in a clinical pathway to achieve ABMS certification.

Advanced Standing

Residents who have received advanced standing or credit from the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) for time spent in another program must include a copy of the ACOFP approval letter. Advanced standing must be approved by ACOFP prior to the application postmark deadline date.

B. OCC/Recertification

- Primary certification in family medicine for at least six years;
 - Eligible for exam in years 7 and 8 of certification cycle
- Current practice as a family physician;
- Hold a valid and unrestricted medical license to practice medicine (include expiration date) in a State or Territory of the United States.
 - An applicant who has a restricted license may petition the Board to enter the exam process based upon review of the reason for licensure restriction. A copy of the court order should be included with the submitted application documents.

C. Re-Entry Recertification

Successful re-entry into the recertification process allows a candidate to pursue certification in Osteopathic Family Medicine and OMT. To do so, candidates must meet the following requirements:

- Primary certification in family medicine for at least six years;
- Certification expiration status of 3+ years;
- Hold a valid and unrestricted medical license to practice medicine (include expiration date) in a State or Territory of the United States.
 - An applicant who has a restricted license may petition the Board to enter the exam process based upon review of the reason for licensure restriction. A copy of the court order should be included with the submitted application documents.

Candidates may petition up to two times to re-enter the certification process. Each petition can be for up to one year, with two examination attempts. A candidate is not considered board eligible during this time period. After exhausting this re-entry process, a candidate is not eligible to continue the certification process.

II. Procedure for the Written (Cognitive) Examination

The **written (cognitive) examination** is a full day, computer-based examination administered at regional test sites made available by Pearson VUE. Once AOBFP receives your completed application for the exam, it may take 4-6 weeks for its review, processing and approval.

Once candidates are approved, AOBFP sends an authorization-to-test letter confirming the approval. Once candidates receive this letter, it is recommended they quickly contact Pearson VUE (www.pearsonvue.com/aobfp) to select preferred test sites because availability is on a first-come, first-served basis.

- **Initial and Re-Entry Exam:** The complete written examination consists of approximately **400** multiple-choice questions as standalone questions or as part of a clinical case. This is a 7.5 hour exam with one 30 minute break.
- **OCC Recertification Exam:** The complete written examination consists of approximately **200** multiple-choice questions as stand-alone questions or as part of a clinical case. This is a 3.5 hours with no scheduled breaks.

Approximate percentages of content areas represented in the written (cognitive) examination are as follows:

Content Area

Addiction Medicine	3%	Neurology	5%
Adolescent Medicine	4%	OPP	5%
Preventive Medicine	5%	Pulmonology	5%
Psychiatry	4%	Geriatrics	5%
Medical Jurisprudence	3%	EENT	5%
Allergy/Immunology including			
Rheumatology	5%	General Surgery	3%
Cardiology	5%	Orthopedics	5%
Dermatology	5%	Obstetrics/Gynecology	4%
Endocrinology	5%	Pediatrics	4%
Gastroenterology	5%	Sports Medicine	3%
Hematology	4%	Women's Issues	4%
Nephrology/Urology	4%		

Written (Cognitive) Exam Results.

Approximately 8-12 weeks after the exam administration, candidates receive a detailed score report of their exam results. The unsuccessful completion of the examination requires a retake at another exam administration; a total of two retake examinations are allowed prior to further approval. Retake examinations are limited to two administrations prior to further board review with a recommendation for further educational requirements.

III. Procedure for the Practical OMT Examination

When you apply for the Practical OMT Exam, you will also select your preferred date.

Please note: When the OMT practical is given over a number of consecutive days, there is no guarantee you will be scheduled for the day you select. Candidates should not make travel arrangements until they receive an authorization-to-test from AOBFP.

- Candidates are assigned a time at which to appear for the Practical OMT. Times are sent to scheduled candidates about six weeks prior to the exam.
- Each candidate will have a partner (another candidate) who will act the role of the patient during the examination. Partners cannot be related by blood or marriage.
- Upon admittance to the exam room, candidates complete a waiver and are randomly assigned three case histories on which they will be examined. Time is provided for the review of those cases prior to examination.
- The candidate will be asked by a team of examiners to diagnose the assigned cases and demonstrate osteopathic manipulative treatment. A time limit is applied.

Practical OMT Exam Results. A pass/fail designation is provided for the practical OMT examination on site. If needed, an opportunity to retake the performance exam is offered during the session.

IV. Process for the On-Site Practical OMT Examination

A. Dress Code/Professionalism – AOBFP Practical OMT Examination

Admission to the on-site practical OMT examination room is dependent on appropriate dress and cleanliness.

Dress conservatively (medical office attire) and avoid constrictive, very loose and revealing clothing (including anything that reveals the chest, back or abdomen) and accessories that may interfere with your being physically examined or your physically examining another. We also expect that you and your clothing are clean, groomed and free of fragrances, odors, tobacco smoke, etc. that may trigger allergic reactions in others.

Recommended Dress for Women

- Leg-length khaki or dress pants (should be able to roll pant leg up to the knee)
- Skirts/dresses with hemlines below the knee
- Blouses or conservative dressy tops
- Clothing tops loose enough to show the top of the neckline, elbows, forearms and hands
- Loafers or closed-toe, low heel shoes with nylons or socks (all easily removable)

Recommended Dress for Men

- Belted leg-length khaki or dress pants (should be able to roll pant leg up to the knee)
- Polo or golf type short sleeve collared shirt
- Buttoned-down collared short-sleeve shirt
- Loafers or dress shoes with socks (all easily removable)

Candidates will not be allowed into the examination room if wearing any of the following:

Watches	Hospital/surgical scrubs	Sweatpants/yoga pants/shorts
Dangling or large hoop-style earrings	Jackets / coats / hoodies	Halter tops/visible sports bras
Neck-ties (regular long neck ties; bow ties)	Jeans / denim pants	Bathing suits/bikinis
Scarves	Skirts/dresses above the knee	Workout clothes
Hats/visors/headscarves	Sweaters / sweatshirts	Sandals/flip flops
Sport shoes/athletic socks	Tank tops / tee shirts	Spike/high heel shoes

NOTE: Any request for exemption to the above dress code must be received by the AOBFP at least 30 days in advance of the OMT practical date. The request must include documentation for exemption based on your personal reasons.

B. Entering the Registration Area

Upon arriving onsite, read the dress code document and indicate your agreement with your signature.

Candidates are required to present one government-issued photo ID with a signature. Candidates will sign-in and receive an ID badge, which is to be worn throughout the examination. Insert the government-issued photo ID in the back of the badge holder with your name and photo visible.

Certification candidates within the same exam time assignment select their exam partners. If an odd number of candidates, a surrogate patient will be assigned to a candidate. Partners will then await entrance to the exam room. Once you get your badge and are admitted to the room, you may not leave. Any exits from the room will result in a failure, and require returning at the next test administration in 4-7 months.

Partners cannot be related by blood or marriage and cannot be in an employed relationship (e.g., Chief Medical Officer and attending physician). Note that the exam process includes palpatory examination, which will require both the partner candidate (male or female) and the examiner (male or female) to place their hands on a candidate to identify landmark identification.

C. Waiver

Upon entering the case room with your partner, you will be presented with a waiver form to sign. The form states that you understand that if your treatment involves an active correction, thrust, or HVLA, you are to set the patient into the proper position only and verbalize the mechanism and direction of your correction. You are not to complete the active correction. Performing an active correction, thrust or HVLA is grounds for immediate failure of the entire exam.

D. Case Room

You will receive one case from each of the following categories: spine, extremities and systemic diseases. Enter your name and ID number along with your partner's ID number on each of these three cases. Do not turn the papers over until instructed. On the signal to begin, you will have 15 minutes to review and choose the one best answer from the four choices listed on the front side of each sheet. After you have selected the diagnosis for each case, use the remainder of the 15 minutes to plan your treatment strategy. This is all the data that will be given. **If necessary, you may direct any questions to a proctor but may not talk with your partner or fellow candidates.** Reference materials may not be used. Notes may only be made directly on the case form.

E. Examination

Exam proctors direct all candidates to the examination area and the exam stations. Candidate guidelines will not be repeated at stations two and three. If partnered with a surrogate patient rather than another candidate, wait until the time elapses before advancing to the next station.

Case Diagnosis. Examiners will review your case diagnosis and indicate whether or not it is correct. Correct diagnoses earn points. If incorrect, you will be informed of the correct diagnosis.

Demonstrate/Discuss OMT. Each partner is given 4 minutes in which to demonstrate and discuss appropriate OMT for the first case. Speak loud enough and clear enough for examiners to hear and understand you.

Scoring is based on the explanation and demonstration of treatment for the correct diagnosis. If your treatment involves an active correction, thrust or HVLA, you are to set the patient into the proper position only and verbalize the mechanism and direction of your correction. You are not to complete the active correction.

The official timer announces the start/end times for each station. Upon completion of the exam at the third station, the candidate will remain seated at that station until directed to exit the room to receive their results.

F. Scoring

Each case is scored on the following criteria:

- Diagnosis
- Identification of landmarks appropriate to the technique
- Implementation and demonstration of appropriate technique/s
- Ability to discuss each technique
- Professionalism

G. Results

A candidate must receive a passing score on two of the three cases in order to pass. (An exam session may involve two exam attempts if necessary.) In the event a candidate does not receive a passing score on the first attempt, that candidate may be given another opportunity to retake the practical OMT exam either on the same day or the next day, time permitting. The candidate will be retested with three new cases using the same examination protocol and scoring system. In the event of a failure on the second attempt within that same administration, the candidate will be deemed to have failed the practical OMT examination.

V. Special Accommodations for Examinations

Test accommodations are individualized and considered on a case-by-case basis.

A. Disability (American with Disabilities Act--ADA)

https://www.ada.gov/regs2014/testing_accommodations.html

Candidates seeking special ADA accommodations for either the written or OMT practical must submit the required documentation as specified within the AOBFP 'Criteria Policy for Documentation of a Disability – Request for Accommodation Candidate Handbook' along with the AOBFP 'Request for Accommodation Application'. The information and application are on our website. The request for accommodation application and supporting documentation must be submitted with the completed application for examination and postmarked by the initial deadline date.

B. Religious Observance

Candidates finding conflict with scheduled examination dates (for either exam) due to religious observances must provide a written explanation of the conflict with letters of verification from the clergy on official

stationery with original signature and dated, which is to accompany the completed application and supporting documents due by the initial postmark deadline date.

C. Comfort Aid

Comfort aids do not require pre-approval for the written examination site. They will be allowed in the testing room upon visual inspection by the PearsonVue Test Center staff.

([https://home.pearsonvue.com/Documents/Accommodations/Comfort-aids-\(2\)/pvue_comfort_aids.aspx](https://home.pearsonvue.com/Documents/Accommodations/Comfort-aids-(2)/pvue_comfort_aids.aspx))

D. Other Considerations

Candidates seeking nursing mom consideration (e.g., expressing breast milk) for the written examination should inform AOBFP and PearsonVue of their intent *in advance* of the event. (<https://home.pearsonvue.com/test-taker/Test-accommodations/Testing-Exceptions-for-Nursing-Mothers.aspx>)

VI. Recommendation for Certification

Candidates fulfilling the following requirements will be presented to the American Osteopathic Association's Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists (BOS) for recommendation for certification by the AOA.

Initial Certification

- A final pass status on both the written (cognitive) exam and the practical OMT exam
- Valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in a State or Territory of the United States
- AOA confirmation of completed residency training

Recertification, i.e., Osteopathic Continuous Certification (OCC)

- A final pass status on both the written (cognitive) exam and the practical OMT exam
- Valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in a State or Territory of the United States
- Fulfillment of CME requirements

Re-Entry to Certification

- A final pass status on both the written (cognitive) exam and the practical OMT exam
- Valid and unrestricted license to practice medicine in a State or Territory of the United States
- Documentation per AOA activity reports of 150 applicable CME hours for the previous three years

VII. Re-Examination

OMT Practical Exam and Written (Cognitive) Exam

A candidate who has failed either the OMT Practical or Written (Cognitive) Exam may apply for re-examination at the next scheduled exam. Retake examinations (written and/or practical) are limited to two administrations prior to further board review with a recommendation for further educational requirements.

OMT Practical Exam. If time and space allow, an opportunity to retake this exam is offered during the same exam administration either later in the day or on another consecutive day of testing. In the event of a failure on the second exam attempt within that session, the candidate will be required to document completion of a CME review course in osteopathic principles and techniques before retaking the OMT practical at a future date.

VIII. Appeals

OMT Practical Exam and Written (Cognitive) Exam

Any appeal of a failure decision must be received in writing by the AOBFP administrative office within 30 days of the failure. Issues that can be appealed include:

- Unequal application of the regulations and requirements or standards
- Unwarranted discrimination, prejudice, unfairness or improper conduct of the examination

The AOBFP will not consider appeals addressing exam content, exam evaluation or the determination of the minimum passing score. Appeal documentation, including the rationale as to why the candidate believes the examination results should be reviewed, will be evaluated by the AOBFP Executive Committee and a decision rendered within 30 days of receipt of the original appeal. In the event that the candidate still wishes to contest the examination results, the candidate may then appeal to the AOA Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists (BOS).